Aboriginal History

Volume seven 1983
Aboriginal History aims to present articles and information in the field of Australian ethnohistory, particularly in the post-contact history of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, will be welcomed. Future issues will include recorded oral traditions and biographies, vernacular narratives with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, résumés of current events, archival and bibliographical articles, and book reviews.

Aboriginal History is administered by an Editorial Board which is responsible for all unsigned material in the journal. Views and opinions expressed by the authors of signed articles and reviews are not necessarily shared by Board members. The editors invite contributions for consideration; reviews will be commissioned by the review editor.

Contributions, correspondence and inquiries about subscriptions should be sent to: The Editors, Aboriginal History, C/- Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, Australian National University, G.P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Read</td>
<td>'A rape of the soul so profound': some reflections on the dispersal</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>policy in New South Wales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Quinlan</td>
<td>Bellbrook: my father's country</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Markus</td>
<td>William Cooper and the 1937 petition to the King</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory Lyons</td>
<td>Official policy towards Victorian Aborigines 1957-1974</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Gray</td>
<td>Aboriginal fertility at the time of European contact: the Daly River</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission Baptismal Register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Dutton</td>
<td>The origin and spread of Aboriginal pidgin English in Queensland: a</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preliminary account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Reynolds</td>
<td>Aborigines and European social hierarchy</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia J. Hallam</td>
<td>A view from the other side of the western frontier: or 'I met a man</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who wasn't there . . .'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Black and Grace Koch</td>
<td>Koko-Bera island style music</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Shnukal</td>
<td>Torres Strait Creole: the growth of a new Torres Strait language</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW ARTICLE</td>
<td>Three perspectives on coastal archaeology and a view from 64° north</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel Broadbent</td>
<td>Book Reviews, Correspondence, Book Notes</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABORIGINAL HISTORY

VOLUME SEVEN 1983
PART 1

CONTENTS

Three tributes to Pearl Gibbs (1901-1983) 4
Kevin Gilbert
Jack Horner
Heather Goodall

Peter Read

M. Quinlan

Andrew Markus

Gregory Lyons

Alan Gray

Tom Dutton

Pearl Gibbs: Aboriginal patriot 5
Pearl Gibbs: a biographical tribute 10
Pearl Gibbs: some memories 20

'A rape of the soul so profound': some reflections on the dispersal policy in New South Wales 23

Bellbrook: my father's country 34

William Cooper and the 1937 petition to the King 46

Official policy towards Victorian Aborigines 1957-1974 61

Aboriginal fertility at the time of European contact: the Daly River Mission Baptismal Register 80

The origin and spread of Aboriginal pidgin English in Queensland: a preliminary account 90
Top: Pearl Gibbs when elected to N.S.W. Aborigines Welfare Board, 14 August 1954. Photograph courtesy of Jack Horner.
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS (1901-1983)

PEARL GIBBS: ABORIGINAL PATRIOT

Kevin Gilbert

Pearl Gibbs often described herself as 'a battler'. Maybe, after a lifetime of battling the odds against white Australia, this description should be her epitaph. However neither that nor any other lauding of her fighting spirit would do her justice. Nothing short of justice, humanity and land rights for Aborigines could signify even a portion of the great love of this land that Pearl held.

When I heard of her death I was assailed by emotion and guilt, self-recrimination for having deserted her at the end of her life, because her painful quest for Rights, Justice, Love, Humanity, International Covenants and love for Australia, our land, became too much for me to bear. A song I once sung, once wrote upon a poem, came back to mind: 'She was of Kamilroi / a Princess in stature / a Goddess of nature / though only a child . . .' and, from a dimly recollected image a line from the Bible: 'These are the heirs, come let us kill them that the inheritance will be ours'.

There'll be no epitaphs for Pearl
In copperplate upon a stone
No funeral of State or trace
Of civic honor to remark
Her passing though her feet have trod
The Halls of Justice haunting God
And man and woman child and fool
Who makes the Nation's Law a tool
Of massacre and hate
Injustice, land theft tortured fate
Befall the rightful heirs their sons
Must fall to strychnine and the guns
The last descendants to imprisonment
The will negated, overthrown
The phantom killer called the Crown
By Acts repeals the Right
Of victims of its conquering lusts
And holds the land by might.
Yet in some far off distant land
A Royal Seal a trembling hand
May moved by conscience still repeal
Infamous Acts and heed appeals
Before a Falkland comes
A Cuban Syria Red war drum
Sounds to the thieves 'retreat'

Kevin Gilbert is a leading Aboriginal poet, playwright and author. His most recent book is People are legends: Aboriginal poems (St Lucia, 1978).
And prophets, patriots standing forth
Shall speak as Pearl did for the worth
Of life and justice for her race
Somewhere somehow to reach the heart
And soul of death's white face.

Throughout history, wherever there has been massacre, genocide, deprivation of human right — wherever tyranny ruled — the human spirit objected, often rising to heroic proportion. One such spirit was Pearl Gibbs. Garrulous, cranky, hurt, bitter, defamatorily lashing out in frustration, she held one course: justice, humanity, honour within this country. That such could only come when the newcomers grew a little, matured enough to develop a real and substantial love for this land and an honourable national spirit, spurred her on: testing, waiting, hoping like a mother for her child to grow to realisation. May her spirit live on.

There are no heroes or heroines in contemporary Aboriginal land. Our beliefs in legends and life were traumatised, shattered so that the only reality became survival; a singular group conscience; a racial identification. The total infrastructure of the personal ego was suppressed and denigrated to the point of a catastrophic personal insecurity and identification syndrome that negated heroic proportions. After all, heroes were winners and Aborigines hadn't won a round for a long long time.

Today the only bearable reality is self and the confirmation, the groping and fighting to assert self in a dynamic proportion that allows no image superior to one's own to emerge for fear that a comparison may reveal or undermine the very basis of the infrastructure. An infrastructure that at all costs needs be constantly seen to be itself, reinforced and built upon. A case of independent growth, worth, emulating none, indebted to none. A pity in this case, for Pearl Gibbs was a patriot, a very human one indeed but nevertheless a true and enduring patriot in her country, her land.

Her remarks on the non-recognition bit (taken out of context from my memories) would have been: 'Them's the bloody breaks. Just grin and bare it — like the doctor said to the nurse', and, when she'd finished chortling, she'd have added, 'Who's a bloody hero anyway? Black or white, if we had a hero, we wouldn't be sitting here whinging now, we'd have our Land Rights, one way or the other!' and, 'Our heroes have all got big balls, but they keep 'em for the white women's games!'

After the laughter she'd say 'Here's ten dollars. Get us a bottle of brandy and then we'll talk. Ah, before you go, I must tell you this. I met old Jessie at the hospital. I said "What are you here for?" She said, "I dunno the name of it but the doctor said they're gonna take me gears out!" I said back to her, "They're probably like mine, all stripped out years ago!" ' And amid our laughter we would sit down with a bottle of brandy to talk.

Pearl was amongst the most politically astute in the Aboriginal community. She lived and breathed, ached and bled Aboriginal affairs. She believed, despite the ongoing fact of discrimination and dispossession, that white Australia would one day ratify the 'Yes' vote of the 1967 referendum; that justice would be done and the federal government would legislate to override the states and give Aborigines their due. In her years at the Dubbo hostel Pearl had a direct phone link-up throughout the length and breadth of Australia to 'people who knew' what was happening, what was going
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

to happen, why it didn’t happen. Even the not so lustrous Prime Ministerial offices, the opposition’s Shadow Ministers, never managed to escape her pleas and belabourings. Her favourite ‘sons and daughters’, sisters, brothers of the Aboriginal community ‘dropped in’ as they passed through the town or travelled to see her. For many, facing her growling, her dressing down, her rare words of praise, loved Pearl with a deep and tolerant love. And where there is much love there is also hurt, anger, bitterness. Pearl, in her lifetime, had evoked all of these responses. I visited Pearl in 1972 to obtain her views for a book I was currently writing. I quoted what she said:

There's no white men, or woman, who has that feeling we have. They can study us all they like, but we've got them studied too. Because this is our country — the country of my mother's mother, a full-blooded Australian Aborigine. And it is my country . . . It is our country. It belongs to us, it is precious to us. And that is something no white man will ever understand, except perhaps Bill Harney and Don McLeod. They understood a little bit of what we feel and what we are.1

Pearl had battled most of her life in an attempt to evoke a sense of right, to get the white man to understand a little bit, to little avail. In the days when Aboriginal reserves and stations, the ‘missions’, were often concentration camps with police and managers acting as the camp Kommandants — in the late 1930s — Bill Ferguson, Bert Groves and Pearl Gibbs raised their voices in protest at the slavery, the abuse of human rights, the evil of this gestapo system of control. Pearl convinced Michael Sawtell, a well-disposed man who became a member of the N.S.W. Aborigines Welfare Board, to help her launch a public appeal, an exposé if you like, of the terrible conditions Aborigines suffered under. Her speech was broadcast in 1941; in 1972 she gave me permission to publish her radio script.2 Here are some excerpts:

Good evening listeners,

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Theosophical Society of Sydney in granting me this privilege of being on the air this evening. It is the first time in the history of Australia that an Aboriginal woman has broadcast an appeal for her people. I am more than happy to be that woman. My grandmother was a full-blood Aborigine. Of that fact I am most proud. The admixture of white blood makes me a quarter-caste Aborigine. I am a member of the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship. My people have had 153 years of the white man's and white woman's cruelty and injustice and unchristian treatment imposed upon us . . . A person in whom the Aborigine blood predominates is not entitled to an old-age, invalid or returned soldier's pension. There are about thirty full-blooded returned men in this state whom I believe are not entitled to the old-age pension. A woman in whom the Aborigine blood predominates is not entitled to a baby bonus.

Our girls and boys are exploited ruthlessly. They are apprenticed out by the Aborigines Welfare Board at the shocking wage of a shilling to three and six per week pocket money and from two and six to six shillings per week is paid into a trust fund at the end of four years. This is done from fourteen years to the age of eighteen. At the end of four years a girl would, with pocket money and money from the trust, have earned £60 and a boy £90. Many girls have great difficulty in

2 The full text appears in Gilbert 1973:13-17.
getting their trust money. Others say they have never been paid. Girls arrive home with white babies. I do not know of one case where the Aborigines Welfare Board has taken steps to compel the white father to support his child. The child has to grow up as an unwanted member of an apparently unwanted race. Aboriginal girls are no less human than my white sisters. The pitiful small wage encourages immorality. Women living on the stations do not handle endowment money, but the managers write out orders. The orders are made payable to one store in the nearest town — in most cases a mixed drapery and grocery store. So you will see that in most cases the mother cannot buy extra meat, fruit, or vegetables. When rations and blankets are issued to the children, the value is taken from the endowment money. The men work sixteen hours a week for rations worth five and sixpence. The bad housing, poor water supply, appalling sanitary conditions and the lack of right food, together with unsympathetic managers, make life not worth living for my unfortunate people.

Pearl was a good talker. She made point after point about inadequate education, the prejudice found in schools, the impossibility of owning land, the fact that Aborigines were 'deprived of all federal social services'. Giving details of what Aborigines wanted in their claim for citizenship rights, she reminded listeners of 'the great debt that you, the white race, owe to my Aboriginal people'. Aborigines had guided 'explorers', tracked lost people, saved airmen from crashed planes, served in the Boer War and 1914-18 war and were currently serving overseas while Aboriginal women helped with war charities and enlisted as WRANS. She concluded:

Please remember, we don't want your pity, but practical help. This you can do by writing to the Hon. Chief Secretary, Mr Baddeley, MLA Parliament House, Sydney and ask that our claims be granted as soon as possible . . . Remember we, the Aboriginal people, are the creditors. Do not let it be said of you that we have asked in vain. Will my appeal for practical humanity be in vain? I leave the answer to each and every one of you.

Pearl knew the answer before she died but she, like the whole of the Aboriginal community will not, cannot, accept defeat. Her spirit soared with every thrust of the Aboriginal movement, with every hard won step by the newer younger generation.

The late Charlie Leon once told me how he and Jim Morris had formed an Aboriginal vaudeville troupe called 'Leon's Entertainers'. They travelled throughout New South Wales and wherever they performed they donated half the takings to the local hospital so that Aborigines could receive treatment. In an address published in a Rotary Club Bulletin Charlie Leon later told what he and others owed to Pearl Gibbs:

It was not until 1930 that I began to work in earnest for my people. I could see the need for some kind of development and . . . It was Mrs Pearl Gibbs, Mr Bert Groves, Mrs Faith Bandler and Miss Grace Bardsley who were responsible for the forming of the Aboriginal Australian Fellowship which was formed in 1955-56 and was registered as a charity in 1957. The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement was born: the first meeting took place in Adelaide; then N.A.D.O.C. was formed . . . I do believe it was due to what I would call the “mother” organisation . . . and the honour goes to the people I have mentioned previously.

One day, Aborigines will stop living and dying in hope. When that happens, land rights will come, our people will look at history and historic figures and we’ll see Pearl
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

again, in an Aboriginal Hall of Fame together with Bill Ferguson, Bert Groves, Charlie Leon and our tribal patriots, and the patriots starving now in the parks, chained on the reserves, battlers battling in the streets of Redfern, Moree, Woodenbong, Canberra, Brewarrina, Bourke, Nowra, Dubbo, Condobolin, Cowra. In that hall of glory will be the names of the nations Pearl knew and influenced — Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi, Ngembo, Bipi, Bunjalung, Yuin, Awabakul, Dunguthi3 — each nation among nations formerly linked by commerce, trade and the secret language of tradition will assert their nationhood, and the true story will live again in this land as Pearl hoped.

Pearl collected every item of Aboriginal news. The total collection of clippings, photographs and artifacts formed an extremely important historical record for the whole of the Aboriginal community. Many people, white and black, knew this and, probably in an effort to protect that material, they well may have destroyed it. For, as Pearl lay dying, as news reached the community that she had died, various people descended on her house; some took the news clippings, some the artifacts, some something else. Love and protection — protectiveness — take many forms, but that information, the total aspect of that property is of vital use to the whole of the Aboriginal community. National and State libraries should not receive them or they will become lost to the community. They should be held, housed, in one location. In short, Pearl and her property should be used as she intended, a hammer of truth to 'educate 'em, a little bit', and show the true story and glory of our peoples' struggling.

3 I have spelt their names as I heard them from people proud to belong to them. The ultimate irony (pointed out by Diane Barwick) is that any student who cares to learn what has been written about these groups will have to look at the New South Wales 'tribal' list and map compiled by Tindale (1974:191-201); in the esoteric orthography of the professional linguist/anthropologist the names are spelt Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi, Ngemba, Birpai, Badjalang, Yuin, Awabakal, Dainggati.

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Pearl Gibbs, who died in Dubbo on 28 April 1983, made Australian history in many ways. She was the first Aboriginal person to deliver her own scripted radio talk. She was a prominent organiser and public speaker in the Aboriginal protest campaigns of the 1930s, a member of the first deputations to the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Attorney-General, and served as secretary of the Aborigines' Progressive Association and other pioneering Aboriginal organisations. She was the first and only woman member of the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board (1954-57). In 1956 she founded the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, a multi-racial body based in Sydney which attacked discrimination with resounding success. Subsequently she established the first hostel in New South Wales designed to serve the needs of rural Aborigines requiring hospital treatment. The funeral service for Mrs Gibbs, on 2 May 1983, revealed the esteem in which she was held. It took place at the North Dubbo Roman Catholic Church, made available for the occasion. The officiant was Pastor Ossie Cruse of the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship.

Her sturdy Aboriginal roots came from her mother, Mrs Margaret Murray. In 1967, a year after she herself applied for the old age pension, Pearl showed me copies of the baptismal certificate from Yass and marriage lines from Brewarrina which her mother had obtained in 1940 in order to prove entitlement for the age pension. These papers declare that Mary Margaret Brown, born at Brewarrina in 1875, was a daughter of George Brown, a European 'labourer' (the current official term for any station or shed hand) and Maria, an Aboriginal woman. Whether Pearl's grandmother Maria belonged to the Muruwari or Ngembi people I still do not know, despite diligent inquiries, but the marriage certificate shows that she was dead before 1910.

Pearl's mother was aged twelve in 1887 when the Brewarrina Aboriginal Station was established near the town. This 'mission' with its dormitory and provisional school was at first managed by the Aborigines' Protection Association, but the government Aborigines Protection Board soon assumed full control. At the age of sixteen Pearl's

5 Jack Horner has conducted research in Aboriginal history for many years. He is the author of Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom (Sydney, 1974), co-author of A Dictionary of Australian History (Melbourne, 1970) and editor of Kuroboran, by Monica Clare (Sydney, 1978).

* During research for this obituary I found that there appears to be no published account of the work of Pearl Gibbs except the scattered comments in my own biography of William Ferguson (Horner 1974), which lists newspapers and other written sources in footnotes. Interviews with the late Herbert Groves and William Onus, with Sir Douglas Nicholls, Pearl Gibbs herself and others who shared or knew of her work, notably Faith Bandler and other members of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, were my main source of information. I am grateful for helpful comment by Diane Barwick, who enjoyed Pearl's friendship from 1961.

1 The reminiscences of Jimmie Barker (Mathews 1977) mention that as a child in 1910 he met an old Muruwari woman named Maria at Milroy Station, north of Brewarrina, but this woman reportedly died in 1919. Tindale (1974:197-201) declares Muruwari a valid alternative spelling for the name he renders Morowari; his map distinguishes 'Ngemba' territory (extending south from Bourke and Brewarrina to Byrock and beyond) from that of the 'Wongaibon' stretching southward to the Lachlan river. In the practical orthography recently adopted by the Wangaaypuwan community for their language, the spelling is Ngiyampaa (Kennedy and Donaldson 1982:5).
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

mother was living at Yass, already a prosperous market town for the many merino sheep stations of that district. Budget limitations forced the Board to use police as its local agents, and it was probably the police or the Brewarrina manager who placed her as a domestic servant at Yass. A policeman would have been the railway escort. Her employers John and Catherine Sheehan duly had her baptised as a Catholic at the St Augustine church in Yass on 24 May 1892.2

Mary Margaret Brown had two daughters, Olga and then Pearl Mary, two years younger, who by her own account was born not in Yass but at Botany Bay. Why her mother went to Sydney for the birth is uncertain, but she may have had relatives living there.3 The girls' father, surnamed Barry, is now forgotten but the Barry name is remembered in Yass for a wheelwright and blacksmith's shop that closed as late as 1922.4 Pearl recalled living in rooms over a draper's shop at Yass, where her mother worked as a cook.

Beginning at kindergarten age, Pearl and her sister attended the Mount Carmel convent school run by the Sisters of Mercy. Local prejudice had forced the Education Department to exclude Aborigines from the Yass school after 1887 (this expulsion was duplicated in innumerable New South Wales towns5); at the Catholic school in Yass they received the same lessons as 'white' children but in a separate class. Pearl's teacher, Sister Loreto, made efforts in the charitable manner of that day to visit the homes of children who came from the riverbank to school. She was anxiously concerned about their health and careful to see that provision of the proper style of clothing should prevent playtime cruelty. She encouraged the 'white' children to act decently. Among these day-pupils Pearl found a particular friend, Mollie Coen, a playmate two years younger who took her part in any arguments.6

By 1910 Mary Margaret Brown and her daughters had returned to the far west of New South Wales. At Bourke, almost sixty miles west of her former home at Brewarrina, she found work as a station cook. There she met Richard 'Dick' Murray, an Aboriginal widower aged thirty-three who was employed as horse-groom at a pastoral station. Their wedding took place in Brewarrina on 5 June 1910. The Murray

2 Father T.P. O'Donoghue of Yass provided the 1940 copy of Mrs Murray's baptismal certificate, according to Pearl's copy. Historical information about the Yass Aborigines appears in Read 1982.

3 Pearl told me in 1965 that she was born at Botany Bay, yet in later interviews implied that she had not known the La Perouse people before she joined the Unemployed Workers' camp in 1930. An Aboriginal fishing village had grown up on the northern shore of Botany Bay by 1840; in 1848 it was described by a gang building the Redfern-Botany road which was possibly intended to serve the mill and factory owned by Simeon Lord from 1814. The factory was still there in 1855. Some Aborigines were living there when the industrial suburb of Mascot began to develop just prior to World War I.

4 In an interview in the Dubbo Liberal, 29-30 January 1983, Pearl identified her father as David Barry of Yass.

5 Goodall 1983 provides a detailed account of such exclusions based on oral evidence and Education Department records.

6 I came to know the same Mollie Coen during the 1930s when her family lived in a flat above ours at Randwick; a letter from Mollie's younger sister, Mrs Douglas Stewart of Sydney, provided these first hand comments about the style of racial interaction at this school.
family, including nine-year-old Pearl, then went to live at the homestead of a vast sheep station close to the Byrock railway siding, nearly fifty miles south of Bourke and Brewarrina. Murray was the stable groom, Margaret Murray was cook, Olga worked with her mother in the kitchen and Pearl, with starched apron over her schoolgirl’s frock, soon began to wait and serve at table. Recalling this congenial apprenticeship to her career of domestic service, Pearl told me how her loving parents had encouraged her to work well. She spoke warmly of the hearty grazier, a retired army colonel, whose confidence in his employees gave the Murray family material security. She enjoyed recounting his reaction to one incident at Byrock: Pearl, carrying a huge silver salver loaded with food, was about to leave the kitchen and walk up the passageway to the dining room when a remark by the Chinese gardener affronted her self-respect. She impetuously dumped the salver’s contents on him. When the grazier inquired where his dinner was, Pearl unabashedly replied ‘I threw it over George’. All the people at table joined in his roar of laughter.

Life on the household staff at Byrock had attractions for a growing girl — casual shooting and fishing jaunts, interesting visitors, new clothes from distant Sydney. The rigid social structure of far west pastoral stations, which normally excluded Aborigines (and shearers too), bent a little for the Murrays. But of course Olga and Pearl were expected to give up all thought of return to ancient Aboriginal ways. When the sisters left for Sydney in 1917 they were exemplars of a new Aboriginal style of life which blended the memories and loyalties of their mother and stepfather with their own experience of school and service. They were ready for whatever the city might bring.

Their first ‘place’ was at Victoria Barracks, Paddington, possibly through the good offices of ‘the Colonel’. Their mother’s competent training enabled the Murray sisters to graduate from maid to cook in various wealthy homes at Potts Point. ‘Living-in’ at first, Pearl came to know by sight many of the personalities of King’s Cross, razor gangs and all. During the carefree 1920s she married an English sailor, a naval steward aboard HMAS Australia, and reared a daughter and two sons (one of whom followed his father into the navy and was mentioned with pride in her wartime radio broadcast).

Pearl’s work in the sumptuous kitchens of Victoria Street, Challis Avenue and Macleay Street brought her into contact with other Aboriginal girls, the first she had known since her days at Yass. Most were lonely kitchenmaids, without hope or cash, who had been indentured as servants by the Aborigines Protection Board after a few years or mere weeks of training at the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls’ Home. Realising the injustice of an apprenticeship scheme which placed the girls’ wages in a trust account until they completed their indenture and allowed them only a few pence of pocket money, Pearl decided to help them.

The Board’s offices were in a building (since pulled down) behind Sydney Hospital and facing the Domain. Years later Pearl had vivid memories of walking across the wide park with these girls, appalled by their tales of how Inspector Donaldson and a police escort had forcibly removed them from their families, by their accounts of the severe regime at Cootamunda, and by their reports of many instances of mistreatment.
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

by employers. Pearl never forgot the autocratic and unsympathetic reaction of Board staff when she tried to speak up for the unfortunate apprentices.

In 1930 Pearl found herself unemployed. Domestic servants were the first victims of the great depression. For a few months she and her mother lived in a mean tin humpy in a vast shanty town, the Unemployed Workers' Camp at La Perouse, one of many such camps that surrounded Sydney during the 1930s. They then moved to Nowra on the south coast and joined a pea-picking crew made up of Aboriginal women. In the off-season they took any jobs available in the district. Pearl ruefully recalled that she was a slow picker. At the worst time of the depression she was starving. But at Nowra she made a life-long friend: Mrs Sarah Cruse (mother of Ossie Cruse, later an ordained pastor and a member of the National Aboriginal Conference). Her efforts to improve industrial conditions for pickers were also supported by a Labor Party man, Jack Beale (later Minister for Conservation in a New South Wales Liberal government). This was Pearl’s first experience of the effective work of a structured organisation, and she kept it in mind.

For the first time, too, Pearl and Mrs Murray encountered the full repressive might of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Act (1909-1963) and regulations. It gave the Board and its police agents powers, originally intended to protect Aborigines, which could too easily be used to control and exploit them. For their own good, so they were told, Aborigines could neither drink nor possess liquor; they could be prevented from leaving New South Wales; after 1936 they could be removed from any place on a magistrate’s judgement. ‘Whites’ associating with them could be prosecuted on suspicion of procuring. As legal guardian of Aboriginal minors the Board could assume control and custody of any child it deemed ‘neglected’. When Pearl and her mother became acquainted with the community at Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Station they heard of further petty rules imposed by the manager. Pearl chortled when recalling how she undermined his order that the women must shop in Nowra only in his company. He held their ‘chits’ (probably their income from the new Child Endowment benefit) to pay for purchases; at Pearl’s instigation the ladies embarrassed him by insisting that he supervise their purchase of underclothing.

The Board had dismissed the manager of its Brewarrina station at the end of 1936; his complaints to a sympathetic M.L.A. were relayed to William Ferguson, a prominent Aboriginal spokesman who was campaigning for an inquiry into Board administration of this and other reserves. After the June 1937 meeting at Dubbo which founded the Aborigines' Progressive Association, Ferguson came to Sydney to organise evidence for an expected parliamentary investigation of Board affairs. Pearl visited Sydney to meet Ferguson and at his suggestion applied to the Board for employment as cook at the Brewarrina dormitory. Ferguson wanted her to check reports that a European man habitually attempted to seduce girls living in the dormitory, and to provide some

7 Quotations from Pearl's contemporary comments appear in Horner 1974; Tucker 1977 and Edwards 1982 describe experiences at the Cootamundra Home. Read [1982], a report published by the N.S.W. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, notes that at least 5,625 Aboriginal children were taken from their families between 1883 and 1969.

8 See Horner 1974 for a detailed discussion of the issues.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

independent evidence of residents' comments on their generally poor conditions. She found plenty to be indignant about in a few weeks at the station.9

Back in Sydney Pearl happened to meet two of the domestics she had assisted nine years earlier and accompanied them to the weekly tea-party sponsored by Mrs Joan Kingsley-Strack, a sympathetic employer who was likewise outraged by Board treatment of indentured servants. Their spontaneous friendship led Sydney's Feminist Club to nominate Pearl as their witness when the Parliamentary Select Committee began its hearings on 17 November 1937.10 This inquiry lapsed when an election was called and the minutes of evidence were not published until 1940.11 Meanwhile Pearl remained in Sydney, deeply involved in planning the 'Aboriginal Day of Mourning' on 26 January 1938, the sesquicentenary of Australian colonisation. Both Pearl and her mother were among the twenty Aborigines who went as a deputation to Prime Minister J.A. Lyons a week afterward. Lyons' wife immediately told reporters how Pearl's speech had moved her. Decades later Dame Enid Lyons could still quote Pearl's declaration, 'I am more proud of my Aboriginal blood than of my white blood'.12 Those words sum up Pearl's allegiance. They also tell something of her suffering in eight years of depression conditions.

Over the next few months Pearl was chairman of several heated meetings at which two founders of the Aborigines' Progressive Association, William Ferguson and Jack Patten, argued their different views about future action. At the June 1938 State Conference of the Association in Dubbo Pearl was elected secretary, and Ferguson president. Pearl's mother and stepfather Dick Murray (now retired from pastoral work) were the delegates from Nowra. Pearl already had another prominent role as speaker for the Committee for Aboriginal Citizen Rights, formed in April 1938 by representatives of churches, women's groups and workers' organisations. For two years the secretary, Mrs Strack, and her friend Mrs Gibbs addressed various societies and public meetings night after night. Both were forthright and knowledgable about the distress of Aboriginal servants and reserve residents. Pearl's gift for phrases which stirred the social conscience of 'white' Australians helped to focus public concern.

In February 1939 Pearl was a member of this Committee's deputation to the new federal Attorney-General, R.G. Menzies, to protest capital punishment (specifically, the hanging of a convicted Aboriginal); Pearl's statements, interpreted as antagonism to Christian missionaries in press reports, led to a breach with Ferguson. A month later Ferguson repudiated a press report that Pearl would contest the Parramatta seat (held by the Minister responsible for Aboriginal affairs) on behalf of the Aborigines' Progressive Association in the next State election. This premature announcement had been provoked by news that no Aboriginal representatives would

9 See Mathews 1977 and New South Wales Legislative Assembly 1940 for descriptions of conditions at Brewarrina; Pearl may have made written as well as oral reports to Ferguson but I could not locate any surviving copies.

10 Biographical information and a detailed chronology of events appear in Horner 1974.

11 New South Wales Legislative Assembly 1940.

12 Information from correspondence with Dame Enid Lyons; for contemporary press accounts see Horner 1974:68-70.

14
be included in the reconstituted Aborigines Welfare Board. This Board, appointed to implement a revised policy of 'assimilation and welfare' following amendment of the Act in May 1940, included some new members but the staff and restrictive regulations were almost unchanged.

Meanwhile Pearl had left Sydney to be near her parents at Nowra. Although dismayed by the seeming hopelessness of the fight for reform, Pearl had not retired. She continued to serve as speaker at various meetings organised by Michael Sawtell, the pastoral worker turned socialist reformer who helped to found the Committee for Aboriginal Citizen Rights. On 25 January 1941 (the Sunday on which churches first implemented William Cooper's idea of a National Aborigines' Day), the Committee organised a public meeting aimed at ending the exploitation of Aboriginal housemaids as cheap labour. The prominent reformer Archdeacon R.B.S. Hammond was roused to action by Pearl's blunt statement that

Aboriginal girls are no less human than their white sisters and a wage of a shilling a week encourages immorality. Frequently the young girls who are hired out as helps from a government compound become the mothers of "half-caste" babies and are returned to the compound.

On 8 June 1941 Pearl made a radio broadcast, heard over 2GB Sydney and 2WL Wollongong. She thanked the Theosophical Society of Sydney for making it possible. Her pointed and well-reasoned description of the discrimination current on reserves, the cruelty of excluding Aboriginal children from state schools, and the fate of Aboriginal apprentices ended with a shrewd appeal to conscience. She reminded listeners that the original occupation of Australia would have been impossible 'without my people's help and guidance of the white explorers' and told how Aborigines had saved airmen in recent years. She mentioned Aboriginal work for war charities and the service in three wars of 'men of my race' — including her son 'somewhere on the high seas'. She asked only for justice.

A week before this William Ferguson had addressed the State Conference of the Australian Labor Party (which then governed the state). Knowing that her mentor Ferguson now despaired of reform, Pearl doggedly went on talking and writing. Her demands for Aboriginal representation on the Board appeared in serial articles published by the Nowra Leader from April to August 1942. Her description of official oppression and her appeals for legislative reform so that Aborigines gained the rights and status of other citizens were set out so clearly they could hardly be ignored. The Aborigines Protection Act was amended in 1943 to provide for Aboriginal representation. On 8 November 1943 Ferguson was one of the two men elected to Board membership by New South Wales Aborigines.

13 Ferguson's views, and official actions, are outlined in Horner 1974:82-85.
14 Sunday Sun, Sydney, 26 January 1941. A 1943 amendment enabled apprentices to receive their full wage entitlement. But the authorities could still use legislation such as the Child Welfare Act to take children from their families to further the official policy of assimilation.
15 Pearl's script for this broadcast was published in Gilbert 1973:13-17. The date and time, 6:30 p.m. on Station 2GB, is noted in a letter by Michael Sawtell dated 31 May 1941 in the Albert Thompson Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
During the war years Pearl remained in Nowra and was active in community activities — she and Mrs Sarah Cruse once organised a Red Cross dance — but she kept in touch with the Aborigines' Progressive Association which met monthly in the Clarence Street rooms of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Ferguson was still president and the Cumeroogunga man Bill Onus had succeeded Pearl as secretary. The rules allowed 'white' people to speak but not vote. When Pearl was in Sydney to speak, with Sawtell, at meetings about citizenship rights, she often urged 'white' audiences to become members of the Association. At one of these meetings in the middle of 1943 a young office secretary, Grace Bardsley, came forward. Pearl had a way of forming strong friendships and this one proved most helpful to Aborigines. The Aborigines' Progressive Association was also active in Dubbo through the war years; Pearl recalled a meeting held there in May 1945 at which Onus spoke of high school students who had to take up domestic work.

By war's end Pearl yearned for a change. In 1946 she took her widowed mother and her sister Olga to Dubbo, staying first with the Fergusons then moving to the West Dubbo home of Mrs Maud Carney. Mr Tom Carney, a tank-sinker, owned land and was financially independent. Early meetings of the Aborigines' Progressive Association had been held in the Carney's house in 1937. Now Pearl was talking of an organisational link between Aboriginal communities of two states. On 28 May 1946 Pearl ran a big dance to start a Dubbo Branch of the Australian Aborigines' League. The parent League in Melbourne had been founded by the late William Cooper of Cumeroogunga in 1932; Ferguson and Pearl had worked closely with him and were well acquainted with Bill Onus, Doug Nicholls and other Cumeroogunga folk now revitalising the League. Pearl was immediately elected vice-president of this branch.

The postwar period was not good for Aborigines. Housing shortages and a slump in employment opportunities drove many from cities and towns to camp on reserves and riverbanks as they had in the 1930s. The 'white' Australians who had talked of reforming Australian society in the depression years, and had treated Aborigines as equals in a wartime mateship, now seemed more interested in securing comfortable brick homes for themselves than obtaining justice for Aborigines. Pearl listened to William Ferguson's worried reports about the Welfare Board's deferment of housing programs at reserves (materials were certainly in short supply but dispersal of reserve communities was also a major goal of the Board's assimilation policy); she also heard about his observations that conditions were little better outside the reserves. Pearl kept in touch with the news and views circulating through Aboriginal communities via the 'Koorie telegraph' and was well aware that conditions in other states were much the same. Only the wages were better than before the war. She went on doing what she could do: organising fortnightly social events which enabled the Dubbo community to raise money to help themselves.

Her organisational skills were demonstrated in September 1949 when, at very short notice, she brought together a large Aboriginal gathering at Palms Hall, La Perouse, to farewell the Aboriginal singer Harold Blair on his departure for further musical studies in North America. Bert Groves (Ferguson's long-time friend, elected to replace him on the Aborigines Welfare Board when Ferguson died suddenly in January 1950) helped Pearl with this venture — and long afterwards told me about it to explain his admiration for Pearl's administrative talents. On Ferguson's death Pearl became
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

Secretary of the Dubbo Branch of the Australian Aborigines’ League. She continued to run the social activities which raised funds, and on this shoestring managed to maintain Ferguson’s regular round of visits to the scattered Aboriginal communities of western New South Wales. She also maintained and strengthened her network of contacts with Aborigines and their sympathisers beyond this State’s boundaries.

The Council for Aboriginal Rights, a small but influential organisation particularly concerned with civil liberties and legislative reform, had been formed in Melbourne in 1951. In the next year a concerned Sydney man, Ross Hornshaw, established a Sydney branch which conducted a public meeting at Dubbo on 4-5 March 1953. At this conference, attended by delegates from the western districts of New South Wales, the main speakers were Hornshaw and Pearl. She described how the living conditions of Aborigines in various towns she had visited were getting worse. The Korean War was still on, and when Pearl disclosed that a magistrate in a western town had fined a recently returned Aboriginal soldier for entering a hotel, the meeting discussed discrimination against Aborigines, state laws which forbade possession of liquor, and the consequences for Aborigines of the federal policy of compulsory military training. They resolved to ask the Premier of New South Wales for citizen rights, equal representation on the Aborigines Welfare Board, and the dismissal of a Board member, Michael Sawtell, whose public statements since his recent appointment were resented by many Aborigines who believed he had deserted their cause.

On 19 March 1953 Pearl and Mrs Merle Latham (of the well-known Peckham family) represented the Dubbo branch of the Council for Aboriginal Rights at another Council meeting at Gulargambone chaired by Mr L. Lake, Sr. Speakers discussing incidents of social discrimination revealed that a barber and two cafés refused to serve Aborigines, the school bus did not pick up Aboriginal children, and Aborigines attending the picture show had to sit in a section roped-off from other townspeople. The meeting deplored ‘rampant’ discrimination in this town. Afterwards Pearl visited the local reserve and press accounts noted that she was shocked by housing conditions. On 19 May 1953 the Sydney Morning Herald published a letter written by Pearl as Organising Secretary of the Council for Aboriginal Rights. She took up a suggestion by the Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions, Archdeacon C.S. Robertson, that ‘citizens’ committees be established to make contact with the people on reserves’. In supporting this idea Pearl mentioned that

In a recent talk in Sydney with Mr Saxby, Superintendent of the Aborigines Welfare Board, I pointed out to him that we were more than eager to co-operate with the Board, and that we ask for full representation on the Board. We appeal to church organisations and trade unions to support our claim for full citizen rights. In August 1954 Pearl was elected to membership of the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board, succeeding Herbert Groves. She was dismayed to find that she could not visit reserves except on official tours together with other Board members. Thus no frank discussion with reserve residents was possible. At its monthly meetings in Sydney the Board made decisions affecting Aborigines throughout New South Wales but the Aboriginal representatives had little influence. Pearl felt constrained by the formal rules of debate and strongly suspected she was excluded from major policy

decisions. (After the meetings lengthy discussions took place in hotel bars where women were not allowed.)

Pearl's discontent led to plans for a new kind of organisation. She was not selfishly seeking a secure new power base but imagining the possibilities of an association in which politically-minded Aborigines and others could educate one another, work together for 'citizenship rights', and draw public attention to the needs of isolated rural Aborigines who had little chance of a hearing from officialdom. Pearl persuaded a younger woman, Faith Bandler, to bring together some concerned people in Sydney. About twelve persons met in March 1956 to organise an initial general meeting in July. For thirteen years the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship was a force in New South Wales Aboriginal affairs. Its efforts to reform legislation, co-ordinate the work of many rural 'assimilation committees', and accumulate informed knowledge about Aborigines and their hopes for change were prompted and guided by many Aboriginal members of the executive.

Aboriginal and other members worked (to quote the A.A.F. constitution) to achieve acceptance of Aborigines 'on the basis of complete social and political equality'. Grace Bardsley, the friend Pearl had recruited to the Aborigines' Progressive Association in 1943, was a foundation member; another woman, Irene McIlwraith, was elected Secretary. In deference to men, however, members chose Herbert Groves and not Pearl as the first A.A.F. president. On 29 April 1957 the A.A.F. convened a great public rally at the Sydney Town Hall to launch a national petition for changes in the federal Constitution. It was Pearl who organised the attendance of some five hundred Sydney Aborigines at that meeting.

After twelve months Pearl resigned as a vice-president although remaining an active member of the A.A.F. In 1957 she also left the Aborigines Welfare Board. Never daunted in her concern for the Aboriginal folk of the far west, she persuaded the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation to provide funds and sponsorship for a small hostel near Dubbo Base Hospital to house Aboriginal patients receiving treatment. It was to be her home until she died. By 1960 the Aborigines Welfare Board had accepted responsibility and until the Board was abolished late in 1969 Pearl, as hostel Warden, was a member of the Board's staff. She spent herself tirelessly caring for hostel residents, and earned the warm respect of hospital staff.

Her employment as a public servant did not deter Pearl from investigating all reports of injustice. While I was Honorary Secretary of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (1958-1966) she would pass on such complaints by post or telephone. No detail in her reports was ever wrong: I often thought what a good lawyer she could have been. Once the Board threatened to dismiss her over a case but the A.A.F. was able to bring pressure to bear from high places to save her, and the letters from Dubbo continued.

Pearl relished the opportunities to learn about distant communities provided by the first national organisation for Aborigines, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (a title later changed to include Torres Strait Islanders). The Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, like other affiliated organisations, sent representatives to its national conferences held annually from 1957. The A.A.F. itself held two state-wide conferences in 1961 and 1965. The 1965 meeting was wholly managed by Aborigines, as a matter of principle. Beforehand Pearl travelled through the northwest with Ken
THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

Brindle and Ray Peckham, urging Aborigines to attend. From that time her interest in Aboriginal conferences became almost an obsession, and most organisers remembered to invite her. Her public statements at these rallies veered between careful criticisms and pure vitriol. She was never guilty of flattery. All her life Pearl showed courage in advancing her convictions. This was consistent with her strong views of citizenship, shaped by Mrs Murray and William Ferguson. In private, relaxed among her friends, her public rage vanished and her gentle, jocular, penetrating comments and ironic laughter made conversation a delight. Late in life she took a warm interest in young students and particularly in young blacks who understood their politics.

Pearl was proud of the accomplishments of her pioneering generation of Aboriginal activists and helped many researchers. To the end of her days she was Ferguson’s disciple. But she could be touchy about a fancied slight, as we learned when we visited her at Dubbo in 1966 to record information about Ferguson. We went first to the swimming pool to cool off and somehow she heard of this; by the time we arrived at the hostel she was furious and would not speak to us all evening. But by morning we were forgiven and the next two days were full of high spirits. She made a point of introducing us to her mother, Mrs Murray, still a beautiful woman at over ninety years of age.

Pearl Gibbs did much to change public opinion about Aborigines and force governments to improve the wretched living conditions of reserve residents and young servants who had few other champions. Though her loyalties were with the Aborigines, she had many ‘white’ friends too. She made us see our own faults of ignorance and paternalism. She was concerned to make us aware (as much by her own sturdy independent spirit as her direct talk) of the common Aboriginal experiences of which we knew very little — insult, insensitive treatment, prison, discrimination, unfair laws, the frustrations that go with poverty — and to face them honestly. We had to put aside any middle class ideas of judgement, and speak to people just as they were. Pearl also taught us not to admit defeat.

Pearl Gibbs understood better than most that in creating cordial relations between the two races ordinary Australians have a useful role to play. She shared the experiences of ordinary Australians of her time. With extraordinary courage she spoke and wrote and worked to ensure that in her time Aboriginal people would be represented and consulted whenever decisions were made about their lives. That achievement is sufficient memorial.

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**PEARL GIBBS: SOME MEMORIES**

Heather Goodall

Many people have recollections of Pearl Gibbs. Many are more qualified than I to write on her work and her character. I can only offer these brief notes of what she told me as a tribute to a complex, intensely principled woman who was committed to recording the history of the Aboriginal movement.

When I spent time with her in 1981 age had left her isolated and frustrated. She had by no means given up: she was determined to assert her independence and right to control her situation, and still closely followed Aboriginal politics as far as her failing health allowed. She could still be warm and optimistic. Nevertheless there was a sadness and loneliness about her that was probably not typical in earlier days.

When I talked with Pearl about her motivations for joining the Aborigines’ Progressive Association in 1937 a number of points recurred frequently. These are the issues which Pearl considered most significant in her own ‘politicisation’:

- Both her mother, Maggie Murray (nee Brown) and her stepfather Dick Murray had been ‘hired out’ as servants around Brewarrina in the period before the Aborigines Protection Board gained formal powers of apprenticeship but police and managers arranged the hiring. Her stepfather’s employment was not too bad but her mother’s experience was unpleasant.
- When Pearl was at Brewarrina Aboriginal Station as a child with her mother and stepfather she met Polly Marshall, one of the survivors of the Hospital Creek massacre. She learnt the story of this massacre in Polly’s lifetime; to me and I think to Pearl this fact symbolised the immediacy of the Aboriginal past.
- Pearl often referred to her experience of school segregation and the racism of ‘white’ children. She recalled being turned away from the State school at Cowra when her mother took her and several other children to be enrolled. They were told ‘no blacks were allowed’. At Yass the State school excluded Aborigines so they

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THREE TRIBUTES TO PEARL GIBBS

attended the convent school. She also had to face hostility from children at the convent school in Bourke and the State school at Byrock.

- Pearl was deeply influenced by her suffering, during the depression years, at the ‘Happy Valley’ unemployed workers’ camp, where she watched police try to stop contact between ‘whites’ at the camp and Aborigines on the reserve at La Perouse, and discovered the difference between the dole and the rations allotted Aborigines.
- Her fighting spirit was further shaped by experiences while pea-picking in the Nowra district; she told of organising stop-work meetings to gain basic working conditions, and of organising a boycott of one of the Nowra picture shows to protest against the segregation of Aborigines.
- Pearl’s sensitivity to injustice was sharpened by conditions at Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Station; she mentioned an instance (also recalled by a number of other former residents) when the manager locked one of the community’s leaders in the station office and severely beat him.

Several direct quotations from Pearl’s reminiscences, recorded 6-9 March 1981, seem to exemplify both the force of Pearl’s deep resentment and bitterness and her equally deep commitment to human rights and to the peace movement. Describing her first public speech in Sydney in 1937, she recalled how:

Bill Ferguson and Michael Sawtell had arranged to go down to the Domain and I tagged along with them. They had a ladder [about three feet high] so they got up on their ladder and they spoke... Naturally it was about the Aborigine. There were very few people around us. There was a big political speaker [C.P.A.] about a hundred yards away or more from us and we might have had only five or six people around us. And then I got up on the ladder. I got up there and I shook and I shivered and the ladder was rocking and the reason was because of all this hatred and resentment I’d had... I was so fighting mad, I didn’t know what to say first because there were so many things... and all this hatred. I couldn’t talk. They had to get me down on the ground and then I started! You think my voice is loud now but it’s nothing to what it was. And the people came — a woman was a sort of novelty speaker then and so the crowds came. And that was my first experience at public speaking.

When she was recording the history of the early protests Pearl could speak with detachment of her own role, but remembered injustices still roused her to passion:

We had the same policy right through: Full Citizenship Rights. They [William Ferguson and Jack Patten] left me to talk about women. One of the main things was the hiring out of girls: this was a tragedy, one of the tragedies that broke up the relationship between the Aboriginal people. The girls were told not to mix with Aboriginal people, sent to strange places, separated from all their relations. And they wholly and solely belonged to whoever employed them — and I call that slavery! It took away their independence. A lot of them were helpless and intimidated: they weren’t allowed to be responsible. Then I talked about how we had to have proper schooling. Then there was the poor quality of the rations and the terrible power of the managers over the people.

Pearl saw the Aboriginal fight for justice in a broader context. She spoke often of her pride in being Aboriginal. Often she added a comment such as ‘I don’t think colour or creed makes much difference. Let us put in our time for human rights and let us
live towards that'. Again and again she told me, 'This is what I want people to remember'.

In her Dubbo home Pearl was surrounded by memories of the past. Her newspaper cuttings documenting the protests of the 1930s were tangible evidence of the long-ago struggle and its achievements. One of the mementoes 'most precious' to her was a carved statue, 'a gift from the Maoris of New Zealand to the Australian Aborigines for World Peace', she explained, 'given to me for my work for world peace and for safe-keeping for all the Aborigines of Australia'.

Several generations of Aboriginal activists, university researchers and concerned sympathisers who wanted to learn about the Aboriginal past were told to 'see Pearl Gibbs of Dubbo'. It seems appropriate to quote the recollections of a Dubbo man, Jack Booth, a 'white' railway worker closely involved in the Dubbo Aboriginal movement from 1932. This old comrade-in-arms, who died in 1981, had an unbounded admiration and respect for Pearl Gibbs:

The first thing you'd realize about Pearl was that she was straightforward. That's why she stood out, because she'd have a go. She could adapt herself to any audience — be fiery or softspoken — but she wouldn't pull her punches. She wouldn't crawl to the influential people and say "Please give us this or that"; she said "We have to get stuck into the bastards". And she did. And by God, she got results . . . Pearl was prepared to make enemies, and if a person is prepared to make enemies they must also make friends.
A RAPE OF THE SOUL SO PROFOUND': SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE DISPERsal POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Peter Read

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the whites of southern Australia were alarmed by a series of sensational events in the Northern Territory. After the Coniston Massacre of 1928, perhaps the most notorious of these was the murder of a Constable McColl in August 1933, allegedly by an Aborigine named Tuckiar. The southerners were horrified that some Territorians, including the police, were ready to mount a punitive expedition rather than search for and arrest the culprit. Public protest at length prevailed upon the Commonwealth government, which accepted an offer by the Church Missionary Society to send an expedition to parley with the alleged killer.1

By mid-1934 the Northern Territory was in turmoil again. Scarcely had Tuckiar been arrested and brought to Darwin than the southerners were moved to a fresh expression of dismay at the rough and ready Northern Territory judicial system.2 In May 1934 the same Judge Wells who was later to convict Tuckiar sentenced eight Aboriginal men to death for the murder of two white traders. The effect of the savage sentences on the south was immediate. Over one hundred individuals and organisations petitioned Prime Minister Lyons to commute the death penalty.3 In New South Wales, twenty-five organisations sent letters of protest. They included such improbable associates as the Australasian Society of Patriots, the New South Wales Council of Churches, the New South Wales Taxi Owners and Drivers Association, the International Labour League, the Punchbowl Unemployed and Distress Association and the Archbishop of Sydney.

In view of the attitude of most New South Wales whites towards the Aborigines of their own state, the reasoning on which the protests was based was as remarkable as the diversity of the authors. There were references to the murders as 'judicial

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1 This paper has been prepared from several sources: from fieldwork in Wiradjuri country in central-western New South Wales, from the preparation of a holdings-list of the records of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards in the State Archives, and as a staff-member of Link-Up. The quotation in the title is drawn from Gilbert 1977:2: 'It is my thesis that Aboriginal Australia underwent a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the minds of most blacks today'. For a brief review of events in the Northern Territory at this time see Rowley 1972:290-297.

2 In August 1933 Tuckiar was arrested for the murder of a policeman at Woodah Island. After a sensational trial he was found guilty and condemned to death. Shortly afterwards the verdict was overturned by the High Court of Australia.

3 The file containing the correspondence of the protesters is A1/34/8281, Australian Archives (AA), Canberra.
executions' and appeals to former atrocities by the whites. The New South Wales Council of Churches denounced the sentences as 'a crime upon our civilisation'.

William McKenzie, Commissioner of the Salvation Army in New South Wales, wrote:

> You are quite aware that their standards and ideals are very much different to those of the white race. They have standards down along the ages passed on to them. Doubtless, they looked upon those two white men as intruders into their particular domain, and so they felt they could do none other than kill them as enemies who had landed in their country.

Many of the protesters showed some awareness of the validity of non-European cultural and ethical systems which, even if they were considered inferior, were conceded to be essentially comparable. Even if Aborigines were not to be allowed to conform to their own codes unhindered, it was argued that cultural factors should be considered as mitigating evidence by the courts.

The Lyons government could not ignore the torrent of condemnation. In July 1934 the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Some Sydney citizens still were dissatisfied. The Sydney Men's Bible Class resolved that all Aborigines serving life sentences in the Northern Territory who had been convicted of defending their women against white men should be released.

Throughout this debate there was scarcely a mention of discrimination against New South Wales Aborigines. In fact a senior member of the Society for the Protection of Native Races, Bishop Coadjutor Kirkby, implied that southern Aborigines were of no concern at all when he told the Annual General Meeting of 1933, 'Whatever wrongs have been done in Central, Northern and Western Australia, are wrongs in which we all have some part, either directly or indirectly'. Yet it was not as though there was nothing to protest about in New South Wales. The decade 1930-1939 was perhaps the worst of the eighty-six year administration of the Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards, an administration which was in toto very bad indeed.

Since 1909, when the Aborigines Protection Act was made law, conditions on the Board's reserves had steadily declined. In March 1916 the free issue of blankets to Aborigines was withdrawn. By May the issue of meat was withdrawn in areas where it could be shown that supplies could be made up by hunting or fishing. During the depression years the regulation meant that practically no meat was distributed at all: reserve children were entitled to 4 lbs of flour a week as basic nourishment. There

4 New South Wales Council of Churches to Lyons, 6 June 1934 (AA A1/34/8281).
5 Commissioner, Salvation Army in New South Wales to Lyons, 5 June 1934 (AA A1/34/8281).
6 City Mens Bible Class to Lyons, 7 August 1934 (AA A1/34/8281).
9 Circular 262 (23 March 1916), 591 (6 April 1916), 613 (20 April 1916), Aborigines Protection Board, NSWSA.
10 In 1930 the government conceded that this ration was insufficient for a healthy child but claimed it could be supplemented by the parents' earnings (NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly [LA], 2/124:316, 742).
were dozens of other regulations which managers were to enforce on pain of dismissal, which ranged from the weekly inspection of houses to the necessity of seeking permission to enter or leave a reserve.\textsuperscript{11} Buildings, many of which were already decrepit before the depression, underwent no improvement after 1930, despite the fact that reserve populations in the early 1930s doubled or trebled.\textsuperscript{12} Nor were Aborigines who lived away from the reserves spared indignity. Such people were obliged, for instance, to have the permission of a policeman before they could visit a doctor.\textsuperscript{13}

Aborigines also suffered considerable discrimination through federal and state statutes. Although after 1927 Aborigines were eligible to receive the New South Wales Family Endowment, after 1930 it was distributed to almost everyone in rations, furniture, household or even station improvements. Scarcely any of the endowment, therefore, was transferable if a family left or was expelled from a reserve.\textsuperscript{14} Mothers, either Aboriginal or married to an Aboriginal, were excluded from the Maternity Allowance. Since Aborigines receiving benefits from the Board before the depression were ineligible for the dole the reserve populations swelled enormously, as did the fringe-camps on the edges of country towns.\textsuperscript{15} Faced with continuing pressure from local councils, in 1936 the Board passed an amendment to the Act which entitled authorities to remove any person classified as Aboriginal from insanitary or undesirable conditions to a designated reserve. The onus of proof of non-Aboriginality lay on the accused.\textsuperscript{16} Since by definition any fringe-camp could be considered undesirable, it followed that the town authorities had acquired the power to arrest a person on suspicion of being Aboriginal and forcibly remove him or her from a town. Yet even this extraordinarily repressive amendment, passed less than 18 months after the occasion of the Northern Territory protests, provoked very little comment.

Nor did there appear to be very much awareness that the thrust of this legislation and the general population movement towards the reserves in the early 1930s ran counter to the general policy pursued by the administration since about 1900. Codified in the Act of 1909, the policy looked to the day when there would be no reserves, no Board, no expense and no people claiming Aboriginal descent. In time the 'Aboriginal problem' would be solved forever.\textsuperscript{17} The nub of the perceived problem was the association of Aborigines with each other; the perceived remedy was the

\textsuperscript{11} Regulations Under the \textit{Aborigines Protection Act}, gazetted 30 June 1910. These regulations remained in force until 1940.


\textsuperscript{13} Select Committee on administration of the \textit{Aborigines Protection Board}, Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of evidence and exhibits, NSW LA, 13 July 1938 (witness A.C. Pettitt):48.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Family Endowment Act}, 1929(39), s.3; see also Aborigines Protection Board, \textit{Annual Report}, 1927-8:1; 1929-1930:1.

\textsuperscript{15} Commonwealth \textit{Maternity Allowance Act}, 1912(8), s.6(2); also, the \textit{Invalid and Old Age Pensioners Act}, 1923(1), s.16(1)(c) excluded Aborigines from the old age pension; for details of the decision excluding most Aborigines from the dole see Aborigines Protection Board, \textit{Annual Report} 1931-2:1.

\textsuperscript{16} Amendment No. 32 of 1936, No. 2(c); 3(d).

\textsuperscript{17} Aborigines Protection Board, \textit{Annual Report}, 1920-21:5.
elimination of the reserves. Aborigines were to be dispersed throughout the white community. By 1918 the Board had been granted the power to remove from its reserves all children under eighteen years, men who in official opinion ought to be earning a living elsewhere and all people of more than 'half' European descent.

Several techniques to reduce the reserve populations were evolved after 1909. Amongst the most commonly used were the expulsion orders, by which men and women, unemployed or 'non-Aborigines' were prohibited from remaining on or entering one or more reserves. Over a decade more than a thousand people were so proscribed: one notification of 1915 contained the names of eighty-eight people. Another technique was the revocation of thinly populated reserves by refusing entrance to all prospective residents, so that through natural wastage it was within a few years possible for the Board to revoke them as 'uninhabited'. The closure of the more populous reserves was more complicated. Natural wastage had to be supplemented by expulsions and threats; often the more obstinate residents had to be forcibly removed from their homes.

The other arm of the policy of dispersal (for such it was, rather than its official name of Protection) was the removal of children. Under an amendment of 1915, any child of less than eighteen years, whether living on a reserve or not, could be removed from its parents and placed in a home if such a course was considered to be in the moral or physical welfare of the child. No committal hearing was necessary. Even by 1915, hundreds of children had been separated from family and community; after 1915 the program expanded so that a further 1,400 had been removed by 1934.

18 Aborigines Protection Act, 1909(25), s.3. Also (s.8[1], [2]) non-Aborigines were prohibited from associating with Aborigines.

19 Amendment No. 7 of 1918, No. 2(i)(a). For decades the Board clung to the nonsensical fantasy of a three-generational black-to-white genetic progression. The term 'half-caste', besides being offensive to self-identifying Aborigines was meaningless since it implied that a person so designated had one Aboriginal parent and one white. In fact it is probable in 1910 that the majority of Aborigines had two self-identifying Aboriginal parents. Most local officials realised that such definitions were bureaucratic nonsense and categorised people simply (though just as inaccurately) on the basis of skin colour.

20 Circular No. 51, 7 January 1915, Copies of Letters Sent, NSWSA.

21 An example of this process was the revocation of Grong Grong reserve, near Narrandera, in about 1900. It was declared in 1884 largely in answer to local white protesters who wanted to shift the Aborigines from Narrandera; then the Board changed its mind and refused almost all applications for residence, so that the reserve was deserted (or so it was claimed) by 1900 and revoked.

22 An example of this process was the closure of Warangesda reserve on the Murrumbidgee. Between 1909 and 1923 a fierce battle was waged between the Warangesda residents and the administration, at the end of which hundreds of people had been expelled for a variety of reasons. Local history relates that the last resident defended his home with a shotgun until the roof was pulled off.

23 Amendment No. 2 of 1915, 2(i)(a); 4.

24 The Ward Register in the State Archives contains the names and case histories of 800 children removed to 1928. Another listing names a further 600 children removed to about 1934.
Though the depression put a temporary brake on the dispersal policy, its effects in the two decades 1909-1929 were staggering. There was hardly an Aboriginal family in the state, certainly not one living in close proximity to the whites, which had not been touched. Town councils, encouraged by what seemed to be a temporary truce with the Board, redoubled their efforts in the 1920s to rid their town of a fringe-camp or official reserve. In Wiradjuri country in the central-west, some thirty towns listed as having an Aboriginal population in 1883 no longer had one by 1930. Of hundreds of reserves in the state in 1900, there were only 71 in 1939.25 Of the children removed, at least a third never returned and were not heard of again. Mental hospitals, prisons, alcoholism and suicide awaited many of those taken so young that they did not know where to return, or so frightened by anti-Aboriginal propaganda in the Homes that they dared not.26 Worse, the Amendment of 1918 defined an Aborigine as ‘any full-blooded or half-caste aboriginal who is a native of New South Wales’:27 only such people were legally allowed to enter a reserve. To the whites of the country towns this definition was as meaningless as it was to the Aborigines themselves, whose criteria were self-identification and being of Aboriginal descent. The discrepancy between the official and the de facto definitions caused untold misery in the 1920s and 1930s. The hundreds of people whom the Board expelled from its reserves on the grounds that they were not Aborigines were in many cases immediately hounded from their new camps by the local councils on the grounds that they were. By the beginning of the depression many of the displaced people had spent a decade wandering from station to reserve to fringe-camp.

Perhaps it is not surprising that those who protested over events in the north in the 1930s were for the most part silent over the mundane brutality of those years. Most of them lived in the cities: they simply were not aware of the dusk-to-dawn curfews, the pursuits by alsatian dogs, the prisoners dragged through the streets handcuffed to mounted policemen, the children living on nothing but flour and tea, the windowless leaking huts, their beds sodden throughout the winter, the appalling infant mortality rate, the bulldozed houses. What is surprising in the light of the protests from so many diverse groups in the community about events in the Northern Territory is the silence which greeted the policy which allowed or encouraged such outrages. For while the mental and physical violence of dispersal was kept hidden, the ethical violence was perfectly plain. There were constant references in the Board’s Annual Reports to the ‘lazy’ or ‘irresponsible’ who should be made to work in the white community. At least to 1925, the removal of children was justified on the grounds that they would constitute by remaining on the reserves ‘a positive menace to the State’.28

25 Up to 1915 the Annual Reports listed the number of Aborigines living in hundreds of towns in the state. Some of the Wiradjuri towns which lost their Aboriginal populations in this period were Junee, Wyalong and Wee Jasper. One of the most dramatic declines occurred at Forbes, whose population fell from 75 to 1 between 1908 and 1915; cf. Aborigines Protection Board, Annual Report, 1938-1939:2-3.

26 Of 83 Wiradjuri children removed between 1916 and 1928, one third did not return to their communities. According to the case summaries, of the 83 children 10 fell pregnant while wards, 10 spent periods in mental hospitals and seven died.

27 Amendment No. 7 of 1918, No. 2(1)(a).

of reserves or the installation of a manager was openly attributed to pressure from the local whites. Yet apart from an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1926 which queried the justice of preventing Aboriginal wards from marrying Aborigines, there was little protest over the *purpose* of the policy. There seems hardly to have been an awareness that the official policy was dispersal, or that dispersal implied the extinction of Aboriginality, or that the extinction of Aboriginality meant nothing less than the extinction of Aborigines. There seemed to be little understanding that in the pursuit of dispersal the state regularly and on a massive scale violated the most basic human rights: to live at a place of one's choosing, in a manner of one's choosing and with the company of one's choosing; and to raise one's children in accordance with a chosen cultural inheritance.

Official reasoning ran that Aborigines were doomed to extinction anyway and that Aboriginal culture in southern Australia was practically non-existent. A moment's objective thought could have detected the disjunction between rationale and reality. After 1909 it was perfectly obvious that the self-identifying Aboriginal population was increasing rapidly: had that not been so, dispersal would not have been necessary. While academic debate took place in the 1930s as to whether it was genetically possible to assimilate Aborigines without detriment to the whites, the New South Wales administration, like those in other states, had been proceeding for decades on the basis that it was not only possible but desirable. The very fact that Aboriginal children were removed to be raised as whites gave the lie to the official dictum that Aboriginality was a matter of genes rather than culture. Clearly it was the socialisation of the children as Aborigines which the officials feared most. At the root of dispersal lay the fear of Aboriginal community from which Europeans were to be kept excluded.

This exposition of official policy throws the assimilation policy of the post Second World War years into a rather more sinister light than the well-meaning muddle by which it is sometimes portrayed. For the context of assimilation at the time of its adoption by the New South Wales government in 1940 was that, hitherto, dispersal had failed and failed catastrophically. Practice had demonstrated what a moment's thought should have foretold: that people could not be indefinitely expelled from reserves and camps because there was nowhere for them to go except to another reserve or fringe-camp, the nearest town council to which would then begin to abuse the Board. While almost everyone had been shifted from one place to another between

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30 'Aborigines race dying out. Fate of girls few chances for marriage'; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1924. I do not mean to suggest of course that there was no protest about conditions in New South Wales. Two redoubtable campaigners who deserve recognition today were the parliamentarian Mark Davidson and Mrs Joan Kingsley-Strack. I am grateful to Jack Horner for showing me the information he holds on Mrs Strack.

31 To the criticism of the *Herald* article, a Board spokesman replied that 'the extinction of the race was inevitable'. For a discussion of Elkin and others' estimation of southern Aboriginal culture at this time see P. Read, 'A double-headed coin: protection and assimilation in Yass 1900-1960', in Gammage and Markus 1982:9-28.

1909 and 1939, and the number of areas where Aborigines were living was smaller, Aboriginal community was almost as strong and defiant as ever.33

In September 1940 Board Secretary Pettitt laid the foundations of policy for the next twenty years. He began by explaining to the Board that the system which had been operating for many years had institutionalised Aborigines. Supplies had been made available to them 'without any exertion on their part'. They were not being called upon to shift for themselves. He presented a seven-point program: to inculcate the habit of self-help, to keep Aborigines occupied, to deal with youth, to apprentice outstanding talent, to select suitable families for removal from stations into the white community, to find employment for people away from the reserves, and to encourage local white people to become interested in Aboriginal matters.34 There was nothing particularly new about the program except the plan to move families into towns. The consequence of that helpful-sounding proposal however was far-reaching, for the town-housing scheme in the next twenty years became the principal pillar of assimilation. The 'carrot' of a town house would reinforce the 'stick' of reserve and camp clearance. In effect, the re-housing scheme provided the means to solve the hitherto intractable problem of where to put people expelled from the reserves.

This is not the place to discuss why Pettitt's plan failed so dismally (by 1961 only thirty-nine new houses had been built in towns). The essential point is that assimilation was not a policy in itself, but a refinement of the continuing and much older policy of dispersal. The other 'carrot' of assimilation of the post-war years can be seen in the same light as the housing scheme. This was the Exemption Certificate system, by which on application adults were entitled to a few social service benefits such as the old age pension, provided the claimant did not live on a reserve. Certificate holders were also entitled to purchase and consume alcohol. The Exemption Certificate system in practice acted to condemn 'non-existent' Aboriginal values as much as to affirm the European. Certificates were granted to those who acted 'respectably', saved their money, did not abuse managers or left a reserve to live in a town. They were withheld from those who had 'too many' relatives to stay, shared their cheques with kin-folk or allowed their children to be raised by the extended family.35

The Board's records indicate that whatever the official rhetoric the intention of the state was as firm as ever. In the period 1945-1969 as many reserves and camps vanished as before: in Wiradjuri country Leeton, Darlington Point, Griffith, Gooloogong, Yass and Condobolin all lost at least one Aboriginal living area, while very strong pressure was put upon the people at the Brungle and Cowra reserves to quit. As many children were removed from their communities: nineteen children were removed from Cowra, which was regarded as one of the Board's trouble spots, but at

33 To what extent Aborigines wanted to follow the suggestion of such Aboriginal leaders of the 1930s as Ferguson and Patten of voluntary assimilation with the whites is not clear. This important subject still awaits an in-depth study.

34 Aborigines Welfare Board, Minutes of Meetings, 3 September 1940, NSWSA. The assimilation of Aborigines was formally added to the Board's objectives through the Amendment to the Act 1940(12), 3(b)(l).

35 Hundreds of applications for Exemption are held in the Board's General Correspondence Files, 1949-1969. By the time the scheme fell into disuse in 1963, 1,400 Exemptions had been granted.
Narrandera, which had a large but peaceful Aboriginal population, removals were nil. But the old problems of the Board remained. Aboriginal resistance was too strong, too few people wanted to join the larger community, too many children returned home. By 1969 the remaining reserves were fewer in number, but some were more populous and their inhabitants more militant.

The implications of this analysis run in two directions. The first concerns why there was very much more protest about events and policies in the north than there were in the south. It seems that in New South Wales the dispersal policy was allowed to proceed because the public had fallen victim to that most dangerous of administrative myths, that the repression of a minority was for its own ultimate good, and that that good coincided with the greater good of the public weal. Even the many white-sponsored Aboriginal advancement groups of the 1950s fought their first battles for the right of Aborigines to live in towns, not to remain on reserves. For every ill-disposed, cruel, violent or pathologically disturbed official there were as many well-intentioned and conscientious individuals who did their best to persuade Aborigines to become white. They too contributed to the consignment of Aboriginality to oblivion. Truly the path to hell is paved with good intentions.

Dispersal is around us and within us. The same Joint Parliamentary Committee which recommended in 1967 that the Aborigines Welfare Board be abolished, recommended that no new houses be built on reserves. Instead Aborigines should be scattered about in towns ‘and not concentrated in any one street or town’. In the 1970s the Board’s housing function was absorbed by the Housing Commission. Similar policies to those of the 1950s seem to have prevailed. An internal report by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs concluded in 1979 that, for instance, at the Cowra reserve there was strong pressure on the residents to live in town. Newcomers were not allowed to move into vacant houses; several buildings, including the single-men’s quarters, were demolished. In 1970 a new state-wide housing scheme was begun whose ostensible purpose was to remove Aborigines from areas of depressed employment. It was, and is, known as the Family Resettlement Scheme. It could hardly have been a coincidence that the first towns from which families were removed were Wilcannia and Bourke, two notorious ‘problem’ towns, or that the cities to which they were removed were cities of low Aboriginal population – Newcastle, Wagga and Albury. By 1980, 790 people had been moved under the scheme, enough to people half a dozen reserves. The fact that the scheme was voluntary was offset by the run-down condition of the Aboriginal quarters in the original towns, as well as the uncertain employment opportunities in the new towns. The proportion of Aboriginal children separated from their community or family in the last decade has remained extremely high. In 1980, 14 per cent of children in state institutions were Aboriginal, while Aborigines themselves made up less than 2.5 per cent of the state’s

36 Calculations based on oral history and records in the General Correspondence. There was not an official reserve at Narrandera.

37 Report from the joint committee of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines welfare (N.S.W.), I, Report and Minutes of the Proceedings, 13 September 1967:12.


DISPERSAL POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

population. An Aboriginal child-care agency was in 1980 refused permission to enter a major reformatory on the grounds that there were no Aboriginal children in residence. Subsequent research showed there to be some thirty children of Aboriginal descent in residence, some of whom, because of the failure of the institution to communicate with the parents, did not know they were Aboriginal. Others of the children, though dark-skinned themselves, were too frightened to speak to the Aboriginal field-worker. Clearly, the fear of Aboriginal community haunts the Europeans still. Whether today's dispersal results from state policy or the implacable momentum of the past is for present purposes irrelevant. So the question of public protest in the 1930s is also one of the 1980s. Aurakun and Noonkanbah have replaced Coniston and Caledon Bay. Dispersal proceeds apace.

The other conclusion concerns not continuity but perspective. Even in the memorable television series *Women of the sun* (1983) it was not as apparent as it might have been that the actions of a violent manager were not just an unfortunate accident of employment, that the run-down condition of a reserve was not just the result of government parsimony, that a camp was destroyed not just through the greed of a speculator. So in real life it was not an accident that those thirty Wiradjuri towns lost their Aboriginal populations, or that the Wiradjuri can claim, under the New South Wales Land Rights Act, only some ten hectares of reserve land out of a former total of some 1,400. It is only through an understanding of the dispersal policy that the course of Aboriginal history in New South Wales can appear as something other than inevitable.

So too it is apparent that we cannot attempt to explain changes in Aboriginal social life, living patterns, culture or language unless the generalised context of dispersal is allowed. Besides the large number of people whose houses were razed, a much larger number shifted in anticipation, sheltered relatives or, in an attempt to save their own homes and hearth, cut themselves off from contact with other Aborigines. It was not just the children actually separated from their families who were affected, but the communities lacking the leadership of young adults, the extended families who could not forgive, the parents forced from their reserve dwellings rather than yield their children to the dormitory. Whether state policy caused anger or fear, defiance or misery, dispersal touched all New South Wales Aborigines, and touched them profoundly:

They have been forced to forgo much of their self-respect. All this 'metho' drinking is a manifestation of a cause: the alienation of the people from the land, the alienation of the people from their own culture, people denied any right to decide their own future, denied the basic powers every white man takes for granted in this country. This is the right to bring your kids up in the way you want to bring them up. . . . For the last fifty years this has really screwed up just about every black person in this country. It is going to take another ten to twenty years to overcome

40 Mongta 1982:11, 1.
41 Personal communication, Aileen Mongta, April 1982.
42 Failure to send children to the dormitory was one of the principal reasons for the expulsion of parents from Warangesda; see note 22 above.
the effects of this because the effects are so deeply ingrained in the kids, this kind of inferiority attitude that before you do anything you must ask the white man for it, you must ask permission.43

Until government departments learn to listen to Aborigines, a major responsibility of historians is to inform the policy makers of the perspective of the past. For instance, in 1980 an inter-departmental Commonwealth government team visited Brungle Reserve, near Tumut. Its report remarked upon the paucity of the written records and the 'progressive diminution' of the inhabitants. From the fact that only one family in ten had moved back from Tumut to the reserve it was reasoned that no-one wanted to live there, and that no new houses would be built. The Board's records show that every technique outlined in this paper was enacted at Brungle to make the residents stiff, including the refusal to carry out the most basic repairs. If the team had taken the trouble to talk to the former residents it would have learned the reality of the dispossession. It would also have learned that some fifteen Tumut families would move back to Brungle if only accommodation were available.44

I do not offer this discussion as an exercise in breast-beating but in the hope that in the next decade the context of systematic dispersal will become better known and understood. Such terms as 'invasion' and 'attempted genocide', which still appear to stick in the typewriters of some historians and others, will no longer be avoided. I hope that an understanding of the policy and its consequences will provide a perspective on the changes of the last eighty years, and for Australians of European descent, lead to an awareness of why Aborigines want to be left alone.

43 Paul Coe, address to trainee teachers, in Tatz and McConnochie 1975:104.
44 Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs et.al., 1980:13-14; personal communication, Coral Bolger, September 1982.

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I first met Mrs Quinlan in 1981 when her daughter, Mrs P. Dixon, became one of four Aboriginal people training at the Armidale and New England Hospital. As I was involved peripherally in this training program, I was introduced by the trainees to their families and friends.

Mrs Quinlan decided some time during the following months that she would like me to record her story. She had some doubts about how we might go about it, but she was definite that she wanted to make a statement to leave for her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Further she wanted to establish her right to Bellbrook which she considers to belong to her and her surviving siblings because her father established the settlement.

Mrs Quinlan also decided that I would need to see Bellbrook, that she wanted to ‘show me the place’ so that I might understand better what she was talking about once we started recording. Consequently a group of us visited Bellbrook on 8, 9 and 10 October 1982. Mrs Quinlan began telling her story at our camp site on Nulla Nulla Creek. She continued over several Sunday afternoon sessions at my home, a venue she chose. Her story was later transcribed verbatim from the tapes.

One of Mrs Quinlan’s greatest worries was ‘how are we going to put it all together’, another ‘but is it going to be really important’? We dealt with the first question by simply recording what was upmost in her mind at the time of any one session. When what she considered to be the important aspects had been recorded, I put these in a rough time sequel, wrote them down, and discussed each section with her and her family. We made some additions and deleted some memories which might have been too personal.

‘How to put it all together’ proved a persistent worry to the whole family until the finished product was actually written up, revised and finally accepted. Certainly recording the material on tape contributed to this problem. Mrs Quinlan forgot which areas she had already detailed, which parts of the story would need elaboration. This made her anxious because she wanted to tell the whole story.

‘Is it going to be really important?’ remains one of her doubts. I believe her story is important because it supports and emphasises a number of important events in the living history of Aboriginal people in north eastern New South Wales. The reader is familiarised with the period of early contact, simply referred to as ‘the time of the killings’. The history of colonisation, the ferocious and persistent resistance with which Aboriginal groups tried to defend their country, and the horrors of ‘the killings’ are now well documented by many writers.

Mrs Quinlan's story is told in the following pages. Anne-Katrin Eckermann is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Multicultural Studies at Armidale College of Advanced Education. She has been working with Aboriginal people in urban and rural environments in Queensland since 1969 and in New South Wales since 1977.
BELLBROOK: MY FATHER'S COUNTRY

In the New England region, the Myall Creek massacre of 1838 is generally highlighted as the most significant example of ‘the killings’, perhaps because it was the first time that whites were held responsible and punished for the indiscriminate murder of Aborigines. However, ‘the killings’ described by Mrs Quinlan must have occurred later and this supports Geoffrey Blomfield when he writes:

After Myall Creek massacres were carried out in secrecy or behind a conspiracy of silence. The murderers agreed not to talk and this continues to their descendants of to-day. This is no doubt why massacres hinted at by early writers remained concealed.1

Blomfield obtained much of his information from the late Victor Shepherd, Mrs Quinlan’s brother-in-law. From both accounts it seems certain that the massacres continued well into the 1860s. Richard Kelly and Essie Mills escaped, as did others of the Dhunguddi people, by a combination of luck and, according to Mrs Quinlan, the intervention of German settlers who took up the land near Bellbrook about the 1870s. ‘The Germans’ apparently offered Aboriginal groups shelter, would not permit ‘punitive expeditions’ onto their property, provided some rations and in turn used Aboriginal labour to clear the land. The first of these new settlers was born in 1795 and all lie buried in a small family cemetery. Some of their descendants still live near the original homestead site. Although they are remembered with some affection by Mrs Quinlan and her kin and the relationships that grew out of the early period of contact must have been strong, it would however be wrong to assume that ‘the Germans’ were basically different from the other new settlers. Their approach may have varied, but the result was the same – they took the land and kept it.

About the turn of the century Richard Kelly was encouraged to farm what is now Bellbrook reserve. The family believes that his deeds to the property were kept by the local policeman and destroyed when the police station burned down about 1920. Through Mrs Quinlan’s story we are told of Bellbrook’s development, the result of one man’s drive to provide for his family the best way he could. Richard Kelly obviously discouraged his children from learning too much about the Dhunguddi traditions. In retrospect the present generations regret this loss. At the time, he wanted his children ‘to have a fair go’, as Mrs Quinlan so poignantly describes. His living memory included ‘the killings’ and the racial hysteria which followed the rampage of the part-Aboriginal Governor brothers in 1900. Perhaps he wished to protect his children from similar experiences. It is certain that he gave shelter to the Aboriginal groups which continued to travel along the New England Spur from the Tableland to the coast, that he assisted those who wished to continue to practise their customs and that he provided a home to the old or the very young. In the process he took his children up Sugarloaf Mountain, which purportedly has considerable mythological significance to the Dhunguddi, but he never shared its secrets. Instead he built a different world for them.

This world changed drastically in the 1930s with the Great Depression when, as Rowley puts it,

the law in New South Wales allowed an Aboriginal or a person ‘apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood’ to be removed by order of a court to a reserve, where he must remain until the cancellation of the order . . .

2 Rowley 1971:49.
Mrs Quinlan’s story reveals that although she was ignorant of the legal situation, she recognised that her people had been degraded, ‘dogged about’. Their independence, or relative independence, was eroded when the white manager ‘took over’. Her story recounts the people’s confusion and resentment, their persistent struggle against interference with their lives and livelihood, their deep frustrations when their children’s time to learn was wasted by managers or teachers who ‘loafed’ on the job. Despite all this there appears to be little bitterness, not because there was no hurt, but perhaps because she believes that truth should be recognised and lived with.

This story is also Mrs Quinlan’s land claim to Bellbrook. It is clear that both her parents belonged to the Dhunguddi language group. Tindale’s (1974) tribal map of the area suggests that both Walcha and Sugarloaf Mountain as well as Bellbrook itself (which is located in its shadow) are part of Dainggati or Dhunguddi country. There is no doubt that Richard Kelly established Bellbrook and that government policy changed Bellbrook’s population and nature during the 1930s from a ‘farm’ settled by ‘free people’ to a government institution.

Mrs Quinlan does not wish to evict the people who presently live on Bellbrook, nor does she want to frustrate their attempts to gain some measure of independence through land rights. She does however want compensation for herself and her kin in recognition of her father and his attempts to provide an independent social and economic base for his children. In a sense this kin group has been dispossessed twice. Once when the Dhunguddi lost control of their traditional lands; the second time when, under the guise of ‘assimilation’, segregative government policy deprived them of their limited independence and changed their home into an institution. It seems to me that Mrs Quinlan’s story must have many parallels throughout New South Wales which need to be provided for in the state’s proposed land rights legislation.

Equally important, Mrs Quinlan’s story provides us with real insight into the effects of policy. We often divide Aboriginal affairs into six policy periods: from extermination, to protection/segregation, to assimilation, to integration, to self determination and finally, self-management. Her story clearly demonstrates that in this instance policy effects moved from extermination — the time of ‘the killings’ — to protection/segregation — the influences of the Germans — to self-management — the work of Richard Kelly — and back to protection/segregation — the establishment of Bellbrook as a government institution. There are Aboriginal people who maintain that today these later policy effects persist.

Thus Mrs Quinlan’s story is more than a record for her family. It is a claim to her father’s country as well as a significant contribution to our understanding of Aboriginal history.

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I am Mrs M. Quinlan, my father was Richard Kelly, my mother was Essie Mills.
I was born on the Macleay, on Bellbrook; there were nine of us in the family; now
there is only me and my younger sister and my brother. My father, he'd have belonged
to the tribe around Walcha, I don't know, and my mother, she was Dhunguudi. But
there's not many of that tribe left because they were all killed out — no Dhunguudi —
no good anyone claiming them, 'cause I'm the oldest about here.

My father and mother were the first half-caste kiddies — how could you put it —
my grandmothers were all Aboriginal and then they had white fathers — so they were
fair. When my father was little, that was the time of the killings — before I was born —
it's a wonder how he escaped. They were killing everywhere, all through the area. The
worst was a fella who lived on a big cattle station on the Macleay. Suppose he had
a lot of others to help as well. I lost one grandmother over the bluffs near Armidale.
They killed a lot of our people — pushing them over them bluffs — Wollomombi, you
know. Then the other grandmother, I lost down on the Macleay on Pee Dee Creek.
They used to herd them up and shoot them — go about shooting blacks like wallaby
I suppose. They were only young women.

My old people never talked about that, never talked about the past. I reckon that
was wrong, they should have told us. Might have been too much pain, maybe there was
a law about it. Now my mother and father, they weren't very big, they were only
little when all that happened. I don't know how they got away from the killings, they
must have hid somewhere. Our tribe, there's no one left, we were all shot out; there
was only the few that lived.

But they reckon that Queen Victoria — she stopped the killing of our people. Them
Germans too helped us a lot, took them into their homes. See, the Germans weren't
frightened of my people. And then that Queen that stopped the killings, she gave my
people food and blankets and clothes — everything.

My father and his friends, they walked to Bellbrook. There was no other way.
They'd walk down from Armidale and it wouldn't take more than half a day — just
straight walking. Armidale got too cold for our people. You know, it's alright in
summer, Armidale, but when it gets cold, we'd have to come down from the
tablelands.

My people, they really didn't live anywhere like Armidale or Bellbrook. They
roamed around the Macleay, they were free in their own country. But they didn't
go and mix in with other tribes; our tribe was there on the Macleay, they'd go down
as far as Kempsey and then there'd be different tribes again. I think the tribes must
have been frightened of one another too. You know, our people, they lived on good
food; but then they got destroyed with bread and drink.

Years ago they used to have corroborees — you ever seen 'em? Suppose that's
where my father met my mother. He met her down on the Macleay and then he
stopped there.

Years ago there was a man come from England — Toose, he was. He had a post
office in Bellbrook Village and he really took interest in Aboriginal people. Nice
person and he got that place for my father. My people used to have a sort of camp over the hill about two miles from Bellbrook, my three elder brothers and my sister were born there. Me, I was the first to be born on Bellbrook, seventy years ago. My father fenced Bellbrook three or four times — something like sixty acres. And you know, he wouldn't have the up to date tools, only what he borrowed from somebody. Nobody else lived there. They built three or four homes on Bellbrook, but no one lived in 'm. Just my father was there. He had the farm. Well, to get that farm going he had to go half for a white man, you know? Mr Toose give him that place to live in and he'd give half of everything he grew to a white man — who'd ever used to run the farm. My father used to grow everything that we needed to live on. Corn, and fowls and vegetables. We had horses and cows. He even grew grass on Bellbrook. He used to work for them people up the creek and they used to lend him tools; then he'd come back and work on his own place. We'd help him on the farm, grow corn, husking and thrashing. One thing I used to hate is husking corn — had to pick up every bit up. My father was a hunter too. He used to take shooters from Kemsey up the Big Hill for pigeon and turkey. They'd give him all the bullets and things that were over. So he'd go out to get us some pigeon and turkey then. My mother — she used to work for them German people — that Mrs Schmidt. She used to help her because she was crippled. My mother was a good cook. It was alright we had a good life then. Even when I think about it now, it wasn't a lonely life, we enjoyed that life.
My people lived where they got a livin'. Some of them lived out at Kempsey, Tarooka, out at Wabra and we got a living out of this creek, Nulla Nulla Creek. Everybody couldn't live on one place, they had to go and live where they could get a living — the Quinlans now, they used to live at Lower Creek. People didn't bank up in one place. They moved about and in the old days, when you got too old to go on walkabout lookin' for food, they'd leave you. Well, my mother and father, they had twelve old people that was left on their hands on Bellbrook. They were just dumped there. Suppose they were asked to mind them because they were more kind hearted than the white people.

My old father . . . he had more white ways in him than Aboriginal ways. He never ever brought that into our home, our ways, you know. He brought us up as white people. We never had it in our home, see, never ever had that way, our language and things. We'd hear the language, but we never ever talked it in our home. Sad, there's a Fijian family here that can all speak their language, but we can't. I'd like to have learned more about Aboriginal things. Lots of our people roaming about then and they had things that were left to them. I only remember the corroborees the managers put on for the white people to see, that was much later. I can remember the last corroboree they had. My father didn't want his boy to go out to it. I didn't ask any questions about it, but his son, my brother George, he didn't want him to go out there. They were going to take the boys out into the bush for a week. My father he'd take the food, but he wouldn't stay out there with 'm. So I used to think 'suppose it was too rough, he had it easier at home'. What I can see of my people and learned about, they'd take notice of their old people. They weren't cheeky or anything. You'd never see a brother cheekin' or talkin' to you; not like now, people will have a row with you all the time. They were really sensitive that way.

But my mother and father, they didn't encourage that talk in our home. When they got into the white world, nothing was told. 'Spose wasn't nothing to be proud of, they thought. They were happy in the other world. My father wanted us to have a fair go in life. He knew we'd never get it the other way. My father he wanted us to have the education . . . my father. My mother, she used to be more with going about learning things. She used to work a lot for white people and a lot of these people were her friends. But they wanted us to have the education.

In those days only my family lived on Bellbrook and to get a bit of schooling my mother used to have to get other kiddies and look after them. You had to have nine or ten to get a teacher. So my mother took her cousin's couple of kiddies and reared them — you know, to get a teacher.

We had a nice big school, even had toilets. We had a good teacher. I went to her school when I was seven, till I was fourteen. That was good, she was strict. She used to come up nine o'clock or half past eight and she had to walk two miles over and two miles back. I know that she never ever missed a day. Good teacher, she never ever used the cane but then she'd punish us other ways — she used to keep us in and that. I remember her giving me sums that was really hard — I wouldn't do it and she still kept me in. I remember my mother comin' and rousin' on her — ah!

We used to play lots of games, rounders, that sort of thing. She'd find games for us and then, if we wanted to take them home to play, we'd have to cut that out with extra lessons. After I left school she used to bring me books and things. I used to read in the
evenings because I couldn't study much at school. My mates were backwards and the teacher used to waste most of her time helping them. So I really didn’t get that much schooling, only what I learned myself.

It was a lovely big school, Robinson built it. Most of the things went through the police in those days. We got our home built through the police too.

When I was fourteen, I stayed home, helped my mother look after the kiddies, send them to school and that. The boys used to go with my father to do bush work, always worked in the bush. They would have been fourteen when they started. Most of the time my mother’d be over at Mrs Schmidt’s, the crippled lady. When she had her day off, she’d be cookin’ us lovely meals — you know, she died of that diabetes — too many sweets. At fifty, she died. My mother used to be the midwife in the district and all the Aboriginal people walkin’ through Bellbrook, and if they were having a baby, they’d hang about waiting for her to deliver it.

It’s two miles from the river to where we lived, but yet we never ever went to the river to fish, ’cause our creek had enough fish. Oh I loved fishing, was the only sports we had — go fishin’. Used to be a lot of swimming years ago too and yet we only lost one little child in all them years. Always someone with them, cause it’s one place — they only got to struggle a little bit and they’d drown. Fishin’ and swimming, that was our sports.

When I got to about sixteen I went to work. I used to work for a pastor in Kempsey, you know, a minister. He came and got me, I used to work with them. My mother organised that, he was our minister. His wife died and he had another lady that was helping and I stayed as a companion. I was thinking about the wages we used to
get years ago — I couldn’t remember to tell you the truth. It was enough I suppose to clothe us, wouldn’t be enough money now.

Anyhow, there was a show coming up and I seen a dress in the window and I told her, this lady, ‘you know’, I said, ‘I’d like that dress made’. You know, she used to go every day till she picked that pattern out of that window to make me that dress. I’ll always remember.

He had a car, well that was good. We used to go to places, you know, visit converts. That was alright, I enjoyed it for a while, then I got tired of it.

Oh, whenever I got sick of it, my other sister used to take over. Then there was other jobs. I left the minister when I was eighteen. Got sick of it and came home. I used to fret for home. I’d miss my little brothers and sisters too much, ’cause we didn’t have no companions.

I used to work at the hotel then — you know that hotel there in Bellbrook. I used to walk to the work and walk home at night. Two miles each way, but I didn’t fret for my family.

I was a housemaid there. Oh — there used to be different people come there. I used to like it because in those days they always had a cook. They don’t really have those cooks now. We used to get these nice meals and there’d be cricket and that on; I used to always help out. I worked for years in that hotel, they were lovely people.

We used to have turn outs too. There used to be always some dances or sports and the people used to come from the stations and from Lower Creek. White people used to have them things, even we used to, we used to have dances too. White people didn’t mix with our people, only in the school. They didn’t stop our mother and father going to school, they’d even bring lunch for them, my mother used to say. My mother could read and write, she learned from them, they wasn’t that bad. It’s only few white people that were no good.

They took my sister and cousin away and you know, they kept them in Sydney for five years. Worked them. Made them Aboriginal wards, they called them years ago. They’d be about sixteen, I suppose, and they kept them. My mother couldn’t get them back, my father used to try to get them out of that place. My sister, she got sick. Only when she got sick they sent her home. They weren’t allowed to come home. They were nice, religious people they worked for, but then they weren’t allowed to come home. That was a horrible law.

I got married when I was twenty. Met my husband on one of those dances. After I got married we used to live on Pee Dee and only come home on weekends. Pee Dee was a big cattle station and my husband and his brother worked there; then my father used to dingo kill and that. My father couldn’t ride; he’d do it all walking. People from Armidale not really good riders, and he couldn’t swim either.

But there was plenty of station work about. On Pee Dee they didn’t just take anybody to work, you had to be someone special, good worker and all that. Well, my husband and his brother worked there for years and my father, and my brother and my son after them. I stayed the seven years until my eldest daughter had to go to school. The people on Pee Dee treated us good. They had huts for us to live there. I’d go up to the station and get books and things. We had a good life there.
My husband and his brother, they used to get a dollar a day then, that was all. I used to work there sometimes if she wanted me to. They were real good to us.

Then, when my little girl was ready for school I took her back to Bellbrook. But my husband kept working at Pee Dee. Then when we lived back on Bellbrook, he used to ride up to Pee Dee — ten miles — and he’d stay up there during the week, him and his brother. They’d come home on weekends then, riding back. See, it was a big cattle station and they’d be mustering and clearing the paddocks, that sort of work. Cattle were a good price then and there was plenty of work for our boys on the stations. But then the banana started in Taylors Arm. Most of them went down there then 'cause they was giving good wages. That stopped a lot of them stations.

I had twelve kids. I lost one little girl. She died, hit her head in the water while she was swimming — jumpin' too high. And I reared two grandsons. I had nine girls and only three boys and then I reared them two grandsons. Oh, I had a sister that helped me and then when the girls got bigger they took over. Then, when you’re young and used to it, work’s nothing. We used to go down the creek and wash. We used to make a day of it. We had to walk down there, but we all had horses to carry the things back and forth.

They ordered us into a mission then, after a while. Wasn’t that long ago, they made Bellbrook a mission. The manager only came lately when Valerie was a baby, that must be fifty years ago I suppose. And you know, what I can’t understand, when the manager came there, the people gathered up there. A lot of managers that come there, they were people that bullied you. What I can see, they just wanted to make money on our people — put all of them together. You’d have a bit of a deal if you got a good manager, but we had twenty. Twenty managers.

Managers used to be the teacher too, right till my youngest daughters went to school. Manager used to look after the teaching and the people. Wasn’t much to look after, I reckon, the people was alright, there was nothing wrong with them. He never found them jobs or anything. You’d have to find your own job — there was plenty of work about then, bush work, you know, plenty of bush work. And when I think on it now, everybody had their own places to work. For years that family might work for somebody at Tarooka and then somebody up the creek, where we went. So they’d always find work, they weren’t really short of work.

We never had rations, the rations they used to get years ago — right back — it was only people that really needed it. They was all workers, you know. They really didn’t need rations. Them managers, they didn’t do that much. It wasn’t that long ago, about fifty years ago that the managers took over.

Some of the managers weren’t any good. Well, our people wouldn’t take that. They were nasty fellas and their wives, matron, used to come around, see if you were cleaning up, had the house kept. The people wouldn’t like that. To think, now they got their own way — oh — back in those days they couldn’t. Like my mother delivered my first two babies for me on Bellbrook. But then they said it was unhealthy to have babies at home. So we had to go to Kempsey. We didn’t like going to the hospital. They’d have special dark wards and they’d leave you there by yourself till you really had your baby.

You know, the manager would have a girl working for them. She’d be working every day of the week. Them managers had a good life, never had to do nothing.
I think they paid with rations, they never paid any money out. A girl would go up at nine o'clock and knock off at three — that's every day. She'd get so much ration.

If we got a good school teacher it'd be alright. All them managers used to teach too. But it was only in the later years we'd get good ones. The first lot, they'd loaf on it, you know, used to really waste our kiddies' education. What little bit of schoolin' we got, we used to report them — we just went on till we got a good one. They'd always take notice down below and they'd always put them off if they weren't any good. My brother there, he's a self taught fella, but he can write so they didn't have their own way with our kiddies. Wasn't that they were cruel to them, they'd have got a good hiding, they didn't have it all their own way. But they wasted our kiddies' time.

My youngest daughters, they went to high school. The bus would run every day. They'd catch the bus into high school, but the others missed out on that. They had good teachers there. If they'd got that bus only a bit sooner they could have been nurses and things, but they missed out.

So most of my girls, they went to Sydney, working for big shots, when they were fourteen. Pat went away — I didn't want her to go. My husband, then, he was working for the manager and they asked me to let Pat go. And you know, Pat never ever came home. Sometimes she wouldn't even come home for Christmas. Anyway, one Christmas I went down and saw them about it and the manager, he'd take Pat's part. But I said, 'look Mrs . . ., Pat never ever even sent me a card!' She missed all those years, Pat, being home. She's sorry for it now, staying with them people, them white people.

My girls really didn't do the housework or anything. Just lookin' after them kids. I used to wonder why they didn't have white girls doing that. Flossy, she was a good cook. Elva worked for a doctor, five years. They took her up to Surfers Paradise and they rang me up to wait for them in Kempsey. I went down there waiting for them and Elva to pass. I had my two youngest with me and this doctor, when he came, he had two little ones about the same age. I saw him lookin' at mine and they were more healthy lookin' than his two . . .! And he asked Elva, 'What's your mother do when they get sick?' Elva said, 'ah, Mummy rubs them and that.' Rubs them with Vicks and that. We had to learn to be a doctor too in a place like Bellbrook. We couldn't just turn around and take our child to the doctor. We'd only go to the shop once or twice a week, so we'd have to learn a lot of things ourselves.

My sons, they used to do station work. They were good riders. My boys could ride horses without bridles. Denzil, he worked on Pee Dee like his father. They thought a lot of him. When he was there a white man worked there too. But when the boss went to town he'd always throw Denzil the key to look after the place. He always frets for that place, for down there at Bellbrook.

Mostly everyone'd come home for Christmas. Ah — big time every Christmas time, they'd all be there. I'd get tired of it in the end. Ah, they'd all come home — it was alright then.

Sometimes we'd have dances, good turn outs, at the big school. Christmas time, that used to be wonderful times. And then they'd travel, down to Nambucca or some place like that to have a big carnival. They used to have a good life.
My husband got a job on Bellbrook, he was the handyman, caretaker when they took the managers off. Used to drive the kids to the bus and that. I used to watch the phone and cook. The last manager, Mr Moroney, when he left we had to take over on our own — about ten years ago I suppose that was, may be longer. It wasn't that hard.

I had four homes on that place and I'm left with none now. I paid for the first lot through the endowment, you know. Got the wood through the mill, got the tins. The brother-in-law, he was a good builder, he built it for me. But they put me out. See, I think now, they only wanted to show what they were doing to fixin' them homes up. They really wasted a terrible lot of Aboriginal money building new homes. We had good homes. I had four homes in Bellbrook and look, most of them were beautiful homes. There was three new homes went up and they went and took them down. Beautiful new homes, they was really a show. Wasted all that money. The last home we had was lovely, I didn't want to go out of it. I told that man then, 'I'm not shifting into another home', I said, 'to be ordered out', I said. 'I don't want to leave this home, I left too many'. Soon as they got you out of that home, they'd take it down. But they put me out when my husband retired. My husband didn't care, see; he should have fought for it. I wanted a home that we could retire to. So I never got no further ahead, and I'm still wandering. All the homes I had, now I got nothing, just a little flat.

I only left Bellbrook, oh, six or seven years ago. All the family grew up and went away. Got lonely again. And then my husband retired and I had to leave my home. Beautiful furniture I had. The girls used to buy me things, we had lovely things. We lost all that.

When I was a child, no people lived on Bellbrook, just my family. They were all scattered — most of them lived at Lower Creek and down at Tarooka and outside Kempsey. They didn't go in a group, see, they'd scatter. They only came to Bellbrook when the manager came. They just got dogged about — put there. Most of them people in Bellbrook are all strays, you know, just come there from somewhere. They never really was always there. School, they put a big school up, and they came to send their children to school. Only when the manager came.

What cut all that out was Charley Perkins. He brought a big bus load of students over, right 'round. I know, I was in Kempsey that day. And you know, people hardly spoke in shops, they were that frightened. I always think of that. That was the first time someone stood up for them, the Aboriginals — I always remember that. I always think Charley Perkins was someone like Moses. I always look on him like that — someone that saved our people, got a go for our people.

We used to be really on our own on Bellbrook. My father fenced that place in four times. No one helped him, he even grew grass — had to bring grass to grow in that place. We should have got that place, it's only really, like me and my sister and my brother that could claim it; all the others are strays. There's nobody that we can get to help us, to speak for us. If they want the people living there now to stay there, they might pay us something for compensation.
WILLIAM COOPER AND THE 1937 PETITION TO THE KING*

Andrew Markus

In the 1930s the perspective in which Europeans viewed Aborigines was in the process of change. For over half a century it had been widely accepted that the Aboriginal people would become extinct; now this belief was being undermined by the realisation that the part-Aboriginal population was increasing at a significant rate and by the growth in anthropological knowledge. Government policy which had been essentially negative in character, designed to minimise the nuisance value of Aborigines while making them available as a source of cheap labour, came under increasing attack from pressure groups agitating for a 'New Deal' premised on the assumption that Aborigines could 'advance' to European standards. By the second half of the decade a reappraisal of government policies was underway, brought to a head by an Australia wide conference of officials which met in Canberra in April 1937 and resolved, amongst other things, that the destiny of part-Aborigines 'lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth'.

Perhaps the most important of the pressure groups was the Association for the Protection of Native Races. Formed in 1911, it was Sydney based with an exclusively European membership, led for most of the 1930s by the Reverend William Morely and Professor A.P. Elkin. There were several other European run organisations concerned with the welfare of Aborigines in the southern mainland capitals: the Aboriginal Fellowship Group and the Aborigines' Uplift Society in Melbourne, the Aborigines' Friends' Association in Adelaide and the Australian Aborigines' Amelioration Association in Perth. The London based Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Association and the Royal Anthropological Institute also took an active interest, as did a number of Australian organisations not exclusively concerned with Aborigines, especially church and women's groups (the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Australian Federation of Women Voters) and communist controlled bodies such as the Unemployed Workers' Movement and International Labour Defence.

Pressure group activity was not, however, the exclusive preserve of Europeans. At various times Aborigines made efforts to organise on their own behalf and the

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* Mr Gillison Cooper and Mrs Sally Russell granted permission to reproduce letters written by their father. Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd granted permission to reproduce a photograph of William Cooper. This article has benefited from the detailed comments of Diane Barwick. Research was undertaken with the support of the Australian Research Grants Scheme.

1 Aboriginal Welfare, 1937?

2 The records of the Association for the Protection of Native Races are housed in the Archives, University of Sydney. Much of the correspondence between the Commonwealth and various organisations seems to have survived. See, for example, Australian Archives, CRS A1, 38/12974; CRS A431, 48/961; CRS A461, A300/1, Part II. See also Stanner and Barwick 1979.
period 1935-40 is notable for the establishment and continued existence of the Aborigines' Progressive Association of New South Wales, formed in 1937 under the leadership of William Ferguson and Jack Patten,3 and the Melbourne based Australian Aborigines' League led by the elderly William Cooper, the subject of this article.

Cooper was born in Joti-jota land (in the vicinity of Echuca) about 1861 and worked as a shearer and labourer on pastoral properties for much of his life. One of the missionary Daniel Matthews' first pupils at Maloga,4 he attended adult literacy classes and emerged as a spokesman for Aborigines of central Victoria and western New South Wales. In 1933 when over seventy years of age he left Cumeroogunja reserve to become eligible for a pension and settled in Melbourne where he began a campaign to improve the condition of his people throughout the country.5 During 1933 and 1934 he seems to have acted in an individual capacity, then on behalf of the Real Australian Native Association and from mid 1935 the Australian Aborigines' League, an organisation in which full membership was restricted to persons 'possessing some degree of Aboriginal blood'.6 Based on the 100 strong Melbourne Aboriginal Community, many of whom were impoverished, the league's executive included in addition to Cooper his son Lynch, Douglas (later Sir Douglas) Nicholls, Margaret Tucker, Caleb Morgan, Mrs N. Clark, Mrs Lovett, and Misses Hylus Briggs, Julia Niven, A. Clark and M. Lovett. Two honorary members of European descent, A.P. Burdeu (president) and Helen Baillie (life member) were active in the league's work.7

3 Horner 1974.
5 Barwick 1981.
6 There is some doubt concerning the date of the league's formation. Cooper first refers to himself as Honorary Secretary of the A.A.L. in a handwritten letter dated 20 May 1935 (AA, CRS A1, 35/3951). The Association for the Protection of Native Races minute book for 17 March 1936 notes the receipt of a letter from A.P. Burdeu concerning the 'newly formed' league. The N.S.W. Aborigines Protection Board meeting of 4 March 1936 noted the receipt of similar correspondence from the league. The Register of Inwards Correspondence of the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines discloses no correspondence with the league before 1936. In 1933 and 1934 Cooper wrote to the Board in an individual capacity. Compare Horner 1974:47.
7 Inspector R.S. Browne, 'Australian Aborigines' League', Commonwealth Investigation Branch report, – December 1937 (AA, CRS A431, 45/1591). Helen Baillie wrote in 'Some recollections of Mr A.P.A. Burdeu' (Typed circular, n.d., Association for the Protection of Native Races Records): 'I first made the acquaintance of Mr. Burdeu when I returned from a visit to England late in 1935. On my arrival I was met by Mr. William Cooper, founder and Hon. Secretary of the Australian Aborigines' League, the natives own organisation, who ... was a half-caste aboriginal who did valiant work on behalf of the Aborigines, who he always referred to as "My People". Mr. Cooper informed me that while I had been away he had found some one who was giving him great assistance in his work, and he shortly afterwards introduced me to Mr. Burdeu. Mr. Burdeu was at that time a salaried officer in the Railways Department at Spencer Street, and many were the visits paid to him during his lunch hour by Mr. Cooper and myself in order to consult him on some matter of aboriginal welfare. I was amazed how soon he had mastered the many complicated aspects of Aboriginal legislation. He also soon became the firm friend and councillor of the native ...'
The league's programme embodied nine major demands:
1. Control over Aborigines to be transferred from the states to the Commonwealth.
2. The implementation of a positive national policy of uplift.
3. Increased funding.
4. The ending of discrimination between Aborigines of full and part descent, and between Aborigines and Europeans.
5. The granting of full citizenship rights to 'civilized' Aborigines.
6. Recognition by the legal system of tribal laws in appropriate circumstances.
7. Full access to reserves and the granting of land.
8. The opening of educational opportunities to the highest level.
9. The granting of parliamentary representation on the New Zealand model.

There is no record to explain the distinctive demand for parliamentary representation but in all likelihood the idea originated with Cooper whose correspondence indicates a keen interest in overseas developments. In New Zealand Maoris had been granted four parliamentary seats in 1867; at various times Maori members had held the balance of power in the New Zealand parliament, several having occupied the post of Minister of Native Affairs, starting with James Carroll in 1899.

Cooper and his fellow workers attempted to achieve their objectives through written appeals in the press and to politicians, public meetings and demonstrations. In January 1935 Cooper led a deputation to the Minister for the Interior and on 31 January 1938 was a member of a predominantly Aborigines' Progressive Association deputation which met with Prime Minister Lyons, Mrs Lyons and the then Minister for the Interior John (later Sir John) McEwen. Personal and kinship ties between members of the New South Wales and Victorian organisations provided the basis for co-operative action in 1937 and 1938, even though there was opposition to one of the league's primary objectives, the call for parliamentary representation: at this time Ferguson and Patten argued that the goal of Aborigines should be assimilation on the basis of full equality, not the winning of special privileges, although in 1940 Ferguson was to change his mind. Joint action reached a peak late in January 1938 when Cooper formed part of the deputation to the Prime Minister and a Melbourne delegation participated in the Sydney Day of Mourning demonstration. Coinciding with the sesquicentenary of European settlement the demonstration, an idea of Cooper's,
William Cooper at the time of the preparation of the petition to the King (The Ladder, 1(5), 1937).
was designed to protest against 150 years of mistreatment and to draw attention to the plight of Aborigines at a time of rejoicing and celebration in the European community.13

During Cooper's early years in Melbourne the organising of a petition to the King calling for measures to prevent extinction, improved conditions and parliamentary representation occupied much of his time. Together with members of the Melbourne community Cooper believed that the Crown had reserved certain powers over Aborigines, in evidence of which he cited a South Australian proclamation of 28 December 1836 by Governor Hindmarsh and a similar document relating to the Port Phillip district as the Aborigines' Magna Carta.14 In the period 1933-5 over 1,800 Aborigines signed the petition despite fear of victimisation,15 and obstruction from some government authorities. South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia granted permission to circulate the petition, although only after the West Australian Chief Protector launched inquiries into Cooper's character and the New South Wales authorities stipulated that 'nothing is done to cause disaffection' amongst Aborigines living on reserves.16 The Queensland Chief Protector, J.W. Bleakley, denied Cooper's request 'by direction of the Honourable the Minister'. When Cooper replied that he had received favourable answers from some states Bleakley inquired of other authorities, including the Minister for the Interior who replied two months later that the Commonwealth had decided against assisting Cooper.17 The Minister for the Interior (with responsibility over the Northern Territory) had decided in March 1934 that the administration should not be associated with the collection of signatures after he was advised by Dr C.E. Cook, Chief Protector of the Territory, that while 'it might be considered reasonable that I afford aboriginals an opportunity of submitting their petition', the vast majority of Aborigines were incapable of understanding the 'significance of appending their names... or comprehending the tenor and purpose of the petition itself'.18 Despite such obstruction 900 signatures were obtained (surreptitiously?) on Palm Island, a further 12 came from other parts of Queensland and 9 from Goulburn Island Mission in the Northern Territory; 500


14 Browne, 'Australian Aborigines' League' (AA, CRS, A431, 45/1591).

15 A. Burdeu to Rev. W. Morley, 19 June 1936, Association for the Protection of Native Races, Records: 'Mr. Cooper has just called to see me... [About 2,000 names have been collected on the petition]. These are from all over Australia and ought to be far greater in number but for the fact that certain natives were afraid to sign, notwithstanding that the managers assured them that it was quite allowable. They felt there was a catch in it...'

16 W. Cooper to J. Perkins (Minister for the Interior), 21 November 1933 (AA, CRS A431, 45/1591); A.O. Neville (Chief Protector, Western Australia) to Secretary, Board for the Protection of Aborigines, 27 September 1933 (AA Melbourne, CRS B337, 187); Minutes, Aborigines Welfare Board, New South Wales, 13 April 1934 (N.S.W. State Archives, Aboriginal Welfare Board, microfilm 2792).

17 AA, CRS A431, 45/1/1591.

18 C.E. Cook to His Honour, The Administrator of the Northern Territory, 19 February 1934 (AA, CRS A431, 45/1/1591).
were obtained in Western Australia, 350 in South Australia, and less than 100 each in New South Wales and Victoria.19

The petition's circulation seems to have been completed early in 193520 yet it was not presented to the Prime Minister for transmission to the King until September 1937. Perhaps it was regarded as a last resort, to be used when all other avenues had been exhausted. The deputation of January 1935 had already made the request for parliamentary representation only to have it rejected by cabinet.21 In November 1937 Cooper told the journalist Clive Turnbull that 'if we cannot get full justice in Australia, we must ask the King. Some tell us that the King has no power now in these things, but we shall try anyway'.22 The petition, however, failed to reach its destination; instead of transmitting it the government, after examining its merits, decided at the cabinet meeting of 7 February 1938 (shortly after the Day of Mourning and the Aboriginal deputation) that 'no action be taken'.23 Cabinet minutes provide no indication of the actual discussion but public service records and the written submission to cabinet indicate the context in which it was considered. The inability of a large number of the petitioners to sign their names and the failure to indicate their breed (‘there is no indication . . . as to whether the petitioners are full-blood aboriginals or persons of part aboriginal blood’)24 aroused comment within the Department of the Interior. It was felt that ‘very few aboriginals have the ability to exercise a vote’.25 The Secretary of the Interior, J.A. Carrodus, wrote on 10 November 1937 to Professor J.B. Cleland, a pathologist with a special interest in Australian Aborigines, that ‘with your intimate knowledge of natives you will realise how difficult it would be for His Majesty to give effect to the requests of the petitioners’. On an earlier occasion Carrodus had argued that the education of ‘full-blood’ children was, ‘in the main, . . . a waste of time’ and that comparison with New Zealand was inappropriate as ‘the Maori is a much more highly developed native than the aboriginal’.26 The Solicitor-General, when asked for an Opinion on the Commonwealth’s power to grant representation to Aborigines (there was no consideration of the right to interfere with the passage of a petition to the King), advised that while there was no power to grant representation in the states, there was power under section 122 of the constitution (dealing with territories) to grant representation to Aborigines of the

19 AA, CRS A431, 45/1/1591.
20 In a letter dated 8 April 1935 (W. Cooper to T. Patterson, Minister for the Interior) Cooper writes of having received 2000 signatures (AA, CRS A431, 45/1/1591).
22 Northern Standard [Darwin], 4 January 1938, reprinting article from the Brisbane Courier-Mail.
23 Extract from cabinet minutes 7 February 1938 (AA, CRS A461, A 300/1, Part III).
24 J.A. Carrodus (Secretary, Interior) to Secretary, Prime Minister’s Department, 30 September 1937 (AA, CRS A461, A 300/1, Part III).
26 AA, CRS A431, 45/1591; Department of the Interior Memorandum 32/2470, 4 April 1935 (AA, CRS A1, 35/3951).
Northern Territory. This may have been unwelcome advice and there is no indication, besides some press speculation, that the possibility received serious consideration. McEwen, Minister for the Interior, argued in his cabinet submission that the Aborigines of the Territory were already ‘virtually’ represented in the parliament in the person of the responsible minister (that is, himself). As for the other aspects of the petition dealing with extinction and the provision of better treatment, the various authorities were already ‘doing everything possible’: ‘all governmental authorities in Australia fully appreciated their responsibility in connection with the welfare of aboriginals generally’.29

Cooper and other Aboriginals had received a hearing, and some sympathy, from senior members of the Commonwealth government. Some publicity was gained, but there was little if anything in the way of concrete results. The Aboriginal voice was but one amongst many and not one that was accorded any special notice. A serious hearing, and hence the possibility of influence, was restricted to Europeans with an immediate interest in government policy, notably in the pastoral industry, academia, and the major pressure groups.

References to Cooper’s activities in the 1930s are to be found in several works: Mavis Thorpe Clark’s Pastor Doug, Jack Horner’s Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom, and Diane Barwick’s entry on Cooper in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Unpublished material, particularly from the files of the Department of the Interior and of the Prime Minister, held in the Australian Archives, Canberra, provides the basis for a fuller account. In addition to newspaper cuttings these files contain a report on the Australian Aborigines League by the Commonwealth Investigation Branch (prepared following receipt of the petition), a copy of the Solicitor-General’s Opinion and some 35 letters, 33 of which purport to bear Cooper’s signature. Of these 33 letters 26 are originals (9 handwritten) and 7 are typed copies prepared within the public service. It is most unlikely that all were written by Cooper as there are significant variations in the syntax as well as in the handwriting, and a number of the early letters bear signatures at variance with Cooper’s. On the following pages a selection from this unpublished material is reproduced. It was chosen with the primary objective of focusing on the petition to the King but also includes material indicating the broader concerns of Cooper and his co-workers. It includes the petition, nine letters from Cooper, an extract from the McEwen cabinet submission and the league’s submission to the official’s conference of April 1937.30

28 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 January 1938:11.
29 J. McEwen, (Cabinet submission) ‘Australian Aborigines’ League – Petition to His Majesty the King’, 1 February 1938 (AA, CRS A461, A 300/1, Part III).
30 There are three major files relating to the league. Of the nine letters reproduced the first, second and third are taken from the Department of the Interior file CRS A431, 45/1591, the fourth from the Interior file topnumbered into Immigration, CRS A659 42/1/8104, and the remaining five (together with the McEwen submission) from the Prime Minister’s Department file CRS, A461, A 300/1, Part III.
WILLIAM COOPER AND THE 1937 PETITION

DOCUMENTS

1. PETITION

Of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia to His Majesty, King George VI, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland, and British Dominions beyond the seas, King; Defender of the Faith; Emperor of India.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY, IN COUNCIL

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the undersigned Aboriginal inhabitants of the Continent of Australia respectfully sheweth:-

THAT WHEREAS it was not only a moral duty, but a strict injunction, included in the commission issued to those who came to people Australia, that the original inhabitants and their heirs and successors should be adequately cared for;

AND WHEREAS the terms of the commission have not been adhered to in that -
(a) Our lands have been expropriated by Your Majesty's Governments, and
(b) Legal status is denied to us by Your Majesty's Governments;

AND WHEREAS all petitions made on our behalf to Your Majesty's Governments have failed.

YOUR PETITIONERS humbly pray that Your Majesty will intervene on our behalf, and, through the instrument of Your Majesty's Governments in the Commonwealth of Australia -

will prevent the extinction of the Aboriginal race and give better conditions for all, granting us the power to propose a member of Parliament, of our own blood or white men known to have studied our needs and to be in sympathy with our race, to represent us in the Federal Parliament.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS WILL EVER PRAY

[Signatures of Petitioners.] [Addresses.]

2. W. Cooper, 120 Ballarat Road, Footscray, to Honourable Mr. Lyons, Prime Minister of Australia, 23 October 1933.

On behalf of my people I have the honour to most humbly approach you seeking your permission to send to, and have signed by the Aboriginal Population under your charge, the undermentioned petition, a copy of which is to be forwarded to His Majesty King George V of England, asking on our behalf to do his utmost in taking suitable steps in preventing the extinction of the Aboriginal Race.

I. Obtaining better conditions for all.
II. Obtaining power to propose a Member of Parliament to be chosen by my people to represent them in the Federal Parliament.

Trusting that my humble request will receive every consideration. I have the Honour to be, ...

3. W. Cooper, 120 Ballarat Road, Footscray, to Mr. N. Makin [Labor M.H.R. for Hindmarsh, S.A.], 19 March 1934.

Why can't Mr Bleakley give me something definite, as regards my petitioning my own people for signatures in Queensland, as each of the other States have done, it is just upon six months since I first applied, and the enquiries of the attitude of the other States are still being put forward

31 Similar letters seem to have been sent to the authorities in the various states. Undated (September 1933?) letters to the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines and the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Western Australia, are located at AA Melbourne, CRS B337, 187.
as the reason, surely it does not take all that time to get an answer, other matters of less importance get more business action than this has, the whole matter is being held up, as my people do not want to do anything against the Board of Protection, yet are willing to sign so long as it will not offend.

If something decisive is not arrived at very soon, greater publicity will be given to the unnecessary delay meted out by the Board, their duty is to help our race in a reasonable manner as we are Subjects of the Realm.

In your reply dated 4 Dec 33 you suggest that if there is any objection raised to apply to yourself or some other Member, will you please accept my appeal and try to help me, thanking you in anticipation.32


On behalf of the Aborigines population of Australia from whom I have received 2000 signatures, from all parts of Australia authorising me to plead for justice; And noticing the continual reports in daily presses of ill treatment of Aborigines, reports of a similar nature have been coming from different parts of Australia. Fifty years to my knowledge, in my travels through Queensland, South Aust, N.S, Wales and Victoria, have noticed large tribes of Aborigines, and to my estimation appeared hundreds of thousands. Turning to the general liberty of early history estimates millions of Aborigines, and it is publicly known the numbers reduced from Millions, to 70,000 Aborigines all told. Sir, we humbly pray that you will intervene on our behalf through instrument of the government in the Commonwealth of Australia, to prevent the gold seekers, settlers, and others, from further ill treatment to Aborigines. Trusting a favourable consideration will be given to our requests, and your petitioners will ever pray.


The aborigines are looking forward with deep concern to the forthcoming conference of Premiers in Adelaide next month as they feel that their destinies are somewhat involved.

You have undertaken to bring the matter of aboriginal control and policy to the conference and we do plead that no circumstance be permitted to shelve or delay the matter.

We do plead for one controlling authority, the Commonwealth and request that all aboriginal interests be absolutely federalised. This will enable a continuous common policy of uplift, which we trust will contain provision for the exploitation of all natives’ reserves by the natives, under able leadership, and for the natives. We submit an aim, which is practicable, and that should be the ultimate self liquidation of the whole problem of uplift. So far from the aboriginal continuing to be a charge on the community, he can be made under sound and capable direction to be an asset to the community. This is a long vision no doubt.

We plead for this, but if the Premiers are not willing to lose a responsibility they do not wish to retain we plead for a common policy under Commonwealth control or influence with a subsidising of the States on the aboriginal per capita basis. We have no hope where the States with large aboriginal populations cannot adequately finance their obligations and the States with small aboriginal populations, or none, as in the case of Tasmania, should not be freed from responsibility.

We would request that the request of this League for parliamentary representation be considered. If the whole control is federalised this should be readily concedable, but if the States

32 Makin wrote to the Minister for the Interior, Hon. J. Perkins, on Cooper's behalf on 29 March 1934.
WILLIAM COOPER AND THE 1937 PETITION

retain control, we submit that such representation should be accorded to our people in the States' legislature, at any rate where the aboriginal populations are numerous.

Trusting that you will bring these requests to the notice of the Premiers, . . .33


I take the liberty of enclosing for your information a copy of an agenda of suggestions for the forthcoming meeting of Chief Protectors of Aborigines and other administrative officers.

We looked forward to the late Premiers' conference as the means of our emancipation. Now that the consideration has been passed on to the administrative officers for consideration and recommendation we are hoping that our proposals will be kept in mind. I will forward a copy also to the Minister for the Interior and one to each Minister of the Crown concerned and the Chief Protectors.

Our case is desperate in different parts and only by subsidy can the States hope to improve our lot. They have, in some cases, the will to do so but lack the financial capacity.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES' LEAGUE

AGENDA of proposals submitted by the Australian Aborigines' League for the consideration of the Conference of Chief Protectors and others.

1. That all aboriginal interests be federalised with a Federal Ministry for Aborigines. Failing this
2. That there be coordination between State Departments with a view to a common policy for the whole of the Commonwealth.
3. That a National Policy be formulated for the uniform and systematic uplift of the aboriginal population throughout Australia.
4. That the cost of administering the aboriginal policy be a charge, on a per capita basis, against the whole of Australia, thus enabling the States with a large white population and a comparatively small aboriginal population sharing the cost with States with a large aboriginal population and a relatively small white population.
5. That all approved aboriginals of full or part aboriginal blood be allowed to adopt an independent status and that, in that condition, they be not subject to any disabilities in law, political, civil or economic, as aboriginals. That such aboriginals be entitled to all the rights of white persons as maternity bonus, old age and invalid pensions, sustenance (work for dole and relief work) while unemployed, etc.
6. That all aboriginals of full or part blood have the right to live in reserves set apart for aboriginals. That expulsion from reserves for breach of discipline or other cause shall not be permitted without open enquiry at which the charged aboriginal shall be allowed assistance for his defence, legal assistance if desired. Any aboriginal discharged from an aboriginal station shall be treated in the matter of sustenance as an aboriginal electing to live privately, if unemployed.
7. That no advantage shall accrue to any class of aboriginal over another, i.e., that full bloods with those of any degree of mixed blood shall have equality of treatment and opportunity.

33 The Premier's Conference decided that 'owing to the fact that aboriginals in the different States are in various stages of evolution, and that each State presents its own problems, it would be undesirable and impracticable to have centralised control of the whole of the aboriginals in Australia'. A need was recognised, however, for periodical conferences between bodies 'controlling aboriginals' to discuss 'methods of control' and the general question of the natives' welfare.
8. That the aboriginal population shall be grouped into classes determined by the stage of their progress and that the policy of the Administration shall be the progressive elevation from one class to an higher one till the whole race is fully civilised and cultured. These groups shall be:-
(a) Myall Aboriginals.
(b) Partly civilised and detribalised aboriginals.
(c) Civilised aboriginals.

9. That education be provided for all aboriginal children, designed to permit all who are capable of qualifying, to attain to the highest standard. As may be justified, secondary schools for aboriginal children shall be provided. Where this is not possible, aboriginal children and young people shall have the right to attend secondary schools set apart for white children. The education of all aboriginal children shall be academic and vocational.

10. That all aboriginals be encouraged to work in the industry of civilisation; that they have the right to work and that all able-bodied unemployed, aged, sick and infirm aboriginals shall have the assurance of full sustenance, the third group of aboriginals to be treated for sustenance as whites in parallel circumstances are treated, viz., payment of dole, old age or invalid pension, or as the case may be.

11. Suitable areas of land shall be set apart for the increasing aboriginal population. These should be large enough to permit of the development of full self-reliance, all community services being rendered, where possible, by aborigines. All reserves should be fully developed by the most up-to-date methods under expert direction. Young aboriginals should be encouraged to settle in these reservations but there should not be any compulsion on aged persons to leave areas that they have become attached to. Aboriginal reserves to be inalienable and whites not to be allowed thereon only by permission.

12. That trained and qualified aboriginals be allowed to settle on lands and to work them for their own profit, the ultimate design of all training in settlements being with this independency in view.

13. All offences by aboriginals to be subject to punishment only to the extent that white persons are punishable, due regard being paid to the implications of aboriginal law or psychology. Offences by whites against aboriginals to be punishable on the same basis as offences by whites against whites and offences by aboriginals to be punishable only to the same degree as in the case of offences by whites against whites. In other words there shall be full equality of whites and aboriginals before the law.

7. W. Cooper, 43 Mackay St., Seddon, to Mr. Lyons, the Rt. Hon. The Prime Minister, 26 October 1937. Typed on Australian Aborigines' League stationery, featuring league's motto: 'A fair deal for the dark race'. Signed W. Cooper, Hon. Sec.

Thank you for your acknowledgement of our petition to His Majesty and the promise of fullest sympathy and consideration. We know you will give this and we do thank you for the definite interest you have in our cause. I would, however, offer the following comment in respect of the pen-ultimate clause of your letter of 17th inst. and would request that these comments be in mind in the consideration promised.

His Majesty is King of Australia, and, on this account, the State control of aborigines should not prevent consideration being given on a national basis. I am not, therefore, able to appreciate
WILLIAM COOPER AND THE 1937 PETITION

the reference to the natives of the Territory in particular and to the jurisdiction of the State Governments. We do trust that the division of the administration over State Legislatures, **which is always to our detriment**, will not retard our relief. With all respect, since our petition is to the **King of Australia**, it should not be possible for divided control hurting us in this instance.

Respecting the conference of Chief Protectors, from which we scarcely expected relief, and which, so far as we can see only resulted in one decision which was not previously operative, and that the recognition of the wives of aboriginals married according to Tribal Law being recognised as legal wives and thus not being compellable witnesses. From our point of view the conference was only a waste of time. We did expect a Magna Carta from the Premiers' Conference but from the conference of Chief Protectors we only got the confirmation of our humiliation. Frankly, we are alarmed at the intention to seek advice from countries where Negro populations constitute the dark problem for we, notwithstanding all our indignity, are allowed to walk on footpaths, ride in public vehicles and trains and put up in many hotels where white men are residing. To add to our sorrows the humiliation of our dark brethren overseas in the curfew and the pass system would be degradation indeed. In due course we will present you with our comment on the published minutes of the conference but meantime we are in protest against the whole result. We do claim that the forwarding of our petition be not clouded with the State aspect of the atmosphere of the Chief Protectors' conference.

Respecting our claim for parliamentary representation, we very definitely submit that the Maori population is approximately the same as our people, with any advantage to us. In an area the size of Victoria they have four members and a Ministry for Native affairs, which has had a native minister. We are persisting in our claim for one who can speak for us in Parliament, influencing legislation on our behalf and safeguarding us from administrational officers, who with notable exceptions, interpret their responsibilities to the aborigines in much the same way as a gaol governor does his criminal population. Our desire is a change of heart in the electorate, reflected in Parliament and leading to a policy which will be different from that administered by our gaolers. So far from divided control being allowed to retard our securing representation, we feel that our member should have the right to sit in every legislature, and any constitutional difficulty could be overcome by legislation. If our member were a member of the Senate, perhaps, as this is a States' Rights House, any difficulty might be more easily overcome.

Hoping to hear shortly of the granting of our requests, . . .

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The discussions that took place at the recent Conference of Commonwealth and State officers charged with the protection of aboriginals indicated that all Governmental authorities in Australia fully appreciate their responsibility in this connection.  

35 The initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities was held in Canberra, 21 to 23 August 1937. It was resolved, *inter alia*, that 'Realizing . . . [the need for] enlightened guidance . . . this Conference is of opinion that the Commonwealth should take steps as seem desirable to obtain full information upon racial problems in America and South Africa for submission to a further conference of Chief Protectors to be held within two years.' No further conference was held but approaches were made to government authorities leading to an exchange of official publications with the Office of Indian Affairs, United States Department of the Interior, and the despatch of an eight page summary of government policy addressed to Prime Minister Lyons from (General) J.M.R. Hertzog, Minister for External Affairs, Union of South Africa. (AA, CRS A461, A 300/1 Part III).
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FOR CABINET: Agenda No. 143

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES LEAGUE – PETITION TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING

[The first half of the submission notes the content of the petition, provides details on the petitioners – total, geographical distribution – and gives brief particulars on the Aborigines’ League.]

5. The Department can speak with authority only in regard to the aboriginals of the Northern Territory, because Commonwealth control of aboriginals is limited to that Territory, the aboriginals in the States coming under the jurisdiction of the various State Governments.

6. With regard to the prevention of the extinction of the race and the provision of better conditions for aboriginals generally, the Commonwealth Government and the various State Governments interested are doing everything possible. It was evident from the discussions that took place at the Conference of Commonwealth and State Officers charged with the protection of aboriginals held at Canberra in April, 1937, that all governmental authorities in Australia fully appreciate their responsibility in connection with the welfare of aboriginals generally.

7. The question of whether aboriginals could be given representation in the Commonwealth Parliament has been considered by the Solicitor-General, copy of whose Opinion is attached. It will be seen that –

(a) the Commonwealth Parliament has no authority to pass legislation to give representation in Parliament to aboriginals qua aboriginals who live in the States of the Commonwealth; and

(b) Section 122 of the Commonwealth Constitution would appear to be a grant of sufficient authority to Parliament to provide that aboriginals in the Northern Territory may elect an aboriginal member for that Territory to represent them as such; but these elective powers could only be conferred on the aboriginals living in Territories of the Commonwealth and not in Australia as a whole.

8. As Minister for the Interior, I am virtually a representative of the aboriginals of the Northern Territory. I am responsible for carrying out the Government’s policy in the Northern Territory and for bringing forward new legislation in the form of Ordinances and Regulations which must be submitted to Parliament.

9. It is not seen that any good purpose would be gained by submitting the petition to His Majesty the King, and it is recommended that no action be taken.

(J. McEwen)
Minister for the Interior.
1/12/1938


Re our petition to the King for a representative in Parliament in respect of which there was considerable press publicity some months ago, which we believed to be inspired.

We are much concerned with the fact that there is now no further comment and no word from you in the matter. Would you please tell us how it now stands.36

36 A letter which seems to have been sent on 2 March 1938 advising of the Cabinet decision does not seem to have reached the league. A letter from the Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department of 9 November 1938 refers to this earlier letter without indicating its precise contents (AA, CRS A1, 38/4793).
WILLIAM COOPER AND THE 1937 PETITION

There have been statements that the whole matter of Aboriginal Administration is being referred to another conference of Premiers but not having heard of this either we wonder if that has also been abandoned. We certainly were perturbed about two matters, one being in the minutes of the conference of Chief Protectors to the effect that advice was being sought in America and South Africa on the problem as there existing and the other was from your Department to the effect that the Commonwealth was seeking to induce the States in the way of initiating legislation similar to the iniquitous legislation recently enacted in Western Australia. In the matter of the first we trust that there will not be copying of the shocking treatment of the natives in either place. Here, if we have the money we are allowed to ride in trams and walk on footpaths and, in the civilised parts, white men will treat colored women as women. Cannot our legislators evolve a scheme for Australia and cannot that scheme be that every civilised man and woman, full blood or half caste shall have full equality in law. Why should we be legislatively considered as we were when the white man came to our shores. Is there no time that we can look forward to when we shall be fully human in the eyes of white legislation?

The second matter, the suggested legislation in all States on the lines of the Western Australian legislation. We feel quite definitely that the white community here would not stand for the degradation of the native here as he has been degraded in West Australia in the last months. There men who were educated and have been in the enjoyment of the franchise for quarter of a century are declared aboriginals. They may not now give their daughters in marriage without in every case receiving the personal consent of the Commissioner for Native Affairs. They may not go to Perth without a permit nor work for a white employer without securing a license at the price of £1 per year. For God's sake don't have us all pushed back to West Australian status but rather show that State that their retrospective legislation is foreign to Australian sentiment.

We fully trust you and your Government. We know we can look to you for justice but we are not so sure of the Administrative officers in the States who may be able, as in West Australia, to manipulate legislation to our detriment.

We are waiting most anxiously and will be glad of a word from you.


I am writing to you on the occasion of your selection of a cabinet to bring to your notice the great importance, from the point of view of my people, of the appointee to the Ministry for the Interior.

Mr. Lyons' government has the credit of being the one which has done more for aboriginal uplift, either in promise or fulfilment, than has any other Government. I am glad to say that I communicated to him the gratitude of my people at a time he could appreciate it. I know he did. Mr. Lyons has selected a sequence of Ministers for the Interior who have inspired confidence from the natives and the culmination has been found in the announced policy for aborigines. This has been good, mostly, and the parts we don't approve have been brought to notice in the hope that, when finally operative, the policy will make it possible for us to take our place as Australians.

A request such as the one I am to make would be deemed an impertinence from some people but it is a matter so fraught with moment to us that I feel we must mention the matter and I feel that you will accept the request in the spirit in which it is made. "Will you please select a minister for the Interior who will continue to maintain his administration with the desire to fully help the natives into full British Culture"?

37 The Western Australian Native Administration Act of 1936 extended the definition of Aborigines from 'persons of half-blood' and children of a 'half-caste woman deemed to be an aboriginal' to 'any persons of less than full-blood who is descended from the original inhabitants of Australia', with some exceptions. See Biskup 1973:170-1.
Mr. Lyons has assured me that all his ministry shared his sympathy for my race. This includes yourself. I do trust that care for a suffering minority will ensure that kindliness of treatment that will not allow Australia's minority problem to be as undesirable as the European minorities of which we read so much in the press.

Will you kindly make yourself conversant with the petition to His Majesty, now being held in the Office of the Prime Minister. It may be that you will be able to recommend some of the requests there made.

11. W. Cooper, 73 Southampton St., Footscray, to Mr. Menzies, The Rt. Hon. The Prime Minister, 5 October 1939. Typed on league stationery, Signed W. Cooper, Hon. Secretary.

At a meeting of the League held yesterday concern was expressed at the delay in hearing the result of the petition to His Majesty, asking, inter alia, that representation in Parliament should be afforded to our race.

I would be glad of advice which I can pass on to our members.

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OFFICIAL POLICY TOWARDS VICTORIAN
ABORIGINES 1957-1974*

Gregory Lyons

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, numerous citizen groups in Victoria exerted pressure on the state government to improve the lot of Victoria's neglected Aboriginal population. By 1955 Aborigines had become a political embarrassment. It was not that their numbers were great or that their votes counted. Rather, their presence in camps on the fringes of country towns and in overcrowded city dwellings presented an affront to 'decent standards' and a potential threat to Law and Order.¹

The new Liberal government of Henry Bolte wanted advice as to the steps it should take. In December 1955 the Premier appointed the retired Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, Charles McLean, to review existing policy towards the state's Aborigines, and to recommend policy changes. McLean's Report led to legislation which in 1957 established an Aborigines Welfare Board, which presided over Aboriginal affairs until 1967. In 1968 the Board was supplanted by a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, which in turn was replaced by the Victorian Office of the newly established Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

This paper traces official policy towards Victorian Aborigines from the beginnings of the Board in 1957 to the demise of the Ministry in 1974. It considers the origins and objectives of each body, and their initiatives and methods, especially in the field of housing policy. It also investigates the reasons for their failure, for in each case their achievements fell far short of their stated intentions.

THE McLEAN REPORT

In his 1957 Report, McLean reviewed the operation of the Aborigines Act 1928 which was then in force. He was asked to recommend amendments to the legislation and 'whether it is necessary or desirable to maintain a system of administration for aboriginal people and if so . . . what persons or classes of persons should be deemed aboriginal for the purposes of the system'.²

Gregory Lyons, formerly a solicitor with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, is now a legal officer in the Victorian Department of the Premier and Cabinet. He is writing a Ph.D. (Law) thesis at Monash University on the work of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service as a model for delivering legal services to Aboriginal groups.

* I wish to thank Diane Barwick, Peter Hanks, Peter Renkin and John Willis for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

¹ Boas 1975:52.

² The full terms of reference of the Inquiry are set out in McLean 1957:1.
Under the *Aborigines Act* 1928, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines continued to have authority over those deemed to be Aborigines. 'Half-castes' (with the exception of those licensed in writing by the Board to reside at reserves) were in general excluded from the Board's area of responsibility. The spirit of the 1928 Act — that the Protection Board should have responsibility only for Aborigines of full descent — was a carry-over from the *Aborigines Protection Act* 1886 which declared that only those Aborigines of full descent and half-castes then over the age of thirty-four years were entitled to assistance.

As early as 1858 public opinion had advocated differential treatment of 'fullblood' and 'half-caste' natives. It was widely believed that while the former were entitled to be charitably maintained and protected as some compensation for the loss of their tribal lands, the latter ought to be dispersed into the wider society to form a convenient workforce of labourers and domestic servants.

When McLean came to review the policy of dispersing half-castes and offering protection to Aborigines of full descent that was embodied in the 1928 Act, he found ample evidence that it had failed. The one Aboriginal Station remaining in Victoria in 1957, Lake Tyers, was the home for 186 people of whom at least 161 were of mixed descent. (Only about twenty Aborigines of full descent, all adults, remained in the whole state at the time.) Those of mixed descent were living at the Station at the time without licences; the system of issuing licences had broken down in 1937 'because of the clerical work involved'. While the remaining Victorian population of Aboriginal descent — according to McLean, some 1,160 in number — were scattered across the state, they were not merging appreciably with the broader population. McLean found that Aboriginal camps in country areas were squalid; humpies of

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3 In 1860, the 'Central Board to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines' was appointed. (For an account of its activities, see Christie 1979:163-177). When the *Aborigines Protection Act* 1869 was passed, the Board was given statutory authority and re-constituted under the name 'the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines': McLean 1974:4.

4 The term 'half-caste' was defined in the *Aborigines Act* 1928 to include 'half-castes as well [as] other persons whatever of mixed aboriginal blood'. (s.4). Licences, subject to cancellation at any time, were to be granted by the Board only in 'cases of illness, infirmity, or other necessitous circumstances'. McLean 1957:12.

5 *Aborigines Act* 1928 s.5(v). Half-castes who were 'deemed to be aboriginals', and hence subject to the Board included any half-caste aged over seventy-five who habitually associated with an aboriginal (s.5[iii]) and any female half-caste who on 1 January 1887 was married to and living with an aboriginal (s.5[iii]).

6 *Aborigines Protection Act* 1886 s.4. In this Act as in the 1928 Act, 'half-caste' was defined to include any person 'of mixed aboriginal blood': s.3. For an account of official policy towards Victorian Aborigines earlier this century, see Foxcroft 1941:100-107.

7 Barwick 1972:16.

8 A 'Station' refers to a supervised settlement on a Crown Land reserve. While Lake Tyers was the only 'Station' in existence, the Framlingham Reserve in the Western District remained.


10 McLean 1957:12.
OFFICIAL POLICY IN VICTORIA

makeshift materials often formed extensions of town rubbish tips.\textsuperscript{11} The contrast between these living conditions and the growing prosperity of the country towns was marked, and it was an obvious source of embarrassment to the Government. In the metropolitan area where some 159 people of Aboriginal descent were said to be, most lived in Fitzroy ‘in overcrowded, slum conditions, and frequently in “condemned” houses’.\textsuperscript{12} Their overcrowding was more acute than amongst other people living there.\textsuperscript{13}

McLean found on the part of the Protection Board that there had been ‘a considerable diminution of apparent interest, and some avoidance of its responsibilities, over recent years’.\textsuperscript{14} Board members were honorary, and the Secretary to the Board, an officer of the Chief Secretary’s Department, was able to devote only a small portion of his time to Board duties.\textsuperscript{15} According to McLean, the Board’s recent policy was one of ‘\textit{laisser-faire}’;\textsuperscript{16} this was a generous description.

McLean found that the Lake Tyers Station was hampering progress towards assimilation. Able-bodied ‘half-castes’ and their families were living there, receiving rations and being deprived of ‘any desire they might develop to seek permanent employment and fend for themselves’.\textsuperscript{17} He recommended that ‘a firm policy of assimilation’ should be implemented so that the number being cared for could be reduced to those who were ‘aged, sick, infirm or otherwise necessitous’.\textsuperscript{18} He recommended the re-introduction of a system of licences for the admission of any Aborigines of less than full descent to the Station.

\textsuperscript{11} McLean 1957:6-7. Rowley wrote of these fringe-dwellers as ‘beyond the statistics of poverty, beside the country towns of the south, often without even a recognized claim to their poor shacks, and dependent on the mercy and whims of the local officialdom’. (Rowley 1973:188). For a graphic description of living conditions in a camp by a rubbish tip (though in Cunnamulla, Queensland), see Robertson and Carrick 1970:34. And see the account of the time he spent at a rubbish tip midway between Mooroopna and Shepparton in McGuinness 1974:63.

\textsuperscript{12} McLean 1957:8.

\textsuperscript{13} Victorian Council of Social Service 1950:9.

\textsuperscript{14} McLean 1957:13.

\textsuperscript{15} In the words of Rowley, the members appeared to have been ‘a curious collection of people’. Rowley 1972:88. At the time of its dissolution in 1957, Board members were: the Hon. A.G. Rylah, M.L.A. (Chief Secretary and Board Chairman, \textit{ex officio}); Mr A.J.L. James (Chief Secretary’s Department); the Hon. Sir Albert Lind, M.L.A.; the Hon. M.V. Porter, M.L.A.; the Hon. R.W. Mack, M.L.C.; Dr A.R. Haywood; and Major R. Glen. With the exception of the Chief Secretary, Board members had been appointed by the Governor in Council. 1958 Report of the Aborigines Welfare Board:3. (Annual Reports of the Board appear in PFP; see Bibliography.)

\textsuperscript{16} McLean 1957:13.

\textsuperscript{17} McLean 1957:14.

\textsuperscript{18} McLean 1957:14. Hausfeld has commented on the illogicality of a ‘policy of assimilation’. One can only speculate about his reaction to ‘a firm policy of assimilation’. Hausfeld 1963:32. And Stanner has commented upon the difficulties inherent in any assimilation policy: ‘We are asking them [Aborigines] to become a new people but this means, in human terms that we are asking them to un-be what they now are’. Stanner 1969:56.
When McLean considered the conditions of the majority of people of Aboriginal descent who were living in ‘sordid environments’ in country camps, or in overcrowded conditions in the city, he recommended ‘an active policy of assimilation’. This policy should be extended to all those with ‘an admixture of aboriginal blood’ who were in need of assistance. No longer should the Board’s responsibilities be limited to Aborigines of full descent, and to those ‘half-castes’ specially licensed to live at Lake Tyers. McLean’s advocacy of a policy of assimilation was in line with contemporary official thinking. At the 1951 Native Welfare Conference (a meeting attended by the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia ministers with responsibility for Aboriginal affairs), assimilation had been agreed upon as the aim of policies towards all aborigines.

This ‘active policy of assimilation’ placed emphasis on re-housing projects and the development of improved educational and employment opportunities. It was a marked shift from earlier ‘protection’ policies which had in general excluded Aborigines of mixed descent from their ambit.

McLean’s recommendations concerning Victoria’s Aborigines had an objective, ‘the goal of ultimate assimilation’, to which all else was subordinate. In the mind of McLean, and in the understanding of the Victorian government which accepted his recommendations, it seems that ‘ultimate assimilation’ meant that people of Aboriginal descent would become so like those in the broader community that they would eventually become indistinguishable. If Aborigines were not going to die out, they would at least fade from notice.

THE ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD, 1957-1967

The Victorian government acted promptly on McLean’s recommendations, passing the Aborigines Act 1957 which replaced the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines with the Aborigines Welfare Board. The new Board’s function was ‘to promote the moral, intellectual and physical welfare of aborigines . . . with a view to their assimilation into the general community’ and its responsibilities extended to all people of Aboriginal descent.

The Board was established in an atmosphere of political crisis and it was expected to act immediately. These were not circumstances conducive to the formulation

19 McLean 1957:15.
20 McLean 1957:16.
22 See the report to Parliament concerning the Conference by the then Minister for Territories (Mr Paul Hasluck), quoted in Stone 1974:196. The full text of Hasluck’s speech is in CAPD, Vol. 214, 873-877.
24 Something confidently predicted as late as 1934; see Jones 1934:38.
25 The Act repealed the Aborigines Act 1928. The Aborigines Act 1957 became, with minor amendments, the Aborigines Act 1958 in the Consolidation of that year.
26 Section 6(1).
27 Boas 1975:17.
of coherent policy goals and procedures. The Board lacked a comprehensive picture of the Victorian Aboriginal population, being guided, at least in its early years, by McLean's limited perceptions. McLean had seriously underestimated the size of the population of Aboriginal descent and had viewed this population as consisting of individuals similar to poor whites. He had not perceived the inter-relatedness of different Aboriginal groups, nor had he articulated any notion of an Aboriginal community.

In its latter years, two factions emerged within the Board. One tended to see Aborigines as failed whites, as irresponsible people who were generally undeserving of the Board's efforts on their behalf. The other saw Aborigines as victims of widespread discrimination and prejudice in a culture-clash with white Australians. The latter group favoured compensatory aid for the members of what it regarded as a distinct community. It was largely the agitation of the second faction, both within the Welfare Board and outside it, that led to the Board being replaced in 1968 by a new administration, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Welfare Board consisted of ten honorary members: the Chief Secretary (or his Ministerial nominee) as chairman; the Under Secretary; nominees of the Housing, Education and Health Ministers respectively; and 'five other members appointed by the Governor in Council of whom . . . two shall be aborigines and one shall be an expert in anthropology or sociology'.

During its existence from 1957 to 1967, there were numerous changes in its membership. Three members of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines at the time of its dissolution became members of the new Board. So too did Dr Donald Thomson, the noted anthropologist. Two Aborigines were appointed to the Board, Pastor Douglas Nicholls and the famed singer, Harold Blair. Although Blair's period of service was short, his successor, Margaret Tucker, remained on the Board until the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was established in 1968. Douglas Nicholls resigned in April 1963 in protest at the Board's announcement in February that it would close

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29 Boas 1975:112. Differences within the Board can be glimpsed when a paragraph in the 1966 Report (observing that Board efforts in East Gippsland to find employment for unemployed men 'have been frustrated by the Aborigines themselves ...', 9) drew a dissent from a Board member, Dr C.M. Tatz, in the 1967 Report:4. (Annual Reports of the Aborigines Welfare Board appear in VPP; see Bibliography.)
31 Aborigines Act 1957, s.3(1)(D).
33 Nicholls' biographer, Clark, writes that Nicholls 'was pleased that two Aborigines had been appointed to the new Welfare Board. It meant a slightly louder voice. But he would have liked to see a more democratic approach to the appointments. He believed that the Aborigines should have the right to vote for their own representatives'. Clark 1975:185.
34 The Board had difficulty finding an Aboriginal replacement for Harold Blair: 1959 Report, 3. This was probably due to a reluctance on the part of more prominent Aboriginal people to serve on the predominantly white Board. Clark notes that Douglas Nicholls had met with 'coldness' from some Aboriginal people on his appointment to the Board in 1957: Clark 1975:224.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

Lake Tyers Station and shift the residents to country towns. Attendance by the Aboriginal members — Nicholls, Tucker and Nicholls’ successor, Cornelius Edwards — at the ten or eleven Board meetings held each year was most consistent. But as Tatz has pointed out, the minutes of Board meetings over a three year period indicate that the Aboriginal members ‘uttered only a few dozen words . . . overawed by the proceedings and truly remote from Aboriginal Victoria’.35 The Aboriginal members were, after all, nominated by the Governor in Council, and not elected or nominated by Aboriginal people.36

The Welfare Board’s executive role meant it was reluctant to delegate authority to its staff. Its chief staff member, the Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare, was not a member of the Board and had little power over the policy to be carried out by his staff. Members could and did issue instructions to the staff without reference to the Superintendent. It was the Board, rather than the Superintendent, which managed the budget and expenditures. Frequently the relationship between the Board and

35 Tatz 1982:36. Access to the Board’s Minutes through official channels is prohibited for thirty years; see Deverall 1978:109. However one Welfare Board member has deposited Board minutes at the A.I.A.S., Canberra. In her autobiography, Margaret Tucker (1977:191-2) refers briefly to her time on the Board.

36 Board membership, 1957-1967, follows. The four successive chairmen were: the Hon. M.V. Porter, M.L.A. (Assistant Chief Secretary, later Minister for Local Government), 30 July 1957 to 20 August 1961; the Hon. E.R. Meagher, M.L.A. (Assistant Chief Secretary, later Minister of Transport), 21 August 1961 to 23 September 1964; the Hon. A.G. Rylah, M.L.A. (Chief Secretary), 24 September 1964 to 30 June 1965. (Ms Rylah did not attend meetings, his chairmanship being nominal); Mr J.H. Davey, 1 July 1965 to 31 December 1967. (Mr Davey was a member of the Board throughout its life, being a member nominated by the Minister of Housing from 30 July 1957 up until his appointment as chairman; he became chairman when pursuant to the Aborigines (Amendment) Act 1965, responsibility for the Board’s work was transferred from the Chief Secretary to the Minister of Housing). Board members other than chairmen were: Mr A.J.L. James (Under Secretary), 30 July 1957 to 31 October 1961; replaced by Mr J.V. Dillon (Under Secretary, and chairman of meetings during Mr Rylah’s chairmanship), 1 November 1961 to 30 June 1965; replaced by Mr A.G. Booth (nominated by the Chief Secretary), c. 1 July 1965 to 31 December 1967. Members successively nominated by the Minister of Education were: Mr J.G. Greening, 30 July 1957 to 22 July 1960; Mr J.R. Lyall, 23 July 1960 to 21 July 1963; Mr J.A. Cole, 22 July 1963 to 12 June 1964; Mr R.P. McLellan, c. 13 June 1964 to 30 June 1967; Mr T.L.W. Emerson, 1 July 1967 to 31 December 1967. Members successively nominated by the Minister of Health were: Dr J. Finney, 30 July 1957 to 16 February 1965; Dr R. Southby, 17 February 1965 to 31 December 1967. Following Mr J.H. Davey’s appointment as chairman from 1 July 1965, Mr J.P. Gaskin became the member nominated by the Minister of Housing, until 31 December 1967. Pastor D.R. Nicholls (‘being an aboriginal’) from 30 July 1957 to 16 April 1963, replaced by Mr C. Edwards, 22 July 1963 to 31 December 1967. Mr H. Blair (‘being an aboriginal’) from 30 July 1957 to c. January 1959, replaced by Mrs M. Tucker, c. March 1959 to 31 December 1967. Dr D.F.F. Thomson (‘an expert in anthropology’) from 30 July 1957 to c. 30 July 1967, replaced by Dr C.M. Tatz (‘an expert in sociology’) from 1 July 1967 to 31 December 1967. The Hon. Sir Albert Lind, M.L.A., 30 July 1957 to 22 July 1960, replaced by Mr A. Holden (‘chartered accountant of Morwell and leading figure in Apex’) 22 March 1961 to 31 December 1967. Mr D.R. Howe (‘businessman and employer of Aborigines at Moorooopna’), 30 July 1957 to 31 December 1967. When the Board was increased to eleven, pursuant to the Aborigines (Amendment) Act 1965, Dr C.M. Tatz became a member, from 1 July 1965 to 1 July 1967, (‘selected from a panel of three names submitted by the President of the Aborigines Advancement League’); replaced by Mr W.T. Onus, 1 July 1967 to 31 December 1967 (similarly selected).
its staff\textsuperscript{37} came close to being unworkable. In these circumstances, policy formulation tended to be haphazard, and decisions made at the monthly meetings were not infrequently reversed at subsequent meetings.\textsuperscript{38}

Annual Reports to Parliament in the period 1958-1967 record the Board's activities and the progress (or otherwise) of Aboriginal policy in Victoria. Rowley's comment is pertinent concerning the capacity of official reports 'to conceal rather than reveal. Ever since the days of British colonial administration a form of words and a phoney optimism had been used to keep the record respectable and the government happy'.\textsuperscript{39}

A tension is evident in the Reports. On the one hand the Board's pleas for greater funding and more staff were based on claims of success in such matters as the satisfactory housing of families previously resident in riverbank camps. On the other, the Board felt obliged to record what it saw as failings: limited success in encouraging Aboriginal students to stay at school; limited success in promoting the employment of Aboriginal adults in steady, year-round work; problems of rental arrears and so on.

Successive reports comment upon lack of staff, especially welfare officers. Full-time staff at the time of the first Report in 1958 consisted of the Superintendent,\textsuperscript{40} the Secretary to the Board,\textsuperscript{41} one Welfare Officer and a part-time housing officer at Mooroopna. In addition there was the resident staff at Lake Tyers: a Manager, Sub-Manager, Matron and Assistant Matron. Even when finance was available, there were difficulties in attracting suitable applicants. Although the staff consisted of twenty-three full-time and five part-time members in 1967, turnover was a continuing problem. All positions went to non-Aboriginal people. Whether suitable Aboriginal appointees were available remains uncertain; it seems, however, that the Board made no special efforts to recruit Aboriginal staff.

A re-housing program was at the heart of the Welfare Board's assimilation plan. 'Assimilation', in the view of Board members, meant that Aborigines should remain 'physiologically visible' but otherwise become identical with ordinary white Australians.\textsuperscript{42} It was the Board's belief that if Aborigines could be transferred from sub-standard housing to satisfactory housing that was close to employment opportunities, then they would take up jobs, encourage their children to attend local schools, pay rent and so on. That the Board adopted this broad plan is entirely understandable. McLean had highlighted the appalling housing conditions that were the lot of Aborigines throughout Victoria. He had accepted the view that because indigenous languages and rituals had disappeared, Aborigines ought to be treated as if they were poor whites. For McLean, and for the Board which set out to implement his recommendations, the distinct histories of Victoria's Aboriginal groups were not

\textsuperscript{37} Boas 1975:60; Tatz 1982:36.
\textsuperscript{38} Boas 1975:12.
\textsuperscript{39} Rowley 1973:190. The Board's Annual Reports appear in VPP; see Bibliography.
\textsuperscript{40} Mr Philip Felton, formerly a Welfare Officer of the N.S.W. Aborigines Welfare Board (1958 Report:10). He remained Superintendent throughout the Board's existence.
\textsuperscript{41} Mr T.N. Garnet, formerly Secretary to the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines. He remained Secretary till 1 January 1964 when Mr J.P. Coutts replaced him (1964 Report:5).
\textsuperscript{42} Boas 1975:61.
known, nor were the relationships both within and between the groups understood. Whether such knowledge would have altered the Board's policies is, in any case, doubtful.

The Welfare Board tackled the improvement of the Aborigines' physical environment with enthusiasm. In April 1958, just eight months after its first meeting, its first housing project, the Rumbalara Housing Settlement, was opened on land outside Moorooroopna. Ten specially built prefabricated concrete houses were made available to families previously occupying some of the thirty-four riverside shacks at Moorooroopna. The staging houses were let at subsidised rents, and electricity was paid for through a slot-meter installed at each house. Initially, they seemed a success. A part-time officer of the Board collected rents and supervised the settlement; visitors were discouraged. One family was soon re-located in Moorooroopna itself, and the Board decided to undertake a similar project at Robinvale. This second project, the Manatunga Housing Settlement, containing twelve pre-cast concrete houses, was opened in 1960.

In 1961, however, the Board decided that the Rumbalara and Manatunga Housing Settlements were 'too segregated' from white communities to fit in with the policy of assimilation. The notion of providing further staging houses was abandoned and the Board concentrated its efforts on providing housing in country towns, not in separate settlements outside them.43

Each successive survey conducted by the Board emphasised that its provision of housing was falling far short of perceived needs. There were three reasons for this. First, the Board started its work believing the Aboriginal population to be considerably smaller than it proved to be. Second, it did not anticipate the growth in the Aboriginal population that occurred. Third, the resources — finance, staff and strategies — at the disposal of the Board were inadequate for the task it set itself.

In 1958, the Board considered that at least 150 houses were required to meet housing needs throughout the state. Only some thirty Aboriginal families had by then become Housing Commission tenants of their own accord. In 1959 in support of its plea to parliament for funding to provide at least some of the two hundred houses then considered necessary, the Board stated that in general, Aboriginal housing was the worst in the state. It also stated that because of the poor physical environments in which Aboriginal children were being raised, many were being placed in institutional care following intervention by police.

As winter approached in 1961, a Board survey revealed that 197 families were in need of housing; about fifty of these families were living in shacks or riverbank humpies. Despite the fact that the Board had provided twenty-nine houses in the past year, young couples establishing families meant there was an undiminished housing need. By 1964, seventy-three Aboriginal families were living in Board houses, and a further fifty-three in Housing Commission houses or flats but a further 205 families were still in need of housing. The Board's housing program was falling behind.

43 While the Board had responsibility for the Lake Tyers Station with its thirty-three cottages, and for the Framlingham Reserve near Warrnambool with its thirteen cottages, the implementation of its assimilation policy towards the residents of these two settlements is a story beyond the scope of this paper. Concerning Lake Tyers, see Long 1970:17-23; for histories of Framlingham, see Barwick 1981 and Critchett 1980.
OFFICIAL POLICY IN VICTORIA

In 1965, the *Aborigines (Amendment) Act* transferred from the Chief Secretary to the Minister of Housing responsibility for the Board’s work. The change acknowledged the importance of the Board’s housing activities. The legislation also increased the Board’s size from ten to eleven; the new member was to be appointed by the Governor in Council from a panel of three people put forward by the Aborigines Advancement League. This amendment, indicative of the League’s growing influence, resulted in a political scientist — Dr Colin Tatz — joining the Board.

In its 1965 survey of housing needs, the Board estimated that there were ‘over 3,000 part-Aborigines in Victoria’ and that 220 houses were required. Few families remained in riverbank shacks and humpies but ‘doubling-up’ in sub-standard accommodation was still common.

The Board’s last Report to Parliament noted that only twelve or so riverbank humpies remained in the state. Some were recently built. By 1967, the Board had provided 116 houses in various country areas and at least 145 families were tenants of the Housing Commission. Stated in statistical terms, the assimilation policy as expressed through its housing program may seem to have been successful. But whatever success the Board had in achieving ‘assimilation’ was gained at a very high price. Tatz has characterised the Board’s policy in the following way:

[1]In Victoria, policy — if it had any meaning at all — was a matter of getting Aborigines into white-type houses, anywhere, anyhow, so that an aerial inspection could demonstrate the essential integration, assimilation, alikeness, equality and colourlessness of galvanised iron roofs.

Decisions about who was to be housed, when, how and where were made by the Board. Victoria’s Aboriginal population was administered in much the same way that a stern principal runs a school; decisions were made on high and imposed on those below. The language of the Board’s Reports is often indicative of how it viewed its role. Aboriginal families were to be ‘trained’, ‘rehabilitated’, ‘supervised’, ‘promoted’ to new housing when they had ‘proven themselves’, and so on. While improved housing was desperately needed, the Board’s approach assumed that if housing were provided, those who were formerly living in riverbank camps would quickly adapt to it and to white patterns of behaviour, and be eternally grateful.

The style and design of houses provided by the Board was typically suburban. They were almost invariably of three bedrooms, despite the large families the Board frequently reported, and despite the frequent inter-house visiting by relatives and friends that the Board so abhorred. Housing design was a powerful instrument of the Board’s assimilation policy, and was not negotiable with those to be housed.

In its 1965 Report, the Board admitted that its system of defining housing priorities was not being communicated to those to be housed. The Board’s selection of families

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44 Section 2. The Minister of Housing was then the Hon. L. Thompson, M.L.C., who was succeeded in that portfolio by the Hon. E.R. Meagher, M.L.A., on 1 July 1967.

45 Tatz comments that he was appointed (even though not a League member) because he was considered ‘more acceptable than the nominated League Chairman and League Secretary’, 1982:36. For comment concerning his period as a Board member, see Tatz c. 1970:22.

to be re-housed must have seemed arbitrary to those waiting. They had no formal way of making their views known to the Board.

In 'pepper-potting', or scattering Aborigines from riverbank humpies into towns and suburbs wherever the Board was able to buy land and build houses, the Board was acting either deliberately or unwittingly so as to threaten Aboriginal kinship ties and community living. Both Tatz and Boas suggest the attempt to sever ties between individuals and groups was deliberate. No doubt Board members considered that if Aboriginal families could let go of the old ways, their chances of fitting in to white neighbourhoods would be enhanced.

Although the Board certainly knew about the appalling housing conditions, poor health, poor education standards and poor unemployment record of its charges when it began work, its members had little knowledge of the dynamics of this minority group, little appreciation of its values and of the ties of some of its members to particular localities. While the Board was able to see that traditional customs, languages and ceremonies had all but disappeared, it was not able to appreciate that new and coherent patterns of behaviour and belief had taken their place. What to the Board was senseless overcrowding was to Aborigines a matter of finding accommodation near seasonal work (without the fear of rebuff at white sources of accommodation) and a matter of maintaining ties with kin and friends. In general it seems that the Board thought it was dealing with passive individuals whose behaviour could be moulded into acceptable white patterns of living. The thinking seems to have been: 'If we can house these people in white houses, they will quickly come to act like white people'.

Not surprisingly, despite improved housing for many Aboriginal families, the Board's activities proved counter-productive. Rental arrears, poor housekeeping standards, property and overcrowding were all matters that regularly came to its attention. All can be seen as the logical responses of people who had been forcefully displaced. The force used was not physical; it was administrative, bureaucratic and paternal. Some families resisted it by refusing to be re-housed and staying put in sub-standard housing.

The Board’s administration in the areas of education, employment, health-care and welfare work was informed by the same kind of approach used in the housing area. Even though the policy of assimilation that the Board was implementing was re-defined in December 1966, the thrust of its activities continued to be to try and

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47 Tatz 1982:36.
50 Civil disobedience (such as non-payment of rent, damage to property and so on) as a means through which powerless minorities can assert some measure of independence is considered by Tatz 1980:11-12; see also Tatz 1975:67.
51 See the Hon. E.R. Meagher, Second Reading Speech, Aboriginal Affairs Bill (No. 2), VPD, 534, 536.
shepherd Aboriginal people into white patterns of employment, education\(^{53}\) and housing.

Within the Board, especially since the inclusion of Dr Tatz, one group was having doubts about its administrative structure, and about its methods of policy formulation and implementation. This group began to lobby for the Board’s replacement by a Ministry and Department of Aboriginal Affairs. As public criticism was growing concerning the Board’s administration (especially with regard to the Lake Tyers Station), the state government in October 1967 introduced legislation to establish a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. That a complete reassessment of Victorian Aboriginal affairs policy was urgently needed was indicated by the fact that the state opposition strongly supported the new legislation.\(^{54}\)

**THE MINISTRY OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS 1968-1974**

Although Victoria’s *Aboriginal Affairs Act* 1967 came into operation on 1 January 1968, repealing the *Aborigines Act* 1958 and establishing the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, it was May 1968 before new initiatives began to emerge. It was then that the Ministry’s Director, Mr M.R. Worthy, a social worker, took up his position. Because the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, E.R. Meagher, had additional portfolios (Housing and Forests), the new permanent head had a large degree of autonomy in formulating specific policies.\(^{55}\) The broad policy objective embodied in the new legislation was the promotion of ‘the social and economic advancement of aborigines in Victoria’.\(^{56}\)

The Minister’s responsibilities, to be carried out by the Director, were extensive. They included taking appropriate measures to provide housing and housing loans; educational assistance; health and medical care; employment and training; rehabilitation and welfare programs and legal aid. The Minister was also required to coordinate the activities of voluntary organisations concerned with the welfare of Aborigines and to disseminate information to the public concerning Aborigines. His extensive powers indicated the government’s determination to effect sweeping changes. The somewhat haphazard administration of the Aborigines Welfare Board was to be replaced by an efficient, powerful government machine.

Whereas the Welfare Board had always experienced funding difficulties, no such problem faced the Ministry. Funding came largely from the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs within the Prime Minister’s Department.\(^{57}\) The Office was established to advise the Commonwealth government concerning the formulation of national policies towards Aborigines. While the main responsibility for formulating and implementing policies concerning Aborigines remained with the states, the Commonwealth now contributed financially to the various states’ programs.

\(^{53}\) For an account of the Board’s view of its role in the field of education, see Felton 1969:4, 8-12.

\(^{54}\) See the comments of the Hon. F. Wilkes on the *Aboriginal Affairs Bill (No. 2)*, *VPD*, 541-51.

\(^{55}\) Boas 1975:115.

\(^{56}\) *Aboriginal Affairs Act* 1967, s.4.

\(^{57}\) The origins of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs are set out in Department of Aboriginal Affairs 1974:1-3. See also Dexter 1974:1, 6.
The *Aboriginal Affairs Act* 1967 also created an Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council to advise the Minister. With the changes brought about by the *Aboriginal Affairs (Amendment) Act* 1968, membership of the Council was to consist of the Director as chairman, six people appointed by the Minister because of their expertise in areas such as health care, education, housing and social welfare, and six Aborigines who were to be elected on a regional basis. Although the Council met on a monthly basis, it came to be seen by Aborigines at least, as a ‘powerless and paternal organ’. In reality, power over the shape and implementation of Aboriginal affairs policy in Victoria was firmly in the hands of the Director.

In 1969 the Ministry’s staff increased from thirty-four to seventy-four, including twenty-three Aborigines, thirteen of whom were employed as farm hands at the Lake Tyers Station. In 1970, when it was estimated that there were about five thousand Aborigines in Victoria, the Ministry’s staff had increased to eighty-six. For the next four years, the number of staff remained at about this level. Generally about 30 per cent of the Ministry’s staff were Aboriginal, most being employed pursuant to the *Aboriginal Affairs (Amendment) Act* 1968 which allowed it to employ Aboriginal staff without having to comply with the provisions of the *Public Service Act* 1968. At any one time, about ten of the Ministry’s employees were social workers. In addition, there were visiting nurses, housekeeping advisers, liaison and field officers, rent collectors, research and publications officers and administrative staff. Not all the staff were based in Melbourne; some lived at Lake Tyers or at regional offices at Shepparton, Swan Hill, Robinvalde, Ballarat, Bairnsdale and Morwell. This commitment of resources to the area of Aboriginal affairs was unparalleled; finance provided by the Victorian government each year was significantly augmented by federal funds.

Compared with the Welfare Board, the Ministry had more accurate information concerning the size and geographic location of Victoria’s Aboriginal population, and as a valuable legacy from the Welfare Board days, it had the Board’s 1966 policy document. That document, in seeking to define the overriding policy of assimilation, emphasised that Aborigines had a right to retain their unique cultural identity if they so desired. The document also emphasised that Aboriginal views on matters affecting them should be given ‘full consideration’. Despite the creation late in the Board’s life of a progressive and coherent policy document, the Ministry saw as its guiding light a concept of equality which was to be achieved by ‘interventive technologies’. Aborigines in Victoria were to become equal to other Victorians through a series of inteventive programs which would eliminate Aboriginal deficiencies in education, employment, health and housing and as well, modify the views of the white community concerning Aborigines. The broad strategy of the Ministry has been described as a ‘race relations’ program. Whereas the Welfare Board’s primary aim was quite specific — to improve the poor housing conditions of Aborigines, conditions that were highly visible and politically embarrassing to the government of the day —

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58 Boas 1975:172.
60 Boas 1975:123, 165.
61 Boas 1975:163.
OFFICIAL POLICY IN VICTORIA

the Ministry directed programs towards both the Aboriginal and white populations of Victoria. The programs, across a broad range of areas, were designed to produce ‘boundary permeability’.\(^62\) Obstacles preventing Aborigines from participating fully in the life of the general community were to be removed. These obstacles were seen to include inadequate job and social skills, poor health standards, and the unfavourable images of Aborigines held by large sections of the white population.

While the Welfare Board wanted to avoid conflict and tension in implementing its housing program, the Ministry believed that conflict could be engineered and then managed to achieve desired ends.\(^63\) The Ministry was supremely confident of the efficacy of its social work theories and strategies,\(^64\) believing that Aborigines would ultimately benefit from the programs, even if in the short term the programs produced uncertainty or a sense of crisis in their recipients. In his first report, the newly appointed Director thanked Victoria’s Aborigines for ‘their willingness to attempt to understand the confusing changes which have again been thrust on them’. While Mr Worthy promised that in future ‘consultation will be the key and the basis for all advancement in Aboriginal Affairs’,\(^65\) this in practice amounted to little more than attempts to ascertain the likelihood of acceptance for, or opposition to, already formulated plans. Despite the fact that the Ministry had a number of methods of consulting Aboriginal opinion,\(^66\) it is difficult to believe that that opinion counted for much alongside the faith shown by officials in the scientific basis of their programs.

The Ministry’s first concern was to abolish any practice that smacked of a paternalistic, ‘hand-out’ mentality. In its view, if it acted as a buffer between Aborigines and the usual sanctions applied by authorities within the community for acts such as damage to property or omissions such as non-payment of rent, Aborigines would receive confirmation of their inferior status. This strand in the Ministry’s thinking was at odds with its determination to make up the deficit for Aboriginal people in terms of health standards, education levels, job skills and so on. On the one hand, the Ministry saw no justification for behaviour which treated Aborigines ‘differently’. On the other, the whole raison d’être of the Ministry was to promote ‘the social and economic advancement’ of the state’s Aborigines by providing special schemes for Aborigines. It seems the Ministry never clearly resolved this dilemma. In the name of promoting ‘equality’, it scrapped some Welfare Board schemes and


\(^{64}\) The Director commented on the Ministry ‘social engineering’ program at Lake Tyers; see Worthy 1973. The plan for this Station was indicative of the Ministry’s view of its role throughout Victoria. Reference to the ‘social engineering’ principles guiding the Ministry appeared in its Reports: 1972 Report:7-8; 1974 Report:5. And see Boas 1972:21, 25; but for an expression of doubt about the state of knowledge concerning planned social change see Boas 1975:179.


\(^{66}\) An annual meeting with ‘a limited representation of Aboriginal people’; annual ‘consultations’ in each of the State’s seven regions; and monthly meetings of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council: Boas 1975:167.
launched a wide variety of programs of its own in the fields of education, housing, employment and training, and public relations.

These activities took place during a time of rapid social change in Australia. American and Australian involvement in the Vietnam war was provoking a widespread reassessment of national goals and values. Government policies towards Aborigines made up just one aspect of life in Australia that was widely being subjected to scrutiny. Not only were people taking an increased interest in Aboriginal affairs, they were actively involved in trying to help. In 1969, there were thirty-five voluntary organisations in Victoria working in the field of Aboriginal affairs, seventeen of them in Melbourne.67 It was the Ministry's task to coordinate the activities of these various groups, as well as the occasional work done by service clubs, church groups and schools. The task was a formidable one.

The Ministry saw improved educational standards as central to creating greater opportunities for Aborigines and as the key to promoting increased acceptance of them. To encourage secondary students to stay at school and to assist their families financially, it extended a scheme commenced by the Board under which students were paid an annual clothing and book allowance. In 1969, the system of giving clothing vouchers to those eligible was replaced by a system of direct cash payments. The indignities of the Board's paternalistic approach were being removed. While enrolments in secondary schools continually increased during the Ministry's existence,68 there was a continuing concern that Aboriginal students were seriously under-represented in the upper forms and in tertiary education institutions. The Ministry supported an adult education scheme at Swan Hill and it initiated a tutorial scheme which involved undergraduate students at tertiary institutions visiting Aboriginal students in their homes to offer assistance and advice concerning study.

Financial assistance was provided for the needy parents of primary students, and under one scheme, payments (known as 'scholarships'), were granted to children and parents on the basis of satisfactory attendance and achievement at primary schools by the children. A pre-school scheme was introduced in 1972 and a year later, a mobile pre-school (staffed by two kindergarten teachers and two Aboriginal assistants) began operating in East Gippsland.

The Ministry continued to acquire and rent houses, announcing that it would be 'several years before every Aboriginal family is able to obtain adequate conventional housing'.69 In 1969 it introduced grants of $1,500 to assist with the purchase of properties. After screening applicants, social workers recommended the payment of some twenty to thirty grants each year. Meanwhile the Rumbalara and Manatunga 'transition settlements' were dismantled.

Numerous programs were developed as part of a wider plan of 'social engineering': training and employment schemes and public relations activities. The Ministry's faith in the scientific basis of its programs was unwavering:

68 In 1967, 243 Aboriginal students were enrolled in secondary schools; by 1974, the number was 640: 1974 Report: 10.
OFFICIAL POLICY IN VICTORIA

The Ministry believes that social engineering principles are as fundamental as any relating to the physical sciences. The programs which have been developed and maintained in this State, based on these principles, are a clear demonstration of the validity of this claim.\textsuperscript{70}

But the 1974 annual report revealed that the programs, and those who implemented them, were not always appreciated:

The foundations for the development of initiatives to remove the need for welfare have been laid using the social engineering skills of a dedicated staff who, on many occasions, have been misunderstood by the people whom they have served.\textsuperscript{71}

The ultimate goal was 'a truly united community with all citizens sharing equal responsibility and opportunity'.\textsuperscript{72} This vision meant Ministry efforts were aimed at encouraging Aboriginal people to use the health, welfare and legal aid facilities already supplied by other government departments or employment, housing or welfare agencies. These services were not to be re-shaped to meet Aboriginal needs; the people were to be prepared to cope with the services. If the Ministry were successful, it thought it could work itself out of a job in twenty years. In the early 1970s, separate Aboriginal health and legal aid services were being discussed, much to the chagrin of the Ministry. The idea that Aborigines should 'run their own affairs' was anathema to those who hoped that the affairs of Aborigines would soon merge with those of the rest of the population.\textsuperscript{73}

Yet Aboriginal people did want to run what they saw as their own affairs. The Ministry was unprepared for opposition to its policies and administration, and opposition there most certainly was. The principles of social engineering were being implemented at a time when Aboriginal groups and individuals were becoming politically active and when the numbers of their white supporters were growing. A keener sense of identity meant Aborigines were moving away from the integration plan guiding the Ministry. The 1973 report noted that Aboriginal people in Melbourne were planning their own health service, which was quite contrary to Ministry policy. Matters were beginning to get beyond its control and the experience was not pleasant; opposition increased.

The popular fashion in Aboriginal affairs this year [1973] is to "knock" government departments irrespective of whether it is action or inaction which is under scrutiny. The result is always the same — we are damned if we do and damned if we don't . . . If we employ Aborigines they are accused for being "stooges"; if we don't employ them we are accused of denying them employment opportunities . . . If we promote Aboriginal organisations we are told we have supported the "wrong ones"; if we neglect to promote Aboriginal organisations we are told we are "empire building" for white administrators . . . It is interesting to note that on all occasions there are Aborigines and members of the public who take both sides of every issue.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70} 1974 Report:5.
\textsuperscript{72} 1971 Report:2.
\textsuperscript{73} 1972 Report:7-8; and see Boas 1972:26-7.
\textsuperscript{74} 1973 Report:4-5.
The widening gap between the Ministry and those it was meant to serve is evident in the following report of two meetings:

In addition to the consultation between Ministry officers and Aboriginal people during normal activities, two formal meetings were held in the Goulburn Valley and East Gippsland areas. It was clearly evident from the tension which was created during the meetings that communication between Government authorities and the people must increase. Heated discussion, denials and counter-denials revealed a serious credibility gap.\(^75\)

For an increasing number of Aboriginal people, the Ministry was becoming ‘the enemy’. It was a bureaucratic government department staffed principally by white people. The Ministry, rather than Aboriginal people, decided how ‘Aboriginal money’ (money allocated for spending on Aboriginal affairs) was to be spent. Inevitably it became the first target for Aboriginal groups and individuals exercising new-found political power, principally because its policies gave Ministry officials considerable power over the lives of Aboriginal people. They decided which Aboriginal families would be allocated housing loans and Ministry rental accommodation;\(^76\) which tenants would be evicted; which subsidised rents would be increased to commercial levels; which potential employees would receive training; which non-Aboriginal voluntary organisations would receive Ministry assistance; which Aboriginal organisations would receive Ministry funding; and so on. The Ministry set the priorities. It initiated some schemes, and rejected others, all in the name of ‘social engineering’, a program designed to merge Aboriginal people with the broader population. It became a focus around which Aboriginal groups coalesced because of their opposition to the Ministry’s administration. The Ministry was indeed fostering political activity, but not the type it favoured.

Opposition meant that the position of its Director, Mr M.R. Worthy, became untenable. During debate in October 1974 on the *Aboriginal Affairs (Transfer of Functions) Bill* (the proposed legislation to pass administration of Aboriginal affairs in Victoria to the Commonwealth), the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Meagher, paid tribute to Mr Worthy, ‘... one of the greatest friends of the Aboriginal people in Australia’.\(^77\) The compliment brought a swift response from Victorian Aboriginal organisations, and from the Opposition spokesman on Aboriginal affairs, Mr Barry Jones. After a meeting convened on 27 October 1974 by the Aborigines Advancement League, representatives of eleven Aboriginal organisations repudiated

\(^{75}\) 1974 Report: 17.

\(^{76}\) Such decisions may have been based on considerations other than those relating to housing needs: ‘There is every reason to believe that this weapon [discrimination between Aboriginal families] has been used in the past to persuade members of the Aboriginal community, who might be vocal in their criticisms, to modify them or to be silent altogether, rather than lose what is in many cases a substantial concession – the opportunity of renting a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs home ... People who do the right thing by the Ministry, and do not kick over the traces or object to what the Ministry does will have a better chance of obtaining a Ministry house ...’. Mr B.J. Evans, (Country Party), *VPD*, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 2416.

OFFICIAL POLICY IN VICTORIA

the statement, saying that 'Mr Worthy had never been a friend of the Victorian Aborigines. He is a public servant implementing the policies of his State Government and not the wishes of the Victorian Aboriginal people'.78 Mr Jones observed that 'those who approve of Mr Worthy — Ministers, journalists and public servants — have one thing in common; they are all white'.79

In April 1973 negotiations began between the Victorian and federal governments concerning the transfer to the Commonwealth of responsibility for Aboriginal affairs, which was effected by the Commonwealth Aboriginal Affairs (Arrangements with the States) Act 1973 and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs (Transfer of Functions) Act 1974. The Victorian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs ceased to exist on 31 December 1974; the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, through its new Victorian Regional Office, took over most of its responsibilities the next day.

While supporting the Victorian legislation in principle, the state Opposition reviewed the Ministry's period of stewardship and concluded that its underlying philosophy had been one of assimilation, a view with which the former Minister, E.R. Meagher, agreed.80 Mr Worthy did not take up the position the state government expected he would occupy: first Director of the Victorian Office of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs.81 Probably because of the strength of the opposition to his style of administration, especially from Aboriginal organisations, he took up instead a Department of Aboriginal Affairs post in Brisbane.82

CONCLUSION

If Aboriginal affairs from 1957 to 1974 can be characterised by a desire to merge Aborigines with the broader population, that policy can be judged to have had limited

78 The organisations issuing the statement were the Aborigines Advancement League, the National Aboriginal Congress — Areas 1 and 3, the Aboriginal and Island Women's Association, the United Council of Aboriginal Women, the Nindethana Theatre Company, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd, the Goulburn and Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd. (Speech of Mr Jones, VPD, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 1840.)

79 VPD Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 1839. Comments concerning Mr Worthy continued to pepper debate on the Aboriginal Affairs (Transfer of Functions) Bill. The Minister tabled letters of support for Mr Worthy from Sir Douglas Nicholls and Mr Stewart Murray, Director of the Aborigines Advancement League: VPD, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 2334. It was subsequently pointed out by Mr Jones that Sir Douglas Nicholls was then working 'within the framework of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs' (as a consultant to the Director) and that Mr Murray had recently accepted an appointment to the Ministry: VPD, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 2334. Tributes to Mr Worthy came from the Hon T.W. Mitchell (Country Party) VPD, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 1851; the Hon. Mrs D.A. Goble (Liberal Party), VPD, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 2424.


81 The State Government's expectation is made clear when one considers Clause 6 of the draft arrangement between the Commonwealth and State Governments: the Director of the Ministry was to be 'entitled to elect to be appointed ... to the office of Director [of the new Department of Aboriginal Affairs Victorian Regional Office]'. VPD, Mr B.O. Jones, Session 1974-76, Vol. 319, 1837.

82 Mr Worthy was later to return to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Office in Melbourne. One view of Mr Worthy's period of administration in Aboriginal Affairs is contained in 'Worthy of Contempt!' in Mureena: The Aboriginal Student Newspaper 3(3) August 1978, 3.
success. By the end of the period the continued sense of identity among Victoria's Aborigines was finding expression in the creation of Aboriginal organisations such as health and legal services. To the officials who had hoped that Aborigines would make use of existing community services, such developments were anathema. With funding made available as a result of new Commonwealth policy aims, Victorian Aborigines could at last achieve ambitions long frustrated by policies formulated by white officials in what were thought to be the best interests of Aborigines.

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ABORIGINAL FERTILITY AT THE TIME OF EUROPEAN CONTACT:
THE DALY RIVER MISSION BAPTISMAL REGISTER

Alan Gray

When European colonists first came into contact with Aboriginal Australians, no anthropologists, demographers, sociologists or missionaries described the structure of Aboriginal families as they existed at the moment of contact. On the Aboriginal side, ceremony, tradition and myth were certainly centred on creative processes and kinship, but on a higher plane than the mundane matters that interest demographers. It is also unfortunately true that by the time European interest in Aboriginal society first became evident, the demographic structure of Aboriginal communities had already been affected by contact: when the first European settlers arrived in Brisbane in 1825, old Aboriginal men there carried the marks of a death-dealing smallpox epidemic that 'had come amongst them long before the time of the European people, killing off numbers of their comrades'.¹ Not until about this time was there even any move to have missionaries work exclusively among Aborigines, the first missionary with the specific task of ministering to Aboriginal people having come to the Sydney colony only in 1821, thirty-three years after European settlement.²

An attempt to discuss Aboriginal demography before contact with Europeans therefore raises a serious historiographical problem: direct sources, Aboriginal or European, are hard to come by. It also passes over the question of why anyone would want to determine Aboriginal fertility patterns at the time of first contact or before first contact, and perhaps this question ought to be answered before trying to come to grips with knotty historiographical problems.³ Certainly, an attempt to describe Aboriginal fertility before European contact should not be seen as one of finding out something about ‘traditional’ Aboriginal society, as if this was ever something unchanging. It would be as wrong to have expected ‘traditional’ Aboriginal society to remain unchanged after 1788 as it would be to expect that European society now should bear a close resemblance to European colonial society in 1788.

Alan Gray, a research scholar in demography in the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, is about to submit a thesis on Australian Aboriginal fertility in decline.

¹ Petrie 1904:65 (A recent book by N.G. Butlin, describing depopulation as a result of smallpox epidemics, appeared after this article was written.)
² Woolmington 1973:86.
³ When demographers refer to ‘fertility’ they are referring to birthrates, not the capacity to bear children, which they call ‘fecundity’. The two measures of fertility which are mentioned in this paper are: (1) the crude birth rate, which is the number of births in a year divided by the mean population in that year (and usually multiplied by 1000); (2) the total fertility rate, which is the number of children that a woman would bear in her life if she experienced each of the age specific birth rates applying in the population as a whole.
ABORIGINAL FERTILITY

The matter is nevertheless important. Smith proposes a set of parameters within which to discuss the history of Aboriginal population decline, resulting from massacre, epidemic and dispossession, and its later resurgence. Depopulation is as central an issue in Aboriginal contact history as the dispossession which prompted it. Smith believed that it was 'almost certain that Aboriginal populations in pre-European times maintained their numbers relatively constant as a result of a balance between a fairly high birth rate and a fairly high death rate', each of which he estimated to have been about forty per thousand population per annum. He went on to discuss the subsequent fall in the birth rate to the levels first recorded, and the more recent increases during the middle part of the twentieth century. If Smith is right, Aboriginal fertility in recent times can be seen as a recovery to pre-contact levels.

The trouble is that almost all the evidence from anthropologists points to Aborigines having once had low fertility. On the basis of evidence drawn from many different parts of the country, Cowlishaw has recently disputed Smith's assumptions and concluded that fertility was traditionally low. Earlier, Malinowski had cited a long string of statements concerning the structure of families, from which the following points emerge: according to most observers, the norm for a family was approximately two living children under the age of puberty at any time; although infanticide was reported to have been practised in order to maintain this family size, and infanticide rates of thirty per cent were reported with much substantiation, high incidence was probably unusual; breastfeeding was extended, to at least three years and sometimes up to six years. There is said to have been a population explosion following the establishment of a settled pattern of life at Yirrkala in north-east Arnhem Land in the 1940s. Another source maintains that tradition-oriented Aborigines had norms of three or more children in some groups and a limit, per wife, of two in one desert tribe. The large family size that younger Aboriginal women have more recently achieved is said to have caused dismay on the part of older women. The fact is that the hunter-gatherer way of life is not compatible with large family size.

The common characteristic of these pieces of evidence, all of which appear to contradict Smith's assumption, is that they refer to family size rather than fertility. The size of families is determined by mortality rates as well as fertility rates, and by family formations and reformations. The purpose of this paper is to draw on data from

4 Smith 1980:226.
5 Cowlishaw 1981.
6 Malinowski 1913:234 ff.
7 See Cowlishaw 1978. Reported incidence must be regarded with suspicion, as direct evidence would not generally have been available. Infanticide is the kind of thing that another tribe does (because its members are considered to be barbarians). Some early reports may be of that nature. For the area which is the subject of this paper, MacKillop 1893 reports that cannibalism of infants is extensively practised, but then says that 'a blackfellow will always deny that his tribe practices cannibalism, but accuses every other tribe of the same'.
8 Berndt 1970.
9 Connon 1975.
10 Connon 1975.
one locality at a particular point in time in order to demonstrate how small family size can in fact be reconciled with high fertility. It will be shown that a pattern of high fertility, apparently unmodified by fertility control measures, existed among Daly River tribes in the 1880s and 1890s — but that mortality was also high in infancy and early childhood. The result was that actual family size conformed closely to the ethnographic descriptions obtained from so many parts of the country.

The evidence is provided by the Daly River baptismal register, maintained over a period of thirteen years by the fathers of the Society of Jesus at the Daly River Mission Station between 1888 and 1901. This is of course one hundred years after the establishment of the first European settlement in Australia, but the Daly River, halfway down the coast between Darwin and the Cambridge Gulf, was at the frontier of European settlement. This is not to say that the Aboriginal people there were unaffected by European contact; indeed, the baptismal register is a product of it. But contact had been very recent and the Aborigines in the area were probably not under any concerted pressure at the time the register was written.

The mission had been founded about November 1886.11 The earliest European penetration into the area had been by the McMinn party surveying the route for the overland telegraph in 1871, and gold diggers were in the area east of the Daly River by about 1874.12 By the early 1880s the Daly River Station was operating in the district and a sugar plantation on the Daly had been started and abandoned.13 There may have been intermittent violence in this period but no massacres of Aborigines were reported until 1884. In that year, a copper mine was established near the site of the former sugar plantation, and Aborigines killed four miners. In the words of Hill, there was prompt retaliation in the form of 'riding Queensland style' — massacre.14 This undoubtedly affected more than the 'Wilwonga' people who had been held responsible. The copper mine and another nearby were worked intermittently until the early 1890s, but despite early hopes on the part of government officials they appear never to have become large-scale operations, and employed only a few dozen men in 1886.15

This contact history is important. There emphatically was contact on the Daly River before 1886 when the mission was established, and the history of other places leads us to suspect that this contact would have carried with it disease that particularly affected Aborigines, who generally had low resistance to the particular bacteria and viruses responsible. Intermittent violence around the edges of the Daly area undoubtedly persisted too. But the contact was very recent and hardly extensive by 1886. The vice-Superior of the Mission reported that lack of contact was the reason

11 Holtze 1886. The writer was Government Gardener in Palmerston (Darwin).
12 Hill 1951.
13 Reports of the Government Resident 1883.
14 Hill 1951.
15 Report of the Government Resident, 30 June 1886. See also Flynn 1957, for a description of the reasons for establishing the mission and a summary of its history from the missionaries' point of view. Even though the missionaries wished to move beyond the frontier of settlement, by doing so they were of course pushing it further.
he held out so much hope for the mission.16 The mission Superior spelt out the reasons:

The land, our share of it at least, is very poor, but game abounds. The uninviting character of the soil may prevent the only thing we fear — the occupation of the country by our white brethren. However loyal to what is held to be the good of Australia, in the interests of the natives whom Australia dispossesses, and to whom out of her abundance she cannot afford even one small native territory, we do fear this.17

The Daly River baptismal register kept by the Society of Jesus may therefore be as close as exists to a register of vital events for an Aboriginal society at the time of first contact with Europeans.18 Few missions to the Aborigines began as this Jesuit one did — as an attempt to introduce Christianity directly into the tribal context. A more common pattern was the one provided by the Bathurst Island mission of a slightly later era. There, children were removed from the tribal way of life and raised institutionally. As these children grew to adulthood and other adults came into association with the mission, it would more and more closely resemble a complete society. But its vital records, however extensive, could never be used to examine demographic characteristics at the time of first contact.

The Daly River baptismal register is, of course, only one source document for one particular locality. There is as little reason to suppose that demographic characteristics such as birth and death rates were the same in different parts of the country as there would be to suppose that they did not change over time, that populations did not rise and fall and migrations, expansions and contractions take place.

What the baptismal register can do is to throw some light on the apparent conflict between the descriptions provided by anthropologists on the one hand, and demographic likelihood on the other, by trying to reconcile the outcome of small family size with actual fertility behaviour.

For each baptism, the register recorded: a serial number; date of birth; date of baptism; name of father; name of mother; christian name of baptised; tribal name of baptised; place of birth; home country ("patria"); sponsor (godparent); minister; date of death, where applicable, for deaths occurring at any time in the remaining life of the register; and notes. There are 363 of these line entries between 13 November 1888 and 12 December 1901, after which there are a small number of other entries scattered in time (1904, 1905, 1911, 1912) which seem to have been made on visits to the area and which may be disregarded for current purposes. A note concerning a death in about February 1902 says that news of the death was received in March 1902. The missionaries were probably no longer present by that time: Flynn wrote that the mission was closed by decisions of ‘authorities in the south’ and the last of the missionaries left in 1902.19

16 Society of Jesus 1888.
17 Society of Jesus 1889.
18 It is, however, not intended to suggest that it is unique. A number of other registers exist but may not refer to situations as close to the pre-contact situation.
19 Flynn 1957:211.
Most of the baptisms, which are recorded in Latin in the register, are in the same meticulous spidery hand, and the short notes the writer made against some of the events contain much illuminating information in themselves.

In this way we learn that many baptisms occurred ‘in periculo mortis’, in peril of death. Some were ‘in putato periculo mortis violentae’, thought to be in peril of violent death. One entry referred to a man ‘lanceis 5 percussus’, struck five times with spears. The note ‘patre polygamo’, polygamous father, recurs frequently. Some were baptised, ‘in gravi morbo’, in grave illness. Two were ‘morsus a serpente Tyut’, bitten by a Tyut snake. Then, as for Aborigines nowadays, worry about snakes entering camps would have been a significant concern. Four entries referred to babies that were ‘castae mixtae’ with Chinese fathers from the copper mines. A number of babies were said to be illegitimate, but what standard of legitimacy was being applied is not clear.

One note near the start of the register translates as follows: ‘Three important matters are to be noted and changed so that what the baptismal register will contain will not be alien to the laws and practices of the church.

1. A boy should never be the sponsor of a girl of the same age, and generally speaking a sponsor should be of the same sex as the person to be baptised because of the requirement that their kinship should be spiritual, and because of other inconveniences which easily arise from the way the natives live together, as is obvious’.20

At first sight this says that a person of the same age and opposite sex should never be the sponsor (godparent) of the baptised, because of the likelihood of kinship other than spiritual, meaning carnal. But it is unlikely that the missionaries could have thought that sexual unions were likely to exist between any such opposite sex pairs. Throughout Aboriginal society, marriage was permissible only between strictly defined categories of people. On the Daly River, some of the tribes had kinship rules different from the more usual subsection and moiety kinship systems of northern Australia. In these Daly River tribes, marriage could not take place between classificatory parallel cousins, actual cross cousins, or closer relatives. To further regulate this, all members of the third preceding and third succeeding generations were classified as a person’s brothers and sisters.21 It is possible that the prohibition by the missionaries was in response to an attempt by the Aborigines to superimpose some actual kin relationship on the baptismal relationship between godparents and godchildren, and that they disapproved of the innovation.

Another interesting entry concerns the only multiple birth recorded, which happened to be of triplets. All were baptised on the day of their birth, with the note ‘in putato periculo mortis violentae’, thought to be in danger of violent death. One in fact died four days later, the other two nine days after that. The note substantiates the practice of infanticide in cases of multiple births, reputedly with the purpose of

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20 He then refers to examples in the register where the requirement was not met. The other two ‘important matters’ are administrative matters only. I am grateful to Dr C. Mayrhofer of the Department of Classics, Australian National University, for his help in translating this and other parts of the register.

21 Stanner 1933:391-392.
ABORIGINAL FERTILITY

leaving only one child. Causes of death were generally not recorded in the register, and were not on this occasion.

An early entry refers to an 'abortivus'. This almost certainly means stillbirth, not abortion. But it is still interesting to note that in this case the Jesuits gave the still-born child a Christian name, while no tribal name is recorded. One can only speculate about what the Aborigines thought of the insistence of the missionaries on naming a child born dead, and administering a sacrament to it. There are strong prohibitions on even mentioning the names of Aboriginal people who have died, let alone giving them names.22 No other still-born children were recorded in the register.

As a direct source of ethnographic information, the register can yield no more than these scattered pieces of information that have been mentioned. But a detailed internal comparison and analysis is much more fruitful.

Details from all the entries except for the small number against which no mothers were recorded were transferred onto index cards, one for each couple who had had children baptised, alphabetically arranged according to the mother's names. Each person baptised was recorded on his parents' card with location in the register, date of birth, name and date of death, where applicable. Names of persons baptised were also crossreferenced to principal entries so that the dates of birth and death of some mothers are recorded.

This arrangement yielded some additional sociological data. There were no cases of women taking more than one husband at once — none would be expected in an Aboriginal community — but polygyny appeared to be quite common, as would also be anticipated. There were six cases recorded of birth sequences to fathers which definitely established non-serial polygyny in the sense that first one wife bore a child, then another wife did, then the first did again.

A total of 211 children were baptised in the 1888-1901 period who had also been born during the period, and in each of 48 cases the mother had herself also been baptised, so that her age at time of giving birth was known. The ages of these mothers was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>25-29</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>30-34</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the ages of only a minority of mothers were recorded, their age distribution seems to indicate that childbirth took place right throughout the fecund years of a woman's life according to a pattern of natural fertility; that is, without fertility control.23

22 But see Stanner 1934:11. Names given by Europeans were exempt from this prohibition on the Daly River in the 1930s.

23 Fertility patterns are said by demographers to be 'natural' if they deviate little from the pattern in populations known to practise no fertility control — particularly the North American Hutterite religious sect. See Coale and Trussel 1974:187 ff.
Few births were recorded as having taken place in the first few years of the register, but this does not necessarily indicate any increase in the rate of birth during the period of the register. It is possible that the acceptance of the missionaries was less in the early days, and in any case their efforts at first were largely directed towards baptising adults. It is clear that the missionaries were in no rush to make conversions, since the first recorded baptism took place two years after the mission had been founded.

Of course, the register is not strictly a birth register. Many baptisms were of adults not babies, and in any case a baptism may have taken place sufficiently long after a birth for some infant deaths to have been missed. A number of children would not have been baptised at all, including any infanticide cases. The true number of births to Aborigines in contact with the mission is therefore unknown, as is their exact population.

Reports to the Territory's Government Resident were made by the mission annually from 1887 to 1898 and are included as appendices to the Resident's Reports. These give population figures that refer only to the numbers of Aborigines actually living at the mission station (about 80 in 1897 for example), but the true population in contact with the mission and covered by the register was much larger. In addition, the mission was centred at three different places during the period, admittedly not far from each other but possibly affecting the number of people who were in contact at any point in time. This uncertainty about the size of the population in contact with the mission does not affect the kind of analysis to be undertaken here. This is because estimates of fertility are to be based on the length of intergenetic intervals; i.e. the time that elapses between successive births to individual mothers. It can be assumed with some confidence that if an Aboriginal mother had one child baptised then her subsequent children will also have been baptised, and that if she was baptised then any children she subsequently had will also have been baptised. Expressed in months, these intergenetic intervals had the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-41</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-44</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-47</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-53</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54-56</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be easily calculated that the mean intergenetic birth interval, where at least two children were born to the mother and baptised during the register period, was quite short: thirty-four months in fact. It might be argued that this result reflects truncation problems in the data, arising from the short length of the period during which the register operated, but these can hardly have been important as only four intergenetic intervals in excess of sixty months were recorded in a total register period longer than

24 Reports of the Government Resident 1883 and subsequent.
25 About 500 according to the report for 1897.
ABORIGINAL FERTILITY

twice that. Some women had only one birth/baptism during the period of the register, but in the cases where the mother’s age was also known, it was found that two thirds were either less than twenty or more than forty years of age, and were therefore entering or leaving their fertile years at the time. Some would also have died having given birth only once. It is safe to assume that an intergenetic interval longer than the maximum shown in the table was highly unusual among the Daly River peoples.

This indicates that quite a high level of fertility prevailed, but it was moderated to a considerable extent by infecundity: of the women whose ages were known and who were aged between 15 and 49 during the register period (a total of fifty-three), over one third (nineteen) had given birth to no children that had been baptised; and of those, only two had had children born outside the register period and baptised. As the women were themselves baptised, it is reasonable to suppose that any children they were having would be too, and that they were therefore not bearing children. Universality of marriage in this society allows no explanation other than infecundity, since although nine of the nineteen died during the period of the register, only two of these deaths occurred near its start.27

Because of the natural fertility pattern, it is possible to use these data to obtain an estimate of the total fertility rate (TFR), using the formula

\[ \text{TFR} = E(L/I). \]

Here E denotes expected value, L denotes the length of the reproductive period, and I denotes the intergenetic interval. If L is assumed constant at 33 years,28 and I is expressed in months, this becomes

\[ \text{TFR} = 33 \times 12 \times E(1/I). \]

The total fertility rate was calculated using this formula from the preceding data for the total female population with two or more children born or baptised during the register period, using also an estimate of the number childless (fifty-one, in accordance with the proportion 19/53 obtained for those women whose ages were known). The result was a total fertility rate of 9.0.

This result is high, despite the apparent prevalence of infecundity, and would be consistent with a crude birth rate somewhere in excess of 40 per thousand. Since there is no logical reason to suppose that higher birth rates were associated with higher baptismal rates, this result can be assumed to apply to the total population in the register area at the time. How then does this match up with the anthropological contention that fertility was relatively low? Here the register again provides the answer. Out of the 211 children born and baptised during the register period, 47 died before reaching the age of one year. Although the figures are certainly incomplete, since there must have been many babies who died before baptism could take place, the data nevertheless show a very high infant death rate. A further 15 children died before the age of two.

27 Stanner 1933 confirms universal marriage among Daly River tribes.

28 See Brass 1975:20. The mean length of the reproductive period between menarche and menopause varies between 30 and 36 years in human populations, with an overall mean value of 33 years.
There may have been some epidemic among babies born during the years 1897 to 1899. Over half the children born in 1898 and baptised died within the first twelve months of life. The mission reports for these years do mention health problems, including a skin disease, but there is no reference to an epidemic affecting children in particular.29

The following table brings together the high numbers of deaths of children with the high numbers of births. The table records, for each woman of fertile age recorded in the register, how many children she bore and saw baptised and how many of these died, all during the period that the register was kept.

Daly River Mission Register of Baptisms.
Women of fertile age, by number of births during register period
and number of these children who died during the period of the register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Births</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>51*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes an estimate for the number of childless women who did not appear in the register.

The diagonal and sub-diagonals of this table show what might be called the effective fertility pattern: the number of children born during the register period who remain alive at its end in 1901. The main diagonal (51+19+3+3) records effective issue of zero, the first sub-diagonal (45+13+7) records effective issue of one, and so on. An anthropologist who visited the area in 1901 would have found the following distribution of children under the age of thirteen (under the simplifying but slightly incorrect assumption that none of the mothers had died):

76 women of fertile age with no children under 13;
65 with one child under 13;
23 with two children under 13;
7 with three children under 13.

It can finally be seen that the high fertility assumption of Smith and the anthropologists' reports of low fertility are quite compatible in the case of the Daly River data. It is all a matter of what is meant. The Daly River people did have high fertility, high enough to give a crude birth rate of well over 40 per thousand — probably in the region of 56 per thousand.30

29 Reports of the Government Resident, 1897 and 1898.
30 This conclusion is based on fitting a model life table to the age distribution of all deaths (not given here) and the total fertility rate calculated above.
ABORIGINAL FERTILITY

But very high levels of mortality in children under the age of two meant that the number of surviving children under the age of puberty was always small. Although it would be dangerous to generalise indiscriminately from this particular case to all of Aboriginal Australia, the results given here do provide a reasonable path to pursue in explaining the apparent contradictions more generally.

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INTRODUCTION

From 1823 onwards, Europeans came in increasing numbers to that part of New South Wales that was later to become Queensland. As a result it was inevitable that some form of English would become the lingua franca between the original inhabitants of the land and the intruders just as it had done in New South Wales. Indeed, because Queensland was originally part of New South Wales and was largely settled from it in the important formative years between 1823 and 1859 it was highly likely that forms of Pidgin English spoken in New South Wales would form the basis of that lingua franca, if it was not adopted entirely.

The purpose of this paper is to look briefly, and somewhat impressionistically (for want of better data and historical knowledge at this point) at the questions implied in these claims; e.g. How did Aborigines and Europeans communicate in early Queensland? Was there a recognised standard Pidgin English? If so, how did it develop and why; if not, why not? This is attempted by presenting and discussing linguistic data that have been obtained from a varied, though limited number of sources, both published and unpublished, covering the relevant period, and by relating those to socio-economic developments in Queensland at that time.

These data (together with some attitudinal notes) are those presented in Appendices 1 to 5. They range roughly over the period 1838 to 1900 and can be divided into five sets according to time and geographical location: those in Appendix 1 come from the south-east corner of what is now Queensland but was at that time the convict settlement of Moreton Bay (see Map 1). Those in Appendix 2 come from the squatting area inland of where Brisbane now is but outside the area of the former...

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1 This is a revised version of a paper 'Early Queensland Pidgin English: A Beginning Account' presented to the 53rd ANZAAS Congress in Perth, May 1983. I should like to express my thanks to the Australian National University for providing me with the opportunity and wherewithal to attend that congress and to carry out the research on which this paper is based. I should also like to thank the following for assisting in that research leading to the location of data presented herein: the Director and staff of the Queensland State Archives and the staff of the Oxley Library, Brisbane; Dr N. Gunson, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University; Professor B. Rigsby and Messrs G. Langevad and W. Love of, or care of, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, the University of Queensland, St Lucia, Brisbane. Of course none of these can be held responsible for the use made of the materials herein.

PIDGIN ENGLISH IN QUEENSLAND

penal settlement of Moreton Bay. Those in Appendix 3 are later and come from scattered points about the state but generally north and north-west of those covered in Appendix 2. Appendices 4 and 5 give comparative data from New South Wales at the time.

These data are interesting in that they exhibit obvious features of pidginisation of English (e.g., use of such syntactico-lexical items as been, fellow, -im (on verbs), me, plenty, belong, longa, byamby, close up, what for) and confirm to some extent casual reports that some form of Pidgin English was used by, and between Aborigines and Europeans in early Queensland. However, the researcher's task is to attempt to go beyond casual observations and reports, and to provide as precise as possible answers to the sorts of questions that were referred to above. This is no easy task even in the best of circumstances but in the present case where the study is just beginning it is made more difficult by the kind and amount of data available.

Thus, for example, all the data used in this study are biased in one way or another since all have been obtained from written sources in which descriptions are made solely from a European point of view. There are no Aboriginal sources and the Aboriginal side of the contact picture is never given. Furthermore, in no cases are the data actually phonetically or otherwise accurately recorded words or stretches of speech at the time of utterance. Instead they are merely items attributed to speakers (by Europeans) at some other (usually considerably later) time and usually for some particular (but usually comic) reason. As a result there are serious gaps in the data and the precise socio-linguistic details about what was actually said and done are not provided and cannot be recovered from the available descriptions. Instead the intricacies of contact across the Aboriginal-English linguistic boundary are left to the imagination of the researcher and are usually passed off with such tantalising, all-embracing and quite meaningless phrases as 'successful intercourse was had with the natives'. Consequently in using the available data one has to not only recognise their limitations and nature but also try to make certain allowances for these features. In this study the latter has been attempted firstly by presenting as much of the data so far collected as possible, and secondly, by presenting them in the context in which they occurred. In this way biases are at least exposed and the validity of claims made laid open to inspection. On the other hand, however, one has to face the fact that these data, poor as they may be, are, for socio-historical reasons, the only ones available at the moment. They thus have to be taken as a guide to the sort of language that Aborigines were using and/or were exposed to at the time, but especially in the early stages of settlement when communication was still very much from European-to-Aborigine and vice versa, and when that language had not yet become the medium of communication amongst Aborigines themselves. When that happened this language, normally referred to as 'broken English' in the literature, could be expected to have undergone changes and become stabilised as many other similar languages have done in other areas and situations (e.g., on plantations). Yet all the data are obviously not of the same quality (e.g., some of them are almost straight English) and so for present purposes only differences between data and standard English are counted as manifestations of Aboriginal usage at the time; and conversely, wherever there are no differences the data are regarded as ambiguous and cannot be invoked to make claims about Aboriginal Pidgin English.
Finally, since the New South Wales scene prior to and/or contemporaneous with the Queensland one has not yet been studied there are other comparative details that cannot be included in this account. Thus, for example, although it is clear that a Pidgin English was spoken in New South Wales from earliest times, its nature and use have not been described in any detail to date. Consequently it is not possible to say exactly what kind of Pidgin English served as the basis for developments in Queensland and so what differences, if any, developed there. In lieu of this it has been assumed, for present purposes only and until the question can be investigated further, that there was a reasonably uniform and standardised variety of Pidgin English in New South Wales and that this was spread from Sydney (Port Jackson) outwards in various directions with expanding settlement. Nor has it been possible to take into account the possible effects that Aboriginal languages from the relevant areas of New South Wales and Queensland may have had on the development and spread of Pidgin English in those areas, and so to refine the conclusions reached at this time. The situation is complex but the problem briefly stated is as follows: Aboriginal dialects and languages (in so far as these have been described) in the south-east corner of Queensland belonged to at least three different groups or families — Waka-Kabic, Durubulic, and Banjalangic — which, although related to one another and to other groups or families further afield in Queensland and New South Wales at a high level, were not mutually intelligible. They were, however, generally similar in structure and contained some related basic vocabulary (e.g., words for some body parts, common objects, and verbs. As a result it was presumably relatively easy for Aborigines from different areas to learn each other's language, especially where, as happened in Queensland at bunya nut feast times, many different tribes came together regularly for relatively long periods. However, despite reports of widespread bi- or multi-lingualism amongst Aborigines no precise information about the extent of this amongst the relevant south-east Queensland and New South Wales tribes are available. Consequently, while these various factors undoubtedly had their effect on the nature and spread of Pidgin English in New South Wales and Queensland, it has not been possible to take them into account in the present study. For these and other reasons touched on above, therefore, the present account can only be regarded as a preliminary and exploratory one.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN EARLY QUEENSLAND AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PIDGIN ENGLISH**

Queensland developed socio-economically initially on two fronts: a south-east corner coastal front settled from Sydney via coastal sea routes, and an inland one settled by squatters and patrolled by police coming overland from inland New South Wales. Because the coastal contact occurred in a number of fairly discrete stages it is

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3 Baker 1970:311-20, supported by data in Appendices 4 and 5 herein.
5 Curr 1887, vol.IV.
convenient to divide this further into at least three phases: an early one, a middle one and a late one. Linguistic data are available only from the last two.

**Coastal settlement: early phase (1799-1823)**

The first known contact between Aborigines and Europeans in Queensland (excluding Captain Cook's contacts in northern Australia in 1770) occurred in 1799 when the explorer Matthew Flinders spent several weeks in Moreton Bay mapping the bay and exploring the country around the Glasshouse Mountains. During this time Flinders and his crew had a number of peaceful contacts (apart from an early incident when Flinders fired on a man and his companions after they had thrown sticks and a spear at his party) with the natives of Bribie Island (see Map 1). During these contacts the Aborigines learned to call Flinders 'Mid-yer Pindah' and his brother Samuel 'Dam-wel' and Flinders in turn learned some of their names. In these contacts Flinders was assisted by Bon-gree or Bongaree, an Aborigine from 'the north side of Broken Bay' (i.e., from around the mouth of the Hawkesbury River north of Sydney) whom he had brought with him as interpreter and envoy to any Aborigines he might meet on his journey. Although Bongaree was apparently not able to communicate with the Bribie Islanders directly through his own and/or their language, even though Flinders observed that they had 'nearly the same words in calling our people that would have been made use of by a Port Jackson [Sydney] native', he apparently did so quite effectively through sign language. Because of his similar cultural

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7 Collins 1802.
8 Collins 1802:251-2.
9 Bongaree (Bungaree or Boungaree) was one of a small band of celebrated Aborigines from around the Sydney area during the early years of settlement [Pike ed., 1966:177]. He spoke 'English' of a kind that is illustrated by the following surviving sentence recorded by D'Urville (?) in 1796: 'No, massa, no tomarra; derekle, brandy, derekle' [No Sir, not tomorrow; straight away, brandy, straight away] (Dutton 1974:30). He is not to be confused with another later Bongaree who was educated at Sydney College by a Mr Coxen who intended to send him to one of the English Universities and who later joined the Native Police in the early 1850s' (Skinner 1975:85-6, and n.4, p.407; Select Committee Report 1861:166). Nor is he to be confused with Binnelong or Binalong another famous Sydney Aboriginal who went to England with Governor Phillip in 1792 (Bridges 1978:79, n.8 and 9).
10 Collins 1802:231.
11 It is also probably true as Laurie (1959:156) points out that it is 'not unreasonable to assume that the local [Bribie Island Aborigines] would view Bongaree with hostility as being a foreigner and a trespasser in their country and would have him dealt with according to the law of the tribe'. But one must remember that other factors probably came into play to soften these attitudes: e.g., it was the European who was the centre of attention — the way in which he suddenly appeared, his physical attributes, and his powerful firearms. In any case explorers generally found Aborigines of considerable value as envoys (and helpers in other ways) and 'Mitchell, Sturt, Eyre, Leichhardt, Warburton, Gregory, Landsborough and Kennedy have left honourable records of their aboriginal companions' (Meston 1895:80). Burke and Wills, who did not take any Aborigines with them, were seen to be very foolish (Bennett 1927:44) and probably owe their tragic end to this. In Leichhardt's case his two Aboriginal 'boys' (from Bathurst and the Hunter River [Leichhardt 1847:xiv, xv]) apparently easily made
background, however, he was naturally of considerable assistance to Flinders in helping to understand and interpret the actions and intentions of these Aboriginal strangers.\textsuperscript{12}

After Flinders left the area at the beginning of August no European (or English-speaking Aborigine) visited the area (as far as is known) until John Bingle, 'who had been sent from Sydney in command of the Colonial cutter \textit{Sally} in 1822',\textsuperscript{13} to search for what is now known as the Brisbane River. He did not find it but again established friendly contact with the Bribie Island inhabitants. Subsequently William L. Edwardson in the cutter \textit{Snapper} visited the area to continue the search but left without result. He is also presumed to have had some contact with the same Aborigines as the anchorage used until later was that discovered and used by Flinders near Bribie Island.

Finally Lieutenant John Oxley, who was convinced that there must be such a river, was sent to the area himself in November 1823, to look for a suitable site for a convict settlement for doubly convicted convicts from New South Wales. It was on this visit that he discovered and rescued two of three Europeans — Thomas Pamphlet, John

\begin{itemize}
\item contact with local Aborigines in inland south-west and western Queensland (although they were not at ease in the alien environment) and, indeed, eventually got Leichhardt into trouble by meddling with their women (Leichhardt 1847).
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{12} I have not seen Flinders' journal but Collins' account is based on it and quotes from it.

\textsuperscript{13} Holthouse 1982:8.
Finnegan and Richard Parsons — who had been living with the Aborigines of the Moreton Bay area (including those of Bribie Island) for the previous eight months after they had come ashore on Moreton Island in April 1823. These castaways were ticket-of-leave men who, with another companion who died on the voyage, had left Sydney on 21 March 1823, to buy cedar on the Illawarra coast and had been blown off course during a storm. They survived by the kindness and generosity of the Aborigines with whom they communicated in sign language, although they apparently began to 'pick up' Aboriginal words and undoubtedly taught the Aborigines some English. During this visit Oxley used Finnegan's knowledge of the area to find the Brisbane River. Oxley then returned to Sydney and plans were drawn up to open a penal settlement in Moreton Bay.

At the end of this period then friendly relations had been established with Aborigines in Queensland and their help had been enlisted in exploring the Moreton Bay area and in saving the lives of stranded whites. In this situation Aborigines had been exposed to English and to the superiority of the foreigner's arms. But conditions were not favourable for the rapid formation and spread of any sort of Pidgin English. This was so for two reasons. On the one hand, because of their similar cultural backgrounds Aboriginal contact men or envoys could presumably make themselves understood without the aid of any specific common language. On the other hand, because the castaways were in the weakest position numerically they would most likely have made an effort to learn as much of the Aborigines' language as they could rather than the Aborigines trying to learn English. Whatever stimulus there was for the development of a Pidgin English would have probably resulted in a variation of the language used in New South Wales, in particular, a rudimentary jargon incorporating pieces of New South Wales Pidgin English and Moreton Bay languages (particularly the Bribie and Stradbroke Island ones) and accompanied by much hand waving and sign language. Unfortunately we have no data from this period (except for the two rather uninformative items already quoted) to justify or modify this conclusion. However, given the nature and infrequency of contact there seems little reason to doubt it. And this is how things may have continued for a long time were it not for the fact that conditions changed rather suddenly after 1823 when the Aborigines were to be drawn into closer contact with Europeans, and English, whether they liked it or not.

14 Parsons was away at the time but was rescued later by Oxley.
15 Pamphlet, for example, learned at least the name dingwa (taken to be a misreading of bungwal given later by Curr [1887:223] and Lang [1861:392] for 'fern root' and presumably other items of food given to him, if nothing else (Steele 1970:6).
16 There is one tiny piece of evidence to support this: the comment in Cilento and Lack (1959b:76, n.3) that castaways Parsons, Pamphlet and Finnegan had some 'Five Islands' biscuits with them 'which they distributed to the aboriginals on Stradbroke Island' and that fifteen years later natives on the Darling Downs, seventy-odd miles away inland, were demanding biscuits from Europeans with the expression 'faiv-allan'. In other ways too this is an interesting piece of data as it implies that not only did Parsons and his companions teach the Aborigines the name of these biscuits but that this name was transmitted inland by 'bush telegraph' ahead of European settlement. Unfortunately Cilento and Lack do not give the sources of this information.
Coastal settlement: middle phase (1824-42)

In September 1824 Oxley returned to Moreton Bay to found the proposed convict settlement. He had with him on this occasion 'Lt Millar, his wife and family, his storekeeper, storekeeper's assistant, his detachment of fourteen men of the 40th and his twenty convicts' and a settlement was founded at what is now Redcliffe on the northern side of the bay. However, this situation proved to be unhealthy and exposed to the weather so the settlement was shifted upstream to where Brisbane now stands. It remained there until the end of the convict era in 1842 and gradually developed into the capital of the new colony of Queensland.

During this time no free settlers were allowed within fifty miles of the convict settlement and for the first ten years or so Aborigines probably had little contact with Europeans except for occasional visits to the settlement for European food and fishhooks, and apart from looking after numbers of convict absconders who had 'run' from the settlement and stayed with them for varying periods. The most famous of these were John Baker, John Graham, Samuel Derrington, David Bracewell (or Bracefell or Bracefield), James Davis, and Bribie the basket-maker who took up residence in different parts of the south-east corner of Queensland and spent many years with their adopted tribes: Baker spent fourteen years in the Lockyer Valley and Darling Downs area (see Map 1); Graham was in the Noosa area for six and a half years (see Map 1); Derrington in the Burnett River area for nine years; Bracewell (whose Aboriginal name 'Wandi' is said to have meant 'great talker') in the Maroochy River headwaters for 'several years'; Davis (or 'Duramboi' meaning 'bandicoot' in his

18 This was the official reason but it was also 'unhealthy' because of the proximity of Aborigines. Two convicts and one soldier had been speared by Aborigines and the area was regarded as unsafe (Cilento and Lack 1959a:61; Holthouse 1982).
19 Just how much contact Aborigines had with Europeans around Brisbane is difficult to assess. Mr G. Langevad, who is currently working on the nature and size of the Moreton Bay settlement, has pointed out to me that amongst other things: (a) the size and nature of the Moreton Bay settlement is still not clear; (b) some convict gangs had been as far afield as the Tweed River in 1826 and out towards Kilcoy in the 1830s after cedar; (c) there were many more runaway convicts than is perhaps realised but often these were at large for short periods only; (d) the number of convicts varied between ten in the first batch to upwards of a thousand for a time (Lang 1861:58); (e) there was probably considerable contact between soldiers and Aboriginal women but because this was unofficial and clandestine it is difficult (impossible?) to document.
20 Apparently there are many of these noted in the convict register (which I have not seen) some of whom subsequently returned to the settlement, some of whom were never heard of again, and a few to be noted shortly, who remained for up to fourteen years with the Aborigines. For example, Evans and Walker (1977:42-3) give a long list but as mentioned above Langevad says that the exact size and nature of the Moreton Bay settlement is not yet clear. Some of these runaways were later used as interpreters and/or informant-translators by the government (Skinner 1974:10) and the German missionaries (Gunson 1960-61:526). As already pointed out, at least two convicts were speared by Aborigines.
area) in the Mary River valley for fourteen years, and Bribie on Bribie Island for many years.\footnote{Holthouse 1982. There is some confusion in the literature over the local names given to these convicts and other details (Cilento and Lack 1959b; Lauer 1977:6, Evans and Walker 1977:42-3; 93, n.2) but these details are not relevant to the present discussion.}

Unfortunately there is no evidence of the effect the convict settlement or the runaways had on the development of Pidgin English amongst the Aborigines. However, both presumably contributed to some acquaintance with rudimentary, if rather crude, English amongst them. Thus, for example, one source claims that in New South Wales convicts were generally of low class and had no scruples about taking Aboriginal women as prostitutes, of introducing alcohol, and of teaching Aborigines the worst phrases in English.\footnote{Bridges 1978:356-80.} That similar things happened in Queensland would appear to be indicated by a number of references in the literature studied so far, among which are the following:

On 18th April we visited the camp of the Blacks . . . To our great sorrow we found several convicts (whites from the prison) among them; they go there to satisfy their depravity . . . they give them their wives and daughters in exchange for food and old rags and the most terrible diseases are spread through all the tribes.\footnote{Grossner Mission, June 1841.}

Most of the white people who are employed on the stations are convicts, mostly unmarried, and devoid of any morals and principles . . . mix freely with black women.\footnote{Leichhardt 1842-8:32, 27 August 1843.}

Since Brisbane-town has been opened to the colonists to settle, the outlook appears very bad for our heathens. They only steal and ask for money to buy spiritous drinks and tobacco etc. in town. They do not even think of working any more; the whoring with soldiers and colonists is limitless.\footnote{Grossner Mission 1844.}

Subsequently sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women became an important part of frontier life in Queensland\footnote{Evans 1975:102ff.} and undoubtedly had its effect on the nature and transmission of Pidgin English; but a consideration of this is beyond the scope of the present investigation.

From 1837 onwards until the early 1840s, however, the Aborigines in the environs of what was later to become Brisbane were brought sharply up against English, when attempts were made to ‘missionise’ them by the Reverend J.C.S. Handt of Brisbane and a number of German missionaries of the Grossner Mission, at what is now the suburb of Nundah.

Handt arrived in Brisbane with his family on 17 May 1837, to replace the Reverend J. Vincent who had left Brisbane at the end of 1829. However, unlike Vincent who had been chaplain only to the settlement and had not attempted to ‘missionise’ the
Aborigines, Handt had come to act as chaplain to the convict settlement and as missionary to the local Aborigines. He had come to Moreton Bay from Wellington in New South Wales where he and the Reverend Watson had been missionaries to the Aborigines with the Church Missionary Society for four years (1832 to 1836). Handt estimated that there were between 200 and 300 Aborigines within a radius of ten miles of Brisbane in 1838. He attempted to communicate with these firstly in English and later in their own language, which he set about trying to learn as soon as he arrived after he found that Wiradjuri, the language he had studied at Wellington, was of no use to him. He found the task difficult, however, because the ‘Aborigines’ knowledge of English was much more limited than in more settled parts of the colony [of New South Wales] and in 1839 still extended very little beyond a capacity to ask for food. Nevertheless he persevered and was ‘very soon reporting an ability to conduct some conversation with his native charges through the use of a mixture of his slight grasp of their language and their broken English’. Yet Handt was soon disappointed in his mission to the Aborigines as he was unable to influence them because of what he alleged were their unsettled and unprincipled ways. He complained that they constantly demanded food and fishhooks and would do little in return, even stealing from him as soon as his back was turned. They were, moreover, he claimed, insolent and abusive to his family and even spat at his children and subjected them to physical hurt. He noted, however, that they soon picked up English but only in relation to acquiring their wants. Because of his habit of giving into their wishes just to have some of them around to attempt to preach to the mission was soon reduced to a laughable farce and he was forced to give up in the end, although he claims he had succeeded in teaching some boys to read the alphabet, to write a little and to recite some prayers.

Overall it can be said that Handt helped spread a knowledge of what he calls ‘broken English’ although according to Bridges, only at the expense of making Aborigines more insolent and disrespectful towards ‘Whites’. The German missionaries who came soon after him fared a little better because they adopted a different policy. Thus whereas Handt would give food and other things to any Aborigine who happened to be around just to have him stay and be preached to, the Germans demanded more and would not give food or other items without some concentrated effort.

The German Mission was established by missionaries from Berlin. There were 38 members altogether — several pastors and other support staff. They were encouraged

27 Bridges 1978:804.
28 Bridges 1978:434-54.
29 Bridges 1978:811.
30 Bridges 1978:811.
31 Bridges 1978:830.
32 Bridges 1978:827.
33 Bridges 1978:830.
35 Gunson 1960-61.
to come to Moreton Bay by the Reverend John Dunmore Lang whose father was lost at sea along the south coast of Queensland in 1831 and was presumed to have been killed by Aborigines. He was anxious to have the heathens introduced to Christianity. According to surviving sources the Germans conducted school for the Aborigines using ‘English’ as their main language as well as ‘passages from the sacred scriptures . . . transplanted by Bracefield [the convict runaway mentioned above]’.

But their English was not very good (e.g., Hartenstein says that they had to take lessons: ‘We all have to learn English well and therefore are practising considerably to be able to teach to the heathens’) and Petrie says that the missionaries were mocked by the Aborigines because they were ‘unable to speak English’. The missionaries themselves admitted that their ‘talk’ with the Aborigines was ‘partly in English and partly in their language’ and that they were only able to communicate with them because they spoke ‘broken English’.

In those cases in which they went into areas where ‘English’ was not known they used an interpreter (e.g., ‘Our Black who accompanied him interpreted to the people [of Ningi]’).

The Germans adopted the policy of instructing their charges:

twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, about five hours altogether, though there be but two or three present. There is likewise, as far as is practicable, a school kept in the bush . . . whose turn it is to travel among the natives. The method of instruction . . . is similar to that used in infant schools; besides that the children are taught the principles of religion, they are instructed in spelling, reading, ciphering and writing; in the schoolroom they write with chalk on a board, and in the bush with charcoal on a sheet of bark, or with a stick in the sand. The progress they have made bears, however, an inferior proportion to the time and strength which have been spent on them; not so much on account of their being in want of faculties, as by reason of their unsettled and fugitive habits.

The native children who attended the mission school were taught side by side with the few children of the whites, the missionaries thinking that in a mixed school the discipline of the white children would have a steadying effect on the black. The youngest children only of the natives, generally those of about six years of age, could be persuaded to submit to school discipline. They learnt rapidly

37 Grossner Mission, 2 February 1839.
38 Select Commission 1861:112.
39 Grossner Mission, April 1839.
40 Grossner Mission 1840. This presumably means that this ‘broken English’ was of their own making for they had not been in Sydney en route to Moreton Bay for very long and they hardly saw any other Europeans who might teach them.
41 Grossner Mission, August 1842. The Germans also had curious, but perhaps not uncommon, attitudes to Aboriginal languages for the times. Thus for example, they had great difficulty in learning the Aboriginal language spoken around them yet they could not see the discrepancy between this and their view of the language as extremely simple, as indicated by Hartenstein as follows: ‘They have only nouns in their language like children when they learn to speak. The other words must be borrowed from other languages or fabricated and taught to them.’ (Grossner Mission, 2 February 1839.)
enough, but the constant habit of going into the bush with the tribe prevented any sustained training. The women would learn the Lord’s Prayer, and then when the tribe visited the township, repeat it to the whites in the Settlement in return for a coin, a penny or a sixpence.

Education was, in fact, merely a matter of merchandise to the native youngsters; attendance at school was regarded as a service rendered to the whites, to be paid for in food.42 The school was not regularly attended, however, and some of the Aborigines ‘stayed . . . from five to six months; others a few weeks, and the generality a few days’.43 The mission gradually folded between 1841 and 1850 for want of government support. Subsequently the pastors moved to different fields elsewhere in Australia while the support staff became the first free settlers in the Brisbane area.

At about this time also the convict settlement was closed down and the Brisbane area was thrown open to selection and free settlement. Land was progressively taken up in the area until by the time of separation from New South Wales in 1859, most of the land had been alienated. We return to this in the next section.

It is during this middle period that we begin to get some better indication of what was happening linguistically on the coast. We have already noted Handt’s comments about the Aborigines’ use of ‘broken English’ when he arrived and how they soon learned more English to ask for what they wanted. In addition one of a number of squatters who were moving into the area west of Moreton Bay at this time (as we shall see in the next section) made the valuable observation that on one of his excursions looking for better country he was accompanied by ‘a native named Jimmy Beerwah, who could speak a little “dog English” or blackfellow slang, having been occasionally at the German Mission near Brisbane’.44 But this ‘blackfellow slang’ was apparently not of a kind that he was used to for he later notes that ‘Jimmy Beerwah no doubt tried to explain this [how he got his name] to us, but our ignorance of the Moreton Bay black’s slang prevented us from understanding him’.45

Thus, although these comments do not enable us to point to a pidginised form of English, they do suggest that whatever it was that was developing was based on English but was sufficiently different from Pidgin English used in New South Wales that it was difficult for a New South Wales Pidgin English speaker to understand. However, when these comments are taken into account with the data we have available from this period (see Appendix 1) it is clear that the ‘blackfellow slang’ which was developing was:
(a) more than a ‘dog English’ or ‘broken English’ (a phrase also used later by another source of the time)46 but was rather already a restricted Pidgin English which contained such typical Pidgin English features as fellow as an adjectival and pronominal marker; been as a past tense marker; some form of -im as a transitive verb marker; and

42 Sparks 1938:30.
43 Sparks 1938:29.
44 Archer 1897:56.
45 Archer 1897:57.
46 Petrie 1904:9, 185, 252.
PIDGIN ENGLISH IN QUEENSLAND

as well such common Pidgin English vocabulary items as all, byamby, gammon, Mary,
how many, long, picaninny, plenty, this fellow, too much, and stop (as ‘live’ or ‘be in
a place’);
(b) probably based on New South Wales Pidgin English and was not a separate
development because at least several items of vocabulary (budgery ‘good’, bael/bel
(and other forms) ‘no, not’, gin ‘Aboriginal woman’) are of New South Wales
origin;47 and,
(c) different from New South Wales Pidgin English (and therefore difficult to
understand) because of the distinctive Aboriginal vocabulary that it contained. Thus,
for example, it contained such words as: jackeroo ‘stranger, missionary’,48 darkery
man’, at least several items of which (notably humpy, jackeroo and yacca/yacker) have
since passed into Queensland if not into standard Australian English.

Coastal settlement: late phase (1843 onwards)

Although I have not had opportunity to pursue the exact sequence of events in
this period my understanding of what happened is as follows. After the cessation of
the convict era the Moreton Bay area was thrown open to selection and free
settlement and available land in the area was rapidly taken up. Thence followed a
demand for labour to help build an economic base for the budding new state. In
consequence, immigration became an important concern with progressively more and
more Europeans (and Chinese, who came to Australia as a result of the gold rushes or
were brought to work as labourers in the expanding pastoral industry) coming to the
new state when it was declared. Without more exact details, however, it is impossible
to assess the effect of the changing social scene in Queensland on the nature and
spread of the coastal Pidgin English that was developing. My guess is, however, that
because there was a certain amount of exploration along the coastal zone preceding
settlement in which Aborigines from around Moreton Bay were used as guides and

47 Baker, 1970. There may be other such words but these have not been investigated to date.

48 Meston (1895:32) has an interesting note on this: ‘Another word used throughout Australia is
“jackeroo” the term for a “newchum”, or recent arrival, who is acquiring his first colonial
experience on a sheep or cattle station. It has a good-natured, somewhat sarcastic meaning, free
from all offensive significance. It is generally used for young fellows during their first year or
two of station life. The origin of the word is now given for the first time. It dates back to 1838,
the year the German missionaries arrived on the Brisbane River, and was the name bestowed
upon them by the aboriginals. The Brisbane blacks spoke a dialect called “Churrabool”, in
which the word “jackeroo” or “tchaceroo” was the name of the pied crow shrike, Striper grisculina,
one of the noisiest and most garrulous birds in Australia. The blacks said the white
men (the missionaries) were always talking, a gabbling race, and so they called them
“jackeroo”, equivalent to our word “gabbler”.’ As pointed out by Meston the first reference to
this term is in the German Mission records (see Appendix 1) but there it is spelled jacato
which is presumed to be a scribal or reading error.

49 Baker (1970:325) records that yakka (and variants) ‘work’ was first recorded in the Brisbane
area in 1838 but gives no reference, but this is presumably again the Grossner Mission.
contact men\textsuperscript{50} that the form of Pidgin English spoken around Moreton Bay was spread along the coast. At the same time, because of the increased contact with Europeans around the Brisbane area (as evidenced by the fact that alcohol was becoming a problem with the Aborigines,\textsuperscript{51} it is likely that the Aboriginal content of the early and middle phases was gradually watered down, or rather, the English content was expanded at the expense of the Aboriginal content. Given the more settled conditions, too, it is further likely that there was increased contact between Aborigines from different language areas which would probably have had a levelling or stabilising effect on the Pidgin English that was developing.

Unfortunately again because of lack of data it is not possible to verify these guesses. Only one of them appears to be borne out by the available data — to wit, the diluting of the Aboriginal content. Thus of those Aboriginal words that occur in the early coastal period (Appendix 1) only some recur in the later period (see Appendix 3) e.g., budgery ‘good’, bung ‘dead’, cabon ‘very’. Others such as dalto ‘eat’, likin ‘in, along’, tar ‘ground’ do not, English derived words having been substituted for them. At the same time there is a veritable wealth (comparatively speaking) of evidence that a fairly normal Pidgin English was developing, if it had not already done so, in the area,\textsuperscript{52} which was characterised by the following features:\textsuperscript{53}

(1) use of such English-derived syntactico-lexical items as all same as, been, belong, brother, byamby, come, fellow, gammon, he, how many, longa, marsa/master, missus, my word, no, picaninny, plenty, runaway, salt water, sit down, stop, too much, what for, where, you;

(2) no subject-verb agreement:
Where that fellow stop? (143)\textsuperscript{54}

(3) no copula:
He no good (209)
bael; that fellow too much saucy (158)
Hello, Jemmy, you good fellow now, no more steal (168)

(4) use of no to negate sentences:
bael [= not] me know; me shot self, no go see many ducks (158)
My word, no gammon Governor (205-6)

\textsuperscript{50} Petrie (1904:258) notes, for example, that when Andrew Petrie, his father, discovered the Mary River in 1843 he was accompanied by, amongst others, ‘five prisoners of the Crown [who] formed the boat’s crew, and two aborigines belonging to Brisbane’.

\textsuperscript{51} Petrie 1904:185.

\textsuperscript{52} One difficulty with Petrie (1904) is that even though the central character, Tom, spoke the Aboriginal language around Brisbane (see for example, p.145), his daughter who recorded his reminiscences did not (as far as is known) and so may have left out those words with which she was not familiar. On the other hand because Tom was only a youngster when he came to Brisbane he must have learned his Pidgin English there and so his examples should be authentic. However, distinguishing between them and his daughter’s renditions of them is still a problem that cannot be solved until more is known about how the book was written.

\textsuperscript{53} I ignore here the observable variation that occurs in the data between such things as the use of I and me, my, your and belong + Noun, no and not, duck and ducks for example. For the time being I have regarded this variation as part of the idiosyncracies of the authors although it may well have been characteristic of the Pidgin English of the time. This question cannot be answered until additional data are found.

\textsuperscript{54} Numbers in brackets refer to page numbers in Petrie (1904) given in Appendix 1.
PIDGIN ENGLISH IN QUEENSLAND

(5) no auxiliary verb 'do' where in English this is mandatory:
   When he come back? (143)
   bael [= not] gettem duck (158)
   no go see how many ducks (158)

(6) past tense indicated by been:
   Oh I been feeling about for 'taggan' (186)
   I been telling other blackfellows to mind you till I come back (186)
   My word! me bin find big fellow ston, longa yinnell (204)

(7) no inflected auxiliary verb 'to be' plus -ing used to indicate present continuous tense where in English this is obligatory:
   Bring gun, plenty duck sit down longa here (9)
   Where that fellow stop? (143)
   When he come back? (143)

(8) future tense marked by byamby:
   byamby me makeim come (186)
   byamby me hanker (209)

(9) transitive verbs marked by -im:
   cuttem (186)
   gettem (158)
   makeim (186)
   takem (158)

(10) pronoun me for subject pronoun I:
   Bael me takem gun (158)
   byamby me go down (186)
   me not be away long (186)
   me bin find bigfellow ston (204)

(11) no definite article:
   longa yinnell (204)
   bring gun (9)
   bael gettem duck (158)
   shoot bird (248)

(12) no plural markers on nouns:
   plenty duck (9)
   trouser (205)

(13) adjectives and pronouns marked by fellow:
   good fellow
   that fellow
   this fellow
   black fellow

(14) plenty as universal descriptive for 'many, a lot' and never occurs with 'of' as in English e.g.,
    plenty duck (9, 157)

(15) longa used as a preposition for 'in' (204), 'on' (186) and also where in English no preposition is used, as in longa here (9)

(16) use of what for for 'why':
   What for the diamonds (soldiers) shoot us? (145)
   What for you put so much powder and shot in gun (158).

This Pidgin English carried on certain features observed in the earlier phase (viz, use of the grammatical features fellow, been, how many, -im). As well it shows traces of the historical contact between Sydney and Moreton Bay in the use of certain distinctive vocabulary items like bael/baal 'no, not' (which varies in this data with
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

no), budgery ‘good’, dilly/dilli ‘carrying bag’, gin ‘Aboriginal woman’55 which were in use in New South Wales before the establishment of the Moreton Bay settlement.

On the other hand it contains a number of distinctive vocabulary items that were and/or must have been in use in New South Wales at the time but which do not seem to have survived into other pidgins of the area: cranky ‘angry’; (208), diamonds ‘soldiers’ (145, 168), hanker ‘handcuffs’ (203, 209), know ‘know, recognise’ (158), lock up ‘imprison’ (209), mind ‘look after’ (186), remember/know’ (184), saucy ‘irascible, belligerent’ (7, 158, 209, 275).56

Inland Settlement

While Moreton Bay was still a convict settlement a great squatting push was under way from New South Wales into the southern and western parts of Queensland, following routes previously discovered by Allan Cunningham in the late 1820s.57 From the early 1840s on, squatters and/or their agents and their recruited Aboriginal servants drove flocks of sheep (and to a lesser extent cattle) overland from southern and western New South Wales into this area and took up land around the west of the fifty mile convict settlement zone. The first to arrive were the Leslie brothers who took up land on the Darling Downs in March 1840. These were soon followed by others, however, who spread further over the downs and then spilled over the range into the Lockyer and Brisbane River valleys.58 Others quickly followed and by the early 1850s most of the available land in the Brisbane, Burnett, and Mary River valleys had been taken up.59 The occupation of land traditionally ‘owned’ by the many different Aboriginal groups in the area immediately brought forth a marked change in the relationship between Aborigine and intruder. Whereas previously the Aborigine had generally extended the hand of friendship to the European, who had not yet posed any real threat to his land and livelihood, he was now forced on to the offensive as he realised his lands and livelihood were in danger of being forcibly taken away from him. The squatters for their part adopted differing attitudes towards the dispossessed. Some, like the Archers, Tom Petrie (later) and Christison (later again), realised that they were taking the Aborigine’s land and livelihood away from him. They therefore attempted to integrate the Aborigine into the squatting system by coexisting with him and allowing those groups who belonged to an area now claimed as squatters ‘runs’ to continue to live there while at the same time employing them

55 Baker 1970. Note that Welsby (1917:76) records gin as part of the Aboriginal vocabulary of Stradbroke Island in the early 1900s. Presumably this means that Pidgin English was such a part of their life by then that gin had replaced their own word jundah (or tchundal) for ‘woman’ (Curr 1887:226).

56 Many of these can undoubtedly be traced to English usage or English dialects represented in Sydney at the time but I have not had time to research this aspect yet.

57 Cilento and Lack, 1959a; see also Map 2.

58 Meston 1895:32-3.

59 Reynolds (1978b) gives peaks in this expansion as follows: early 1840s, Darling Downs and Brisbane River valley; late 1840s and early 1850s, Wide Bay/Burnett River and Maranoa; late 1850s and early 1860s, Fitzroy River basin. Then followed the new frontiers of gold mining in the 1870s and beche-de-mer/pearling in the 1880s.
as labourers. Others adopted a less conciliatory and understanding attitude and attempted to drive the Aborigine off his land. And while the peaceful coexistence philosophy generally worked well for those who adopted it the overall result of the confrontation between white and Aborigine was more or less undeclared war with the Aborigines attempting to drive the pastoralists and their flocks from the land and the squatters in turn shooting and/or poisoning the Aborigine at every opportunity.

For expressions of these attitudes, see Archer Brothers (1833-55: letter by John Archer, c.8 November 1841, and letter by Thomas Archer, Durundur, 10 September 1843) and Archer (1897:49). Tom Petrie’s attitude is expressed in various parts of Petrie (1904). Christison’s (who established Lammermoor station near Hughenden in the 1860s) view is expressed by Bennett (1927:56) as follows: ‘Christison, looking ahead, thought out the question, what to do about the blacks, and boldly made up his mind to let them come in at all hazards – in his view the only workable policy – for the homestead waterhole was a meeting hole of the tribes, whose hunting grounds ranged back from the creek as far as a man could travel without water. To be kind, firm and aloof, and keep his word, was, he believed, all that was necessary to establish a good understanding with them, but it was important to get into good communication with them at once.’ These positive attitudes were, however, as Reynolds (1979a:13) points out, the exception rather than the rule.

Evans and Walker 1977:47ff.; Laurie 1959; Loos 1982; Reynolds 1978a, b. Reynolds (1978a:n.32; 1978b:24) estimates that 800-850 Europeans and their ‘allies’ (i.e., Chinese, Melanesians, and so-called ‘civilised blacks’) were killed between 1840 and 1897 in Queensland, 400 of those in southern and central Queensland between 1841 and 1871 when the expansion (cont.)
This 'war' and the introduction of European diseases not only promoted the intruders at the expense of the Aborigines whose numbers declined rapidly, but also brought forth a special mounted police force — a native police force — to help control the situation (basically to help the pastoralists survive in the increasingly hostile environment). This force was established in 1848 and consisted of a number of sections located at different stations throughout the squatting zone. The sections consisted of a handful of Aboriginal troopers drawn from different areas of western and northwestern New South Wales previously 'pacified' by the colonists. They were commanded by European officers. The following table shows the origin and numbers of recruits for the first few years of the force:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Recruits</th>
<th>Recruited from</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>'four different tribes each speaking a different language, in the Murrumbidgee, Murray, and Edward Rivers' (of southern New South Wales and northern Victoria)</td>
<td>Skinner (1975:28-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers of New South Wales</td>
<td>ibid.: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Denniliquin, New South Wales</td>
<td>ibid.: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Barwon, Balonne, Namoi, Condamine and MacIntyre Rivers, New South Wales and far south-west of Queensland</td>
<td>ibid.: 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>'two new sections'</td>
<td>Clarence District, New South Wales</td>
<td>ibid.: 147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linguistically there are several important consequences of the arrival of squatters and the police who followed them into Queensland. One is that because they came into Queensland via an inland route direct from New South Wales they had no contact with the coastal region. Another is that because they came, as far as the evidence indicates, speaking New South Wales Pidgin English and brought Aboriginal 'servants' with them from western and northwestern New South Wales who also spoke it, it was just beginning and somewhere between 420 and 440 in North Queensland between the first settlement at Bowen in 1861 and the passage of the Aborigines Protection Act of 1897. Of these approximately half (i.e., 400) were in the pastoral industry (although precision is impossible).

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63 Skinner 1975.
64 The Archers brought Mickey and Jimmy from west of Sydney and en route picked up another called 'Billy Grey, of the Camilroy tribe on the Namoy River' (Archer 1897:39, 44). Christison picked up 'an intelligent blackboy from Wellington on the Murray', and 'steered north for the unknown country between the Warrego River' into Queensland (Bennett 1927:44). However, there were other 'boys' in Queensland whose manner of getting there is not known. Thus, for example, Ridley met 'an aboriginal native of the Hunter River district who had been to Scotland' and whom he said spoke 'both English and Gaelic with great accuracy and fluency', and could 'read and write the former; but ... had forgotten his mother tongue' (Ridley 1875:435-6).
must be expected that New South Wales Pidgin English, or some variant of it would come to be the lingua franca of the squatting zone. Finally, because the squatting move was so quick, the acquisition of Pidgin English by Queensland Aborigines inland of Moreton Bay would have been much faster than in the coastal area. Thus, while there was still probably a jargon period in which Aborigines were learning Pidgin English, this would have been much shorter than on the coast and probably did not involve incorporating so many Queensland Aboriginal vocabulary items into it. Not surprisingly this inland variety turns out to be very similar in most structural respects to that of the coastal Pidgin English of the late period, having the following features in common with it: *bei/bale/bael* ‘no, not’, *V-im, me for I, fellow, been, budgery, merri/Mary, know, devil-devil, sit down (= be, exist). Only in one or two cases does it appear to differ from the coastal variety (excluding those cases like *suppose, altogether, maki-haste, directly, good way, see, believe*, which do not occur fortuitously in coastal Pidgin English), notably in using *-im* as a transitive marker on all verbs instead of *-it* as in the coastal variety, and similarly in using *eatim* instead of *dalto* for ‘eat’, *wantem* instead of *like it* for ‘want to’, *cole* instead of *cranky* for ‘angry’, and *yarman* instead of *tar* for ‘ground’. It is also probable that this variety never had the words *diamonds* and *croppies* for ‘soldiers’ and ‘convicts’ respectively, as these were not part of the social scene in the inland areas.

**SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS: 1859 AND BEYOND**

Following the establishment of Queensland as a separate colony, increasing numbers of immigrants poured in to work for landholders or as artisans in the closer settled areas and/or to take up smaller holdings (or selections) themselves around them. New settlements also opened up as the timber industry expanded and a plantation system developed, firstly built around cotton (1863) and subsequently around sugarcane. At the same time squatters pushed ever farther northwards until by the end of the 1870s most areas of the state had been occupied (see Map 2) and the original owners dispossessed of their ancestral lands. In the ensuing ‘development’, Aborigines largely lost out, except where they found niches in the sheep and cattle industries as station hands and stockmen. Elsewhere the remnants of former larger groups drifted to the edge of towns and eventually, for many of them, ended up on reserves or settlements. Bribie Island was amongst the first of these although it only lasted from 1877 to 1879.

Because they were regarded by most Europeans as unreliable and lazy, Aborigines were not involved to any great extent in the plantation industries. After other sources of labour were tried and found wanting, large numbers of South Sea Islanders were

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65 I assume this to be generally true despite some suggestion that some of the introduced Aboriginal ‘servants’ regarded Queensland Aborigines contemptuously (Archer 1897:69), and, by implication, would have little to do with them.

66 Farnfield 1971.


68 Evans 1971.

introduced for the purpose. As a result of these developments inland Queensland Pidgin English was probably spread throughout the inland areas\(^{70}\) where the sheep and cattle industries prevailed; it came to merge with the coastal variety in the south-east corner so that by the 1870s it would probably have been difficult to separate the two. Whether or not the latter claim will ultimately turn out to be true, it is clear from the data contained in Appendix 3 that a Pidgin English with the same sorts of general characteristics (except for vocabulary drawn from different Aboriginal languages) as those noted earlier for coastal and inland areas occurs.

Thus it would seem to be the case that a Pidgin English similar to that spoken in New South Wales and derived from it was the common lingua franca of much of Queensland by about the 1870s. Just how different this language was from New South Wales Pidgin English at any stage, and whether it maintained the sorts of regional differences that seem to be indicated in the present data, or whether these are ephemeral and simply reflect the poor sampling of the language, are empirical questions requiring further attention.

\[\text{Map 3: Sketch of Movement of Pidgin English into Queensland 1799-1859.}\]

\(^{70}\) This is probably an oversimplification because some settlers were still coming direct from New South Wales. Thus, for example, Lammermoor station that has been frequently referred to herein was taken up by Christison coming over land from Sydney via western New South Wales (see \textit{n.64 above}). And as he brought an Aboriginal assistant with him from Wellington, New South Wales, Pidgin English must have been introduced directly by him.
CONCLUSION

In summary then, the most that can be said about early Queensland Pidgin English at this stage (and until the many questions raised in this account have been tidied up) is that there was such a thing; that it was a direct descendant of New South Wales Pidgin English and not a separate development; and that it took on its own characteristics in different parts of the state in response to different social conditions. In particular it developed at least two strands initially: a coastal one which was slow to emerge and which was different from New South Wales Pidgin English in its lexical content, and an inland one which was basically transplanted New South Wales Pidgin English with possibly new Aboriginal lexical items taken in. The inland strand spread widely throughout the state and probably eventually stabilized and swamped the coastal strand. This variety is the most probable forerunner of such modern varieties of Aboriginal English as Cape York Creole, Palm Island Aboriginal English, Northern Territory Kriol and Fitzroy Valley Kriol.71

APPENDIX 1: COASTAL PIDGIN ENGLISH FROM 1824 ONWARDS

The following data are arranged in rough chronological order relating to the time at which the items were recorded or presumably heard and/or learnt. They represent mixed primary and secondary sources.

Grossner Missionaries 1839-51

23 Feb. 1840: 'The heathens are already well acquainted with us. Their greatest torment is hunger. Whenever they come, their first word is copron waro - great hunger! . . . whenever they come here their sack [dilly bag] is empty and then they say, dilly waro - the sack is hungry'

'they said I was cabon butockery - very good . . . We can communicate with them because they speak broken English.'

Besides these the missionaries record a number of other isolated Aboriginal and English words, which the Aborigines use, as follows:

28 Apr. 1839: 'All the women are called Mary, because they know a little English.'

Feb. 1839: baibala (bread), krünkün (clothes)

2 Feb. 1839: 'they are told to go away, or gacke gacke - work.'

Nov. 1839: 'The blacks ran to our houses in great fear [of the storm] crying mudle, mudle (stones, stones).'

Karaberry (song and dance)

'at the same time they . . . hit the head with a waddy.'

ballan-ballan 'any fight, war.'

Gunson 1960-61

These data likewise refer to the German mission settlement in Moreton Bay 1838-50:

p.525: 'They [the Aborigines] called the [German] mission settlement "Darkery Humpy" or "Strange House" and sometimes while services were being held they would gather up and make raids upon the crops and cattle.'

p.525: 'They would listen on some occasions to the preacher's earnest words about God . . . and clap their hands and exclaim "Dickey! Dickey! Budgery!" - "Wonderful! Wonderful! Very good!" but nothing could restrain their cupidity when the crops were ripe.'

p.528: 'And he [an Aboriginal "chief" to whom trousers had been given], looking at the baggy places in the trousers and vest not quite filled, exclaimed, "How many sheep and bullocks that fellow been eat'em every day".' [Quoted from Gerler, c.1844]

71 See, respectively, Cowley and Rigsby 1979; Dutton 1968; Sandefur 1979 and Hudson 1983.
p.528: 'In one account of the story [of Hausmann being attacked at Burpengary] it is recorded that the aborigines were heard to say “Hausmann budgerey ding all, budgerey dalto” meaning that he was “nice and fat” and “nice to eat”.'

p.529: 'One of the missionary daughters found a novel way of dispersing a crowd of aborigines who were demanding “bibler” or bread outside the window.

She told them to go, but they still persisted . . . [so she took out her false teeth]. They stared at her for a moment dumbfounded, and when she was about to repeat the performance they cried out “That fellow Mary devil-devil” and wildly ran away.'

Sparks 1938

p.25: [quoting from a letter by the Commandant, Moreton Bay, to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, 30 Mar. 1840]: ‘he [the Aborigine belonging to the Duke of York’s tribe who had been shot by a German missionary] said the jarkiroos (meaning the missionaries) fired upon him.’

p.42: [quoting from a letter by Dr L. Leichhardt to his friend R. Lynd in Sydney, in 1843]: ‘the blackfellows knew well that it was only gammon.’

Lang 1861

p.72: [re turtle hunting at the southern end of Moreton Bay]: ‘An intelligent black native whom I met with on the Brisbane River, about the middle of December [1845], when asked when the turtle would come to the bay, held up five fingers in reply, saying “that moon”, signifying that they would come about the middle of May.’

p.76: [re excursion up the Brisbane River in December, 1845 in a boat with Mr Wade and rowed by four Aborigines. One of these asked Mr Wade, having observed Lang writing all the time in a notebook]: ‘“What for Commandant yacca paper?” What is the gentleman working at the paper for? As a matter of courtesy they call every respectable European stranger Commandant: that having been the designation of the principal officer of the settlement for twice transported felons.’ [On page 371 Lang explains the word yacca as follows]: ‘The word yacca, in the Moreton Bay dialect of the aboriginal language . . . signifies everything in the shape of service or performance, from the first incipient attempts at motion to the most violent exertion . . . [for example] mooyoon-yacca to read, to write or to cast account.’

p.78: [with respect to a half-dead carpet snake that one of the Aboriginal “boys” accompanying Lang and Wade up river had thrown into the bottom of the boat]: ‘“that fellow no bite” — meaning that his bite was not dangerous.’

Petrie 1904

These data come mainly from the reminiscences of Petrie (1904 — although page numbers refer to a 1975 edition), written by his daughter. They refer, however, to the period following the arrival of the Petrie family in Brisbane in 1837. Tom was only seven years old then. He was the son of the first Government engineer in Brisbane. Griffin was the owner of Whitesides station near Brisbane.

p.7: ‘In three days they [the Aborigines] were back, and reported they had got a number of cattle from the scrub, and that the man — “John Master” they called him — had killed a bull for them to eat, and was all right now, not “saucy” any more.’

p.9: ‘Billy [a Bribie Is Aborigine ?], in broken English, called to one of the men, Bob Hunter by name: “Bob, Bob, come quick, bring gun, plenty duck sit down longa here”.’ [This was before 1849]

p.143: ‘Next day some of the young blackfellows turned up at the Petrie’s home, and they said to Father they knew who had told that man all this rubbish and picking up a piece of paper started mimicking Mr Ridley. They they asked, “Where that fellow stop?” “Oh, he has gone away in a big ship to Sydney.” “When he come back?” and so on.’

p.145: ‘They all said to Father, “What for the diamonds (soldiers) shoot us? We did nothing.” Their friend explained how it had all happened . . .’
PIDGIN ENGLISH IN QUEENSLAND

p.148: 'When cooked they commenced to eat [the poisoned flour] but found it “barn” (bitter); then some got sick, and three of the number “very much jump about”, and died. The rest of the damper was thrown away . . .'

p.157: 'This “Bumble Dick” went once to some sawyers working at Petrie’s Bight, and told them that if they would lend him a gun, he would get them “plenty ducks”.'

p.158: 'Next day Dick’s wife returned the gun to the owners, and told them of what had happened to poor Dick [“Bumble Dick”], saying “Bael gettem duck”.'

p.158: '[Petrie then went to see poor Dick] ’I said to him, “What for you put so much powder and shot in gun?” He replied that the more he put in the more ducks he expected to kill, and he did not think the gun would break. “How many ducks did you shoot?” “Bael me know; me shoot self, no go see how many ducks. Bael more me takem gun, that fellow very saucy”.'

p.158: '[Bumble] Dick was a long time recovering, but eventually he got all right again. If you said to him, “Dick you takem gun, and shoot me some ducks,” he would reply, “Bael; that fellow too much saucy.” You could not get poor Dick to take hold of a gun ever again.'

p.168: 'The soldiers or “diamonds” chaffed him [Millbong Jemmy] saying, “Hello, Jemmy, you good fellow now, no more steal?” And Jemmy was emphatic in his agreement. [Then immediately stole some of their tobacco when the opportunity arose and went to Petrie’s garden on the bank of the river.] There he came across the old gardener, Ned, and gave him the tobacco in exchange for a dilly of sweet potatoes.'

p.179: ‘Later when Father had been married some months, and had decided, upon the advice of Mr Tiffin, the Government Architect, to take up land for cattle, he sought out “Dalaipi,” and asked him if he knew of any country suitable for what he wanted. This old blackfellow was the head man of the North Pine tribe [just north of Brisbane about 15 miles] and often came into Brisbane. He replied that there was plenty good “tar” (ground) at “Mandin” (fishing net) – the North Pine River railway bridge crossing . . . [So Petrie went with Dalaipi’s son to the area] . . . “Dal-ngang [the son],” said to him, “You take this fellow ground, belong to my father?” and he was not at all reconciled to the fact that it already belonged to Mrs Griffin [Captain Griffin’s widow].’ [So Petrie eventually got ten sections of Whitesides run from Mrs Griffin].

p.182: ‘the gin would quicken her pace and say, “Come back now, missus,” in a beseeching sort of voice.'

p.184: ‘You mind “Dalantchin”, who was lame in the leg?’ [Note mind “remember, know”].

p.184: ‘I [the Aborigine] don’t see that. The white fellow stole the ground.’

p.185: ‘In those early days we were not allowed to go near the “croppies” (the native name for prisoners) but could always see you [Petrie].’

p.186: ‘my father said to him [Dalaipi], “You make the rain come and fill the holes again, ‘Dalaipi’.” He answered, “Byamby me makeim come.” About two days after this it got very cloudy, and “Dalaipi” turned up and said, “Me go now and makeim rain come up.” . . . [So he went and made magic] . . . On his way back to the house his master met him, and asked how he had come by the cut [on his head]. “Oh, I been feeling about for ‘taggan’, [rainbow spirit] and hit my head longa ‘mudlo’ (stone).”

That day a shower fell, which soon cleared off, however, so my father asked, “How is it you didn’t make more rain, ‘Dalaipi’? that’s not enough.” The old fellow replied, “Oh, I only cuttem ‘taggan’ half through; byamby me go down and make plenty more come”.

p.186: [One day Dalaipi came to Petrie] ‘and said, “You let me go, me not be long away; I been telling the other blackfellows to mind you till I come back”’.

p.203: ‘One day “Tom” got hold of a Jack-in-the-box, and taking it to Banjo [who had been christened Governor Banjur of Nindery] said, “Here, Governor, you open this fellow.” . . . [The box gave him such a fright he did not come back] till next day when he came up to Father shaking his fist at him, and then putting his hands together, said, “My word, Jack Nittery – handker – policemen” – meaning that my father’s brother, John, would get a policeman to handcuff “Tom” for frightening him. [On another occasion] they got him to come back again, however, afterwards. “My word!” was a great expression with Banjo, and “handker” he always used for handcuffs. The latter had gained a firm hold on his mind, because one day the soldiers had pounced upon him in mistake for another blackfellow, and handcuffing him, led him off to the lock-up. Passing the Petrie’s house on the Bight, the poor
old man cried out for help — "Jack Nittery, come on — poor fellow Governor Banjo!" "Jack Nittery" (Petrie) did come on, and got him off, explaining he was just a harmless old creature.

p.204: 'One day old Governor, who had been away at the Blackall, came in great excitement, and said, "My word! me bin find big fellow stone, longa yinnell (creek or gully) — plenty sit down." So father said not to tell anyone [about the gold].'

p.205: [Governor horseriding] '... he would jerk out to me "My word — Brisbane — policeman — hanker — Mese Nittery." Meaning that when he got back to Brisbane, he would tell Mr Petrie to get a policeman to put handcuffs on me for laughing at him ... [After returning Governor shows other Aboriginals how he rode the horse and adds] "My word, Governor no gamin".'

pp.205-6: 'The natives used to get Banjo to do all sorts of queer things to amuse them, and they used to enjoy seeing him try and read a book or newspaper. More often than not he held whatever it was upside down, and then would quote with quite a grave face, "Itishin, Governor, plour, 'bacco, tea, sugar, plankind, shirt, waiscoin, trouser, pipperou (half-a-crown). Chook her (look here). My word, no gammon Governor".'

p.208: 'When Banjo could collect his wits sufficiently to get away he ran to Rev James Love's house near by, calling loudly, "Marsa, Marsa, come on — Missus cranky!" And then he bethought him of the handcuffs and "Jack Nittery". Going to the latter he gasped out, "My word, Bom's (Bob's) missus cranky"'.

p.209: [re nearly being poisoned at Nindery station on the Maroochy] 'Banjo recalls, "My word!" said Banjo, "that fellow saucy, he no good — byamby me hanker — policeman — lock up"'.

p.248: 'Taljingallini, the Aborigine called, "Look here! Mr Petrie been stand and shoot bird!" and proceeded to show the way that gentleman had fired off the gun.'

p.252: ' "Jimmy Beerwah" who could speak a little "dog English" or black-fellow slang, having been occasionally at the German Mission, near Brisbane.' [Petrie is here quoting from Archer (1897)’s account of climbing the Glasshouse mountains.]

p.254: 'This "Jimmy Beerwah" was, my father says, a regular messenger among the blacks. He carried messages from tribe to tribe by means of the usual notched stick. A messenger could travel anywhere with safety.'

p.254: 'Long afterwards, when my father went to live at the Pine [River], the aborigines showed him just where his father had camped — they said he had with him a bullock on which chains were put, "all same as 'croppies' (prisoners), so that fellow not run away".'

p.276: 'The squatters all stood round, and Billy, who could not say "health" took the glass, and this was his toast, "Gentleman, here you go hell".'

p.290-92: [Some expressions said to have been used by Petrie’s cockatoo]: "Baal budgery! Hip, hip, hurray" (p.290) "Baal yu yacca, baal you tobacco!" (p.290) "Baal budgery — Jack's pretty Cocky! — kill poor 'Cocky'" (p.292)

Griffin 1847-49

10 Sept. 1847: 'Griffin refers to the "salt water blacks" attacking and killing one of his sawyers on Whiteside station.'

Select Committee on the Native Police Force 1861

In Appendix B there is a letter by J. and A. Mortimer to the Select Committee from Manumbar [Nanango], 3 Apr. 1861 about the shooting of Aborigines by Police in which the following sentences occur.

p.107: "policeman been shootim blackfellows."

"that one fellow was 'Bong likin waterhole'." [dead in the waterhole]

"Baal you shoot me belonging to Mr. Mortimer."

p.112: [Petrie re Aboriginal religion] 'they used to believe that when they died they would "jump up whitefellows" [become a whiteman] but they don't believe that generally now.'
Kennedy 1902

p.17: [At Sandgate he visited a native camp in 1864]: ' "That fellow priest?" [they asked]. I agreed; upon which, sinking his voice to a mysterious and hoarse whisper, he proceeded — "Budgery. That fellow like it put on shirt over trausel, get a top o'waddy, and yabber 'bout debil, debil," which rendered in plain English reads — "Good. That man puts his shirt on over his trousers, gets top of wood, or pulpit, and talks about devil, devil".'

p.17: ' "You give mine tixpence mine say lorsprer tin commands budgery quick all same white fellow", which meant, "Give me sixpence I'll say the Lord's prayer and ten commandments splendidly quick as a white man does in church".'

p.18: ' "This fellow [Aborigine] cabon quick one shillin" [This man very quick, one shilling].'

Welsby 1917

Comments on Stradbroke Islanders about 1900.

p.115: 'After the usual budgery remarks, Toompani took a small hat from one of the gins, and with humble countenance and gentle face pleaded, "You gibit tickpence for cabon budgery corroboree. Gibit tchillin".'

p.115: 'a gin — Coolum — cried aloud, "Me been tinkit Billy Cassim been askit gentlemen already".'

p.115: 'Billy Cassim, who sang a fairly decent song, English and black words intermingled, as he deemed it necessary, was also the author of many Amity Point corroborees.'

p.117: 'I can picture him now as I saw him flung by a cross buttock on to the sand, and whilst lying there to recover, calling out, "All right, Tom Welsby, that throw goes to beef, but by — the next will be mine — a damper" — and so it turned out to be.'

p.119: ' "Weel we like Tom Petrie best, Mr Ryder, Home Secretary, we like him also; but (and without hesitation) Mr (-) no good — he talk too much. He think he know everything," this broke in Sydney, and I believe she was right.'

p.122: 'They [Amity Point Aborigines] asserted that "big fellow long ago — my word! — big fellow ship, he go ashore outside Gheebellum (sandhill on Moreton Island) that fellow outside alonga breakers".'

p.122: 'On seeing a horse for the first time': ' "big fellow dogs".'

p.124: ' "My word. Mr Welsby, you got plenty sharp mil (mil meaning eyes). Kitty and Juno not very often show that fellow little finger".'

p.125: 'but it was only after repeated sayings of "You married man, Mr Welsby, or we will not tell you these things", that the information came to light.'

APPENDIX 2: INLAND PIDGIN ENGLISH: EARLY PERIOD

Most of these data come from reminiscences and letters of the Archer family who took up runs in the Brisbane Valley and elsewhere in the early 1840s.

Archer 1897

p.72: [Refers to "gins" and "piccaninnies"]

p.73: [Refers to "dillies"]

p.73: 'Jimmy exclaimed, "Come on, merri maki-haste, direc'ly blackfellow killin' you and me", and set off.'

p.78: 'Kippar Charlie [another Durandur area Aborigine from the Brisbane valley] jumped and shouting, "Come on, now that fellow catch'im", rushed forward.'

p.94: [re an Aborigine at Durandur bitten by a snake]: ' "Snake been bite'im that fellow".'

p.120-21: [re exploration of the Darling Downs]: 'Getting hold of a half-savage black-boy belonging to that country ... we set off ... While thus engaged I tried to get some information about the country from my companion, and, pointing down the plain, asked, "Water sit
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

down?” – a shake of the head and a decided “Bel” (no) was all the answer I could get, greatly to my disgust, as, I could see the plain opening out westward . . . [Later out near Yondarian station came upon a camp of blacks]. Riding up to the camp, I asked, “Where water sit down?” “There along o’that fellow tree”, was the answer . . . [Later] I was much disappointed, especially as I was assured that “Bel water sit down good way” with a swing of the arm all around the horizon.’

p.141: ‘We asked her “Where big fellow water sit down?” (meaning the Condamine), when, turning south-eastward, she flung out her skinny arms and explained, “Good way” (far). I was sorry . . .’

p.148: ‘“I believe [= reckon it’s a] possum”, remarked Darby.’

p.210: [On a prospecting trip to California, USA, with one of his black-boys] ‘stooping and pointing to the ground with astonishment, he exclaimed, “You see that fellow track? Bel me know that fellow”.’

p.219: ‘On my asking “What’s the matter?” they exclaimed “Eh! Me been seen him Devil-Devil” [referring to a bear in California].’

Archer 1858-9

31 Mar. 1859: [re a German having shot old Kitchen Billy]: T.L. Hay and JC Murray held a magisterial enquiry into the affair of yesterday, and after examining witnesses came to the conclusion that it was quite accidental, but have forwarded the evidence to the Attorney General and have bound the perpetration over (in what?) to appear if called upon. I should like to see the vagabond [German] get a good thrashing or some severe punishment that would make him more cautious in future with firearms. The effect upon the Blacks will I fear not be a favourable one to the Whites. They may say and with some reason, “Those white fellows pretend to be our friends and keep telling us we are budgery fellows and make us carry wood and water for them. But when they are colé with us all they have got to do is to pick up a gun and shoot us, and afterwards swear they did not mean it, and that it was all done in fun, and the Commissioner believes them and lets them go. Bel that balki.” However, accidents may happen to the most careful of us.’

Lang 1861

p.327: ‘Reports Dr L. Leichhardt as saying in a letter to Mr Lynd in Sydney that Aborigines collecting wild honey out beyond the Darling Downs said “Me millmill bull (I see a bee’s nest)”’. [That was in the early 1840s]

Evans 1975

p.38: [Quoted from Campbell (1875:5)]: “pho-pho (shoot) musket.”

p.49: [Quotation by Evans from A.J. McConnel MS in Hayes Collection, Fryer Library about the 1842 Kilcoy poisonings]: “That blackfellow been eatim damper. Then plenty that been jump about all the same fish, when you catch im, big mob been die – him dead all about.”

p.89: [Quoted by Evans from McConnell MS again]: “All this ‘yarman’ (land) belonging to me.”

Evans and Walker 1977

p.51: ‘In October, 1850, according to local squatter, Alfred H. Brown: “An Aboriginal known as ‘Billy’ came to me and said, ‘Do you know . . . white fellows he belongs to a dray (pointing at the same time to the hut in which William Roberts lived) tell him that I will kill him; he will come this way soon . . .’” (Later) the body of William Roberts was found a very short distance from Maryborough . . . bearing evident traces of his having received his death from the natives.’

Skinner 1975

p.30: ‘one [Aborigine] said, “Bale break’em, we want’em all, and suppose you bale give it me take’em altogether, dray and bullocks”’.
APPENDIX 3: QUEENSLAND PIDGIN ENGLISH OF THE 1860S AND BEYOND

These data come mainly from the inquests into the deaths of Aborigines and others in Queensland between 1860 and 1870. They are from various parts of the state, and are arranged in approximate chronological sequence.

JUS/N2:60/61 (Rockhampton district)
(1) 'one of the gins was proceedings with the sentence "Coubon (?) me been cry when White Mary" when she was stopped by another gin . . .'
(2) 'they [the gins] were talking "bale buggeree [sic]" that yabber buggeree, ie., that they would not yabber straight.'

JUS/N2:60/71 (Mt Flinders district)
"the Black Police told her Blackfellow kill him Bullock a long time ago."

JUS/N3:61/i (Head station, Fassifern district [?])
(1) 'One of the blacks said to me "Black Police like him come and shoot old man like him camp".'
(2) 'the gins told me that there were "old-fellow black-fellows" lying at the camp.'
(3) [Also claimed in this case that Aboriginal women could communicate fairly well with European shepherds and station hands although no evidence of exactly how]

JUS/N12:66/87 (Wandoo station, ? district)
[No Aboriginal Pidgin English given but in evidence John Gorm, superintendent of Wandoo station indicates he communicated successfully with Aboriginal women]

JUS/N24:70/23 (Gympie district)
'Sammy [an Aborigine] said, "Baal me been there at all, other blackfellow." We fixed a windlass and lowered a candle.'

JUS/N27:70/211 (Rockhampton district)
(1) 'Peter slipped up and gave insolence, he told me to go to buggery, he had liquor in him . . . and Peter said to Fenwick, "You white buggar shoot me".'
(2) 'Fenwick told Peter to "you" just before the gun went off Peter said he would not – by you meant to go away.'
(3) 'The blackfellows said, "Shoot em blackfellows altogether now" he kept telling them to go away.'

Bennett 1927

In these reference is made to Barney, an Aborigine "adopted" by Christison of Lamermoor station and taught Pidgin English.

p.66: [re threatened attack on Christison's house by some young Aborigines, Barney says,]:
" "Master! . . ." Barney went on earnestly, "Master, more better no camp alonga house to-night. Blackfellow come up." "Blackfellow find'em sheep?" Christison demanded. "Noa, no find'em sheep. Come up along house, take blanket, tommy'awk. Me tell'em no do that. Ko-bee-berry [a 'chief'] tell'em no do that. That fellow wy-ko (very bad)", he concluded, in horror and depression.'

p.68: 'Barney alone was made free of the homestead. 'I think I stop with Munggra?' he ventured, and Munggra clinched it heartily. "Very good, Barney", he declared.'

p.71: [Barney says pointing a stretch of open country]: ' "Altogether koonery (downs)"", he declared, "bail 'nother side (no other side)".'

p.72: [Central western Queensland mid 1860s]: ' "No master", they [the Aborigines] replied, "you and me go there, you and me die" . . . At once they acquiesced. "All right, master. You go first, we come up behind"."
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:1

p.74: [Barney, exclaiming when he had quenched his thirst]: “Master, water very good, all the same soup.”
p.75: [Barney commenting on torrential rain]: “all the same bucket.”
p.80: ‘Robert watched the lotus; then he sought Barney. “Warmboomooloo plenty swim?” he queried. “Make fast wondoobra (lotus flower) alonga yally (head), swim under water, catch ram?” Barney was greatly excited. “Yoo-wye (yes), master”, he cried eagerly, “but Warmboomooloo no catch ram. He send wife catch ram. Warmboomooloo got kooberry pairrkunya (three wives)”, he added, holding up two fingers and a thumb – “and plenty hammer'em, my word!”;
p.80: [re Christison’s teaching Warmboomooloo a lesson]: ‘ “Give im more, master; give im more”, she cried insatiably; and kept up a running commentary in quaint pidgin-English and Dalleburra . . .’
p.81: ‘ “Bail youondo pater goalberry tando (don’t you eat emu eggs)”, he [Warmboomooloo] would warn, licking his lips. “Suppose youondo parter – woollammy! (you will die!)”’;
p.101: ‘ “That fellow strong, no fall about”, cried the blackboys in delight . . . When they struck Amelia Creek they cried out, trembling with excitement, “Close up now!” and dashed off at a gallop . . .’
p.103: ‘ “Bail me stupid fellow”, he [an Aborigine] replied, “too much blood run away”;
p.108: “blackfellow come away.”
p.109: ‘One old gin wanted to claim Munggra as a defunct brother who had “jumped up white fellow” . . . “Me close up bung (dead), perlenty me sick. Munggra give me good fellow medicine” – with a sudden change to brisk staccato – “one minute all right!”;
p.109: ‘ “This boy father belonging to me. You give it name” . . . “Me been lose’em name”, he confessed.’
p.110: ‘ “Ah! BIllycan! Never no more me lose’em now.” The boy was called Billycan.’
p.110: ‘In Dalleburra, helped out by scraps of English to express what they had no words for, the wife [of an old Aborigine] told how many moons ago the native police had come with thunder and had struck Woonggo.’
p.123: “I think, master, cattle go away about seven days ago . . . Master, tomorrow when the sun is so high, I catch’em cattle.”
p.130: “The blacks were aghast that a lordly white man had destroyed himself, and sorrowed for the stranger and his unknown grief. They asked, “What for cooce-booroo [the man who cooees = white man] kill himself? Blackfellow no kill himself. ’Posing nother blackfellow come alonga my country, kill kangaroo, ’possum, emu; by-and-by me see’em; me fight. Some time nother fellow kill me: some time me see im’nother fellow. All right! But no good kill himself!”’
p.136: ‘ “Tankoo, Missis! Good fellow Missis!” they repeated . . .’
p.152: [re Barney reading smoke signals]: ‘A few minutes after the signal smoke curled up Barney was reading it at Lammermoor, and a dozen blacks asked, “What name?” “Munggra come up to-morrow, might be three o’clock”, Barney announced joyfully.’
p.166: ‘ “Bung!” (dead!) came the grotesque reply with a sob [from the assembled Aborigines].’
p.167: ‘Wyma agreed with joy to “look out pamboona”.’
p.187: ‘Barney, who recognized the manager [from a nearby station], exclaimed, – “Mister Grame, bail you swim horse. You hang up saddle alonga tree, take off clothes. I come up, take you ’nother side”.’
p.206: ‘Then the blacks would rush in a body from their camp and carry off the deerhounds, as big as themselves, smiting them on the nose, not ungently, for being “cheeky fellow”;
p.228: ‘Wyma shook her head sadly; “Kurry [an Aboriginal assistant] very flash”, she said.’
p.237: ‘Johannis came to say, “Time – go, Master. Can’t see country how look by moonlight.” Then he recognized Christison’s abstracted expression and corrected abruptly – “No matter!” adding, as if he were humouring a child, “You write to Missis, tell her I thank her very much for sending me nice presents”;
p.251: [re Dolly’s native name]: ‘ “Kahnkoollinya”, which signified “young moon, all the same boomerang”.”
PIDGIN ENGLISH IN QUEENSLAND

p.254: 'Jo[hannis] prevailed, “More better sleep!”.'
p.255: [re Johannis not saving his wages]: ‘“More better spend money, get good name”... “I go England with you,” he announced.’
p.258: [Wyma’s explanation of why the family was not getting many eggs]: “only one hen lay egg, and that fellow duck!”
p.267: “The old fellow caught at the name and sprang up in the greatest excitement. “Mungra come up”, he cried. “Good fellow Mungra come up.” She explained, and he sank back, saying so sadly, “No come up”.

Evans 1975

passim (e.g., pp.56, 67, 78, 102): References to Aborigines being called “nigger’s” by some Europeans and native police in Queensland at different times and in different places.

APPENDIX 4: PIDGIN ENGLISH USED BY NEW SOUTH WALES NATIVE MOUNTED POLICE (OR BLACK POLICE) IN QUEENSLAND FROM 1848 ONWARDS

These data come from inquests into the deaths of Aborigines and others in Queensland between 1860 and 1870 (held at the Queensland State Archives) and from books on Queensland’s Native Police Force. They are from various parts of the state outside of the Brisbane area and arranged in rough chronological sequence.

JUS/N2:60/61 (Rockhampton district)
(1) ‘I asked him why they did not let her go he said “that policeman coubon (?) frightened that White Mary directly yabber” [coubon = really?]’.
(2) ‘I spoke to Trooper “Toby” in the cell he said “Gulliver” “bloody rogue” that it was Gulliver and Alma that pulled her off the horse.’
(3) ‘he saw him plant [= hide] something in the saddle room.’
(4) ‘Alma told him [another trooper] to “bale yabber that policeman been manam [= sexually abuse] white Mary along scrub”.
(5) ‘I asked Trooper Gulliver whether that been find him and he said ‘Oui(?) I think it’.
(6) [Reference to “miall” or “mialls” as tribal Aborigines]
(7) ‘I asked him where the tracks where [sic] he said “bale tracks” blackfellow tell him that Mr Archer’s blackfellows cut tree and he did not pursue the tracks any further.’
(8) “Trooper Alma came out of the scrub and saw White Mary on horse close up along scrub.”
(9) “he hit her with the big end of the nullah nullah.”
(10) “I asked the trooper did not he think ‘White Mary’ close up, he said he did not know.”
(11) ‘they gammoned her with some story that they would show her the short way to Mr Archers.’
(12) [Reference to “gins”]

JUS/N25:70/64 (Francistown, Gilbert District)
‘Trooper George came up to the Camp and reported that he had been bitten by a snake he said “Mamme black snake been biting me” [mamme = boss?]’.

JUS/N25:70/205 (Gilberton district)
(1) ‘I asked him [an Aboriginal trooper] where “Paddy” was. He replied, “That fellow die mammy, that fellow drop off horse, cabou [really?] me did cry after him, me been bury him along o’creek”.’
(2) 'Constable M. Fitzgerald in giving evidence about Paddy’s death says, “Sub Inspector Clohesy asked Charley, ‘Wher is Paddy’ and he answered, ‘Mammy that been die, he been fall off horse me been cabou [really?] cry.’ Mr Clohesy asked Charley what he had done with the Boy and he answered, “Me been bury him along of creek”.'

Kennedy 1902

Examples of Pidgin English spoken by and/or to ‘boys’ of the Native Mounted Police 1870-1890?

p.103: [he said]: ‘he had killed a wild “yaraman” [horse]. “Gammon”, we said. “Bel gammon” he replied.’

p.113: “White fellow sit down, marmy (‘White men are there, master’).”


p.124: “Mine take it this curly hair fellow.”

p.125: ‘I saw them [the Aboriginal women who had been taken as wives by the “boys” on an earlier expedition] when I next visited the district. The girls had grown stouter, and were cheery and chatty, having learnt dialects, as well as “Pidgin English”. Upon putting the question to them, “Would you like to go back to your old life?” they answered with a series of groans – “Bel! here budgery there cabon dig, cabon waddy”, which meant that here in barracks all was good, but there in the wild bush was hard work and many blows.’

p.139: ‘ “Plenty blackfellow yan like it this”, he gruffly remarked, as he pointed to a neighbouring range of hills.’

p.150: ‘ “that fellow look out sugar bag”, and listening, the faint tap, tap of a tomahawk could be heard, as it ate its way into the spout of a gum tree, which contained the wild bees’ nest.’

p.175: *. . . one day a “boy” came up and saluted with a diabolical grin upon his face. Upon being asked somewhat sternly “What name?” meaning, “What do you want?” he said that a “white Mary”, i.e., white woman, was hunting the camp for me, that she appeared “cabon saucy”, and that she carried a “pretty feller piccanlinny” in her arms.’

p.207: ‘I will discard the “pidgin” English which was our usual mode of communication [in the Native Mounted Police].’

p.260: “That fellow sit down there, that fellow bong.”

p.261: ‘I told them that the man who was pronounced “Bong”, or dead, was “Budgery”, or all right, and then I smartly rated the “boy” who had brought back this false news.’

passim: Kennedy uses ‘boy’ throughout to refer to any Aboriginal servant or labourer. The rest are regarded as myalls (wild).

Skinner 1975

p.53-4: [Walker’s address to his troopers of 4 August 1851 throws considerable light on the kind of English used in the Police Force]: ‘As the police will shortly again go into the bush I have some things to say to you all.

(1) No policeman is to take grog or wine from anybody but his officer. Any sergeant or corporal who does so will be broke and have the red cloth taken off his jacket and cap for three months. Any troopers will be soundly flogged. Although I tell you this, I am not afraid of any of you disobeying by taking grog because you have before behaved so well, and I know you will do so again. Never mind what any person says to you. When any person tells you I said he might give you grog, he tells you lies, for neither I nor Mr. Marshall nor Mr. Fulford ever will tell anybody to give you grog when we are not there.

(2) I say nothing to you about fighting because anybody can fight – but I want you to shew everybody that I command a body of clean, sharp and good policemen not a lot of dirty, lazy charcoles or stupid constables.

(3) No policeman is to walk about without his carbine – if he does so he will be punished every time.

(4) Every policeman must take care of his arms, his horse, his saddle and bridle, and his clothes. They belong to the Queen, not to you.

(5) The Governor has been very good to you and he will expect you to do your duty.
(6) When a policeman washes his shirt, he must not put it on again until it is quite dry. He is not to take off his cloak unless his officer tells him to do so — and when it is warm, he will strap his jacket on the top of his cloak.

(7) Keep away from Gins when you are at a gunya. Do what you like when you are in the bush. I will not be angry with you then.

(8) When you are sick, tell your officer directly.

(9) Serjeants Dolan and Skelton are to you the same as officers.

(10) Logan’s policemen are now going to the Balonne and you will have something to do because the Balonne blacks are not old women. Old Simon can shew you how to fight; he likes always close up directly — mind I must not have any charcoles beat my police. Do not make my friend Logan ashamed of you.

(11) What the Governor wants from you is to make charcoles quiet, he does not want them killed, and he won’t let white fellows do so. If they won’t be quiet, you must make them — that’s all. But you will not shoot unless your Officer tells you. Mind if the charcoles begin to throw spears or nulla nullas then don’t you wait but close up knock them down.

(12) I shall be quick after you, and when the charcoles in the Balonne think that will do, I shall leave my rogues with Mr. Fulford at Wondai Gumbal and take Logan and Willy’s two sections to help Mr. Marshall and Cobby’s men to cramer [capture] Fraser’s Island. Logan’s men will then come back here to the Sgt. Major and the Sections 1 and 3, if the Governor says Yes, will go with me to Moreton Bay. Now boys this is all I have to say to you except take care of yourselves. Don’t get sick any more for it breaks my heart. When you bogy [bathe, swim] don’t stop long in the water. Mind this is not your country.’

APPENDIX 5: OTHER EXAMPLES OF PIDGIN ENGLISH FROM NEW SOUTH WALES

Dutton, G. 1974

p.30: [Example of Bungaree’s Pidgin English from late 1790s]: “No, massa, no tamarra; derekle, brandy, derekle.”

Bennett 1927

Refers to the founding of Lammermoor station by Christison in 1866 in central western Queensland. Christison had come to Queensland from Victoria.

p.60: [Christison giving Barney a message for his tribe]: “The Dalleburra might camp on the far side of the waterhole, sun-up side, and kill kangaroos, emus, altogether like before; but no kill horse, no kill sheep.”


p.67: [After thwarting the raid on his house with shotgun and saltpeter Christison goes to the Aboriginal camp next morning]: ‘... he addressed them, jeering. “They were pretty fellows, but without brains! Heads hard as a log and hollow — no wild honey inside, only white ants!” He forbade any to move, and laid down the law with passion in as much blacks’ language as he called to mind, and pidgin-English when that failed. “What name I tell you?” He included all in a lion-like glance. “You sit down quiet, fish, hunt: tarrall (very good). But suppose fight, steal, tell lie: wy-ko (very bad). Plenty me koola (angry).” He stormed at them ... Of course they had nothing to eat: they had not been hunting. He knew it. “Clear out”, he exclaimed vigorously. “Yan (go), catch’em kangaroo”.


p.80: ‘Ram tarralee parter” (ram is fine feed), Christison acclaimed.’

p.109: “This boy ‘Billy’, he [Christison] said ... “You lose’em name all the time!” Christison accused, then — “this boy ‘Billy’ — all the same billycan!”.

p.110: ‘Yes, Christison would cure him — “but where you catch that fellow?”’
p.152: 'The evening before getting home Christison sent up a signal smoke: "You think Dolly see it first – or might be Boota?" he joked the blackboys, Dollying being Duncan's gin, and Boota Captain's.'

p.183: "By and by we'll get water, Barney! We must go on working and have patience." [said Christison].

p.246: "My word! You ought to have heard old Barney tell how . . ."

Ridley 1875

p.169: [re a stockman on the Namoi who ill-treated an Aborigine and how the Aborigines turned the tables on him]: 'While he was in this plight [leading his exhausted horse through the bush] a number of blackfellows suddenly sprang out of the bushes and surrounded him. At their head was Charley [the previously offended one]. The stockman thought he was now to die; but instead of spearing him, Charley addressed him in this manner, "You 'member blackfellow, you chase'm with pistol, you try shoot him. I that blackfellow, Charley! Now me say I kill you; then me say bel (not) I kill you; bel blackfellow any more coola (anger) 'gainst whitefellow; bel whitefellow any more coola 'gainst blackfellow! You give me 'bacca." So he made friends with the white men . . .'

Archer 1897

p.39: [While still a new chum in New South Wales before going to Queensland in the 1840s, T. Archer refers to himself as a "white fellow master"]

p.58: [Near the Maroochy River north of Brisbane]: 'At one of these camps, Jimmy [an Aborigine from western New South Wales] gave me a quiet shake and whispered, "Black fellow come. Me hear him"."

p.59: 'when his pint of gruel was handed to him he [Jimmy] burst into tears, exclaiming, "Bel more me patta killigilli" (I won't eat any more gruel).'

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CONTENTS

Henry Reynolds  
*Aborigines and European social hierarchy*  124

Sylvia J. Hallam  
*A view from the other side of the western frontier: or 'I met a man who wasn't there . . .'*  134

Paul Black and Grace Koch  
*Koko-Bera island style music*  157

Anna Shnukal  
*Torres Strait Creole: the growth of a new Torres Strait language*  173

REVIEW ARTICLE

Noel Broadbent  
*Three perspectives on coastal archaeology and a view from 64° north*  186

BOOK REVIEWS

ABORIGINAL AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Henry Reynolds

Until the 1840s the main emphasis of policy makers in the Australian colonies was on the incorporation of the Aborigines into colonial society. Confidence in this plan declined as the century progressed and some argued all along that the blacks belonged to a doomed race which could never be assimilated. Whereas assimilationists of the mid-twentieth century made no mention of class when they projected future Aboriginal adoption of the ‘Australian way of life’ their counterparts a hundred years and more earlier usually had a clear picture of a hierarchical society of ranks and orders differentiated by wealth and power and status. Views about colonial society varied and changed over time yet any discussion about the absorption of the Aborigines necessarily involved the question of where in the hierarchy they would be placed. The race question was by its very nature also a class question. This was apparent in almost every area of white-Aboriginal relations — in the policies and attitudes of the Europeans and in the Aboriginal response as well.

The common view amongst officials, missionaries and well-to-do settlers was that the Aborigines would become landless labourers. Governor Macquarie saw them becoming useful ‘as labourers in agricultural employ or among the lower class of mechanics’.1 A generation later Governor Gipps considered means by which they could be induced to become ‘voluntary labourers for wages’. It was, he argued, ‘by the employment of the Aborigines as labourers for wages . . . that I consider the civilization of the Aborigines . . . must be worked out’.2 In the Port Phillip district, Aboriginal Protector William Thomas remarked that ‘the highest pitch the Aborigines could ever arrive to would be that of a hired labourer’.3 Civilisation meant the inculcation of those qualities considered desirable in the lower orders. Civilisation meant proletarianisation.

The question of civilisation, Governor Hutt argued, ‘could only be answered by discovering some method of overcoming this repugnance to regular work’.4 Charles Symmons, the Western Australian Protector of Aborigines, thought that ‘one of the best means of ameliorating the condition of the native population, and gradually raising them in the scale of civilization was to encourage them in a desire for steady employment’.5 But how was change to be effected, how could the ‘capricious

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1 Macquarie to Bathurst, 8 October 1814, HRA 1/8/368.
2 Aborigines: Australian Colonies, BPP 34/627/1844/105-6.
3 Thomas, 18 September 1841, ML MSS 214/8.
4 Hutt to Stanley, 8 April 1842, Aborigines: Australian Colonies, BPP 34/627/1844/412.
5 Symmons to Colonial Secretary, 18 September 1848, WA CSO/1848/173/36.

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ABORIGINES AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

hunter' be turned into the 'steady labourer'? The colonists found the task infinitely frustrating. Aborigines strongly resisted the demands of regular labour as a chorus of European complaints attested. 'They appear generally to feel they owe us nothing', Port Phillip Protector E.S. Parker wrote, and that they are 'under no obligation to work'. His colleague, William Thomas, remarked that the blacks he knew would 'only work a couple of days and then rest' telling him that 'this is what they do in the bush and how it has always been'. Their prevailing character as labourers, he lamented, was indolence. They preferred 'sleep and saunter to work'.

Many plans were proposed to discipline refractory blacks. 'Though by nature wild', wrote Governor Gipps, and with difficulty induced to submit 'to the restraints which are imposed on ordinary labourers abundant proof exists that they may be made to do so'. Archdeacon Scott suggested a more subtle approach, hoping that blacks would learn the 'nature of labour' by feeling the 'benefits of enjoying and living on the produce', by learning to appreciate the 'sweets of property' as Charles Griffith, a Victorian magistrate put it. William Thomas decided to give flour to those who had worked, denying it to others in order to inculcate the link between working and eating. This annoyed the Aborigines. They came back the next day threatening to return to the mountains and live 'like before white man came' when people took it in turns to hunt and 'didn't have to work everyday'. 'They do not court a life of labour', a perceptive settler remarked,

that of our shepherds and hut-keepers — our splitters or bullock drivers — appears to them one of unmeaning toil, and they would by no means consent to exchange their free unhoused condition for the monotonous drudgery of such a dreary existence.

Missionaries were deeply interested in the encouragement of a work ethic amongst Aborigines. Members of the New South Wales Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Among the Aborigines wanted to lead the blacks to an acquaintance with the first principles of religion but also believed that,

as an important and indispensible Duty, it is incumbent on us, by every pious and conciliatory means to recommend to the Aborigines of New South Wales the habits of useful industry.

On the stations of the Port Phillip Protectorate every endeavour was made to 'induce the natives to habits of industry' while the missionary Joseph Orton urged

6 Collie, Select Committee on Aborigines, BPP 7/538/1837/129.
7 Parker, Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 12.
8 Thomas, 18 September 1841, ML MSS 214/8.
9 Gipps to Legislative Council, 8 June 1841, Aborigines: Australian Colonies, BPP 34/627/1844/119.
10 Scott to Darling, 1 August 1827, Woolmington, 1973:186.
11 Select Committee on the Aborigines and the Protectorate, NSWLCV & P 1849/17.
12 Thomas, 18 November 1840, ML MSS 214/8.
13 Select Committee on the Aborigines and the Protectorate, NSWLCV & P 1849/17.
14 Bonwick, 12 August 1819, ML Box 50.
15 Annual Report of Chief Protector, 1841, Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 10.
'assiduous, unremitting efforts to induce them to profitable industry'. But Assistant Protector Parker concurred. ‘They must’, he wrote, ‘be taught to estimate the value of labour and the beneficial results of industry’. But the link between labour, religion and social control was most clearly enunciated by the Port Phillip missionary John Harper who wrote:

- They must be taught the art of cultivation . . . and it will only be by keeping them employed, that their minds will be made susceptible of Religious impressions . . .
- They must also be brought to settle upon a spot where they will always be under the inspection of their teachers.

Aboriginal resistance to the discipline of regular labour paralleled the situation in many parts of the world where capitalism penetrated traditional peasant and hunter-gatherer societies. English workers themselves conducted a long struggle against the new patterns of life imposed by early industrialism. The parallels with the Australian situation were apparent to colonial officials, missionaries and employers. While the subjects differed the end in view was similar. The Aboriginal problem was seen in much the same light as the contemporaneous task of controlling the itinerants, paupers, slum dwellers, highland clansmen and squatters living on the shrinking commons at home in Britain. The institutions planned and established for Aborigines were based on those of the early industrial revolution — the ragged school, the poor house, the penitentiary.

William Thomas directly linked labour problems among Port Phillip blacks with those at home in England. One Monday morning in 1842 he wrote in his diary:

- this morn scarce a Black would work. In fact I find generally that the Blacks are lazy on the Monday like English Cobblers. I fear they will keep St. Monday.

His planned solution was to initiate the children into habits of industry at preparatory schools where ‘business should be carried on as at the Philanthropic School near London’. A few years earlier the New South Wales Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay, drew up instructions for an Aboriginal settlement at Port Phillip, the object of which was to ‘induce them to offer their labour in return for food and clothing’. It was to be managed ‘upon the System of Mr Owen’s establishment at Lanark or under any similar arrangement’. At Poonindie the Anglican clergyman Matthew Hale consciously modelled his institution on the Ragged Schools in England. Blacks would be gathered together to be kept under regular Christian instruction, ‘where the attempt may be made to lead them by degrees into habits of industry and a more settled mode of life’.

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16 Orton, 3 December 1840, ML MSS A1715.
17 Report on the Loddon Station, Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 12.
18 Harper, 23 April 1827, Bonwick ML Box 53.
19 Thomas, 1 February 1842, ML MSS 214/8.
20 Thomas to Robinson, 1 January 1840, ML MSS 214/8; Thomas, 18 September 1841, ML MSS 214/8.
21 Macleay to Lonsdale, 9 December 1836, NSW & Vic Misc. Papers, 1817-73, ML MSS A1493.
22 Hale, 1889:9.
ABORIGINES AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

But it was not just habits of industry which had to be inculcated but also the obedience and deference required in the master-servant relationship. The problem was that the blacks 'did not understand exalted rank', and consequently it was 'difficult to get into a black fellow's head that one man is higher than another'.23 A West Australian settler referred to local blacks who did not 'know the restraint of being anything like the servant of another'.24 On the other side of the continent William Thomas referred to Aborigines who had been brought up among the whites as 'ones who have been taught to bow the knee'.25 His colleague E.S. Parker argued that blacks on the Protectorate stations would not be fitted for employment as hired servants until they had been taught 'to have some idea of the respective relations of the Master and Servant'.26 The missionary James Gunther noted that amongst the blacks he was familiar with

no man has an idea of serving another. This idea of their own dignity and importance is carried so far that they hesitate long before they apply the term Mr. to any European even when they know full well the distinction we make between master and servant.27

Gunther related an incident which illustrated the conflict of values. He ordered a black living on the mission to plough a field. In reply the young man asked why he should, saying 'he was master too'.28 William Thomas noted a similar occurrence in his diary. A young Aborigine recruited into the Port Phillip Native Police returned to the Protectorate station complaining of ill treatment. He concluded by saying that the white officer was 'no his master'. When taken before the local bench the magistrate told Thomas to give the lad a good scolding and impress on him 'that any Gentleman a Soldier was sent with was his master for the time being'.29

But Aborigines did work for Europeans in all parts of the country as guides, trackers, shepherds, stockmen and labourers. The compulsion either of hunger or of the gun barrel often played a part in the induction into the work force. But that was not the whole story. Reciprocity not fear was often the source of Aboriginal action. In a particularly perceptive comment the colonial historian G.W. Rusden wrote of black servants that 'affection made them willingly perform acts of service regarded as the fruits of friendship rather than as tasks of servants'.30 The Quaker missionary G.W. Walker similarly observed that if the blacks 'do service for others, they do it through courtesy',31 while a New England pioneer remarked that local clans saw

23 Bulmer, 1888:30.
24 Collie, Select Committee on Aborigines, BPP 7/538/1837/129.
26 Parker, Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 12.
27 Gunther, ML MSS B505.
28 Gunther, ML MSS B504/256.
30 Rusden, 1883(II):237.
31 Walker, 1902:249.
work performed for her family 'as a personal favour, and gave us to understand as much'.

European awareness of Aboriginal motivation probably varied widely. Some thought they had trained black servants into habits of deference and obedience. Others, more conscious of the true situation, exploited their status as *de facto* kin. Thus Robert Dawson the manager of the Australian Agricultural Company outlined his methods of dealing with local clans:

I took infinite pains to ingratiate myself with them upon all proper occasions. I danced and sang with them, and entered into all their sports and gambols as an applauding spectator; I accompanied them to their fights; gave them names to their children; conferred upon them offices and badges of distinction; and supplied them with muskets and ammunition, with which to pursue their sports. I gave them food in return for their services and a hearty welcome wherever and whenever I met them. In return for all this, I was treated as one belonging to them and almost necessary to them. I was known and talked of by them far and near, and designated as brother, from whom much had been received and much was still expected. Every person who knows anything of human nature, must be aware that man, in his wild state, is not to be conciliated, or tamed into respectfulness of demeanour and usefulness of conduct, by other than similar means to these.

The situation which emerged in the more settled districts can be seen through the eyes of William Thomas who initially saw labour as the key to assimilation and 'civilization'. By the early 1850s he reported that the Port Phillip blacks were working in a whole range of rural occupations — mustering, horse-breaking, sheep washing, reaping, 'even tying up' and they did 'as fair a days work as a day labourer'. As 'hirelings working for their own support' they knew the value of money and received hard cash 'very little below the European standard'. Involvement in the economy had influenced Aboriginal behaviour but had not radically changed it. Casual work had created a pattern of movement very similar to the old ways but their 'erratic movements' were now due to 'shifting from one locality to another as they finish their work'; so that while 'their nationality' was weakened it was 'not totally broken up'.

Aborigines had not been assimilated. They had compromised when necessary and the role of casual, itinerant labour allowed a degree of independence from the European economy especially when supported by vestigial hunting and gathering. William Thomas described a pattern of articulation which became common all over the continent. Despite the participation in the rural work force all efforts

... so far to improve their condition have been without avail. I have pressed, the farmers and others have urged they become as us not merely in work and diet but to stop in house ... comfortably clad and stretched ... is what they'll hear nought of, the hook, axe or bridle down and all further civilization for the day is over, off goes apparel and they bask under the canopy of heaven as in their

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33 Dawson, 1830:272-3.
34 Thomas, 17 January 1854, ML MSS 214/8.
primative [sic] wildness evidently enjoying their freedom from encumbrance . . . nor have they any desire to be muddled with further, such is their wandering propensities, that all kindness, entreaty or persuasion cannot secure them one day beyond their determination and latterly they have been particularly cautious how they make bargains for labour on this account.35

Gipps believed that it was through contact with Europeans, 'by being placed as nearly as possible on a par with them',36 that the 'civilization' of the Aborigines was most likely to be advanced. He did not mean on a par with all Europeans but only with the lower orders. Indeed numbers of the colonial elite frequently affirmed the similarity between the blacks and the white working class. Aborigines were 'but little inferior in intellect to the uneducated peasantry of Europe';37 they were, asserted the magistrates at Bungonia, in every respect 'as intelligent as the working people around us'.38 The Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell thought that in 'manners and general intelligence, they appear superior to any class of white rustics I have seen',39 while John Dixon, author of a book on Van Diemen's Land, thought that many colonists had 'poor pretensions to rank above' the blacks.40 The arch-conservative, G.W. Rusden, was even more emphatic. When comparing the blacks with 'only the lower and uneducated European' it would be hazardous to affirm that 'the black is inferior to the white' while in intelligence, good humour and loyalty the Aborigines 'often put to shame the boors among the vaunting Caucasian intruders'.41

These remarks need some explanation given the emphasis in recent scholarship on the pervasiveness of white racism. But by equating Aborigines with the 'peasantry' the colonial elite was able at one and the same time to confirm its support for the orthodox Christian monogenesist view of race prevailing up to the 1850s and to emphasise its own elevation above the white working class. In a society where the lower orders seemed to have forgotten their place the Aborigines were marked by racial characteristics for low status. They helped maintain the correct distance between the ranks and orders of society. While they retained identifiable racial characteristics they could not aspire to social equality. As a result familiarity between white master and black servant did not call into question the proper ordering of society. Thus the Port Phillip landowner Edward Curr made the illuminating comment that black servants were 'generally treated by the educated squatter with a familiarity which argued something of equality, and in which the labourer never shared'.42 A Maryborough magistrate H.B. Sheridan told a Queensland Select Committee that a

35 Thomas to Colonial Secretary, 15 January 1853, ML MSS 214/8.
36 Gipps to Russell, 7 April 1841, Aborigines: Australian Colonies, BPP 34/627/1844/106.
37 Addis, NSWLCV & P 1843/506-7.
38 Select Committee on the Aborigines, NSWLCV & P 1845/35.
40 Dixon, 1839:23.
41 Rusden, 1883(I):85-6.
42 Curr, 1883:299.
'gentleman gets on much better with the blacks than an ordinary man' because there was a 'natural good breeding in the black which co-incided with a similar quality in others'. An old colonist Ebenezer Thorne thought the blacks had a dignity of gesture and gracefulness ‘that we look for in vain among our labouring classes and that we usually connect with the idea of a gentleman'.

Not surprisingly white workers were unenthusiastic about being placed on a par with the Aborigines. Economic motives were important, Parker noting the ‘aversion on the part of most European labourers to see the natives taught to work’, avowedly for the reason that ‘a successful result might interfere with the price of labour’. But it was not solely a question of wage rates and jobs. Status and self-esteem were also involved and beyond that class relations in society as a whole. Having commented on the familiarity that often existed between white masters and black servants, Edward Curr observed that the Aboriginal worker was ‘a good deal bullied by the white labourer, who lost no opportunity of asserting his superiority over him’. The South Australian settler Richard Penny made a more detailed analysis of the situation. All efforts for civilising the natives, he wrote in 1842, had been pursued with the object of him becoming a portion of the labouring population and forming an integral part of it and it was this which had caused all such attempts to end in failure:

The two races can never amalgamate, the white labourer, and the native (be he ever so useful) can not be brought to work together on equal terms. We could never succeed in incorporating the native with the mass of the labouring population for there is always enough of that antipathy of races existing, to induce the settler to place the native, however deserving, in an inferior position to his white servants, and to give him the more menial offices to perform; but if the settler being a friend of the aboriginal cause, were not disposed to make any distinction but that of merit, the servants themselves would not perform those offices, whilst they could shift it on to that of the blacks; therefore if the native were to accept the terms of civilization that we offer him, everything would conduce to keep him in the lowest scale of society; he would be constantly subject to all sorts of oppression, and would make but a bad exchange for his native independence.

While officials, missionaries and landowners sought to encourage the Aborigines to become ‘ordinary labourers for wages’ they wanted to keep them away from the influence of irreverent, assertive colonial workers. The blacks were to become servants but in doing so should behave according to an idealised pattern of deference and loyalty rather than take their cue from the actual workforce. A magistrate in Victoria’s Western District observed that in their contact with the white man the blacks had ‘acquired all the vices of the labouring population with whom they have so much mixed’. James Gunther thought that the white workers ‘either make too familiar’

43 Select Committee on the Native Police, QV & P, 1861/26.
44 Thorne, 1876:308.
45 Annual Report, 1848, Papers of the Port Phillip Protectorate, VPRO, Box 11.
46 Curr, 1883:299.
47 The Examiner, 3 December 1842.
48 Pilleau, NSWLCV & P 1849/22.
ABORIGINES AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

with the blacks teaching them 'all their tricks and vices' or they 'abuse and vex them'.

G.A. Robinson, Chief Protector in the Port Phillip district, was so concerned with the situation that he felt unable to recommend that Aborigines should work for the settlers because of the character of the rural workforce. He wrote that:

the difficulty on the part of the Aborigines by proper management can be overcome; but the difficulty on the part of the depraved white man is of far different character . . . their place should be supplied by a more honest and industrious peasantry.

The solution was to try and keep black servants away from their white counterparts. The Tasmanian settler J.H. Wedge explained that he did not allow his servant Mayday 'to live or associate with servants but had him to live with me in my tent'.

While thinking about the problems of assimilation, Sir Thomas Mitchell toyed with the idea of sending a young black couple to southern Europe where they could learn how to cultivate Mediterranean crops. After ten years they could be repatriated when, speaking a foreign language, they 'would be less open to the influences that interpose between employees and employed' in New South Wales.

Regulations drawn up for the Victorian Native Police indicated that the troopers were to be taught to discriminate between 'the different classes of white people showing respect to the upper and well conducted' while avoiding those who would 'instruct them in vicious or disorderly habits'. A rural magistrate advocated schools for Aboriginal children in order to 'alter in many instances the original bent of the mind'; but it would be essential to 'remove them from licentious intercourse with the labouring population till their principles were in a measure formed'.

Institutionalisation appeared to be the most effective means to separate the blacks from the white working class as well as serving other purposes. This was proposed as early as 1819. While discussing plans for an Aboriginal institution the Reverend Robert Cartwright explained that his object was:

to keep these black Natives entirely separate from our own people till the Institution is become sufficiently strong, and the work of civilization so far advanced as to be proof against the evil practices and examples of our countrymen. The only security for their gradual and real improvement . . . is to keep them as much and as long separate as possible from the bad example of those around them.

Plans foreshadowed by Cartwright were realised in places like Wybalena, Poonindie and New Norcia. At Poonindie Matthew Hale gathered the blacks in 'one little community apart from the vicious portion of the white population'. Salvado moved his mission to New Norcia at the first appearance of white shepherds 'so as to keep

49 Gunther, 23 April 1838, ML MSS B504.
50 Robinson to La Trobe, 30 August 1841, Aborigines: Australian Colonies, BPP 34/627/1844/132.
51 Bonwick, 1870:356.
52 Mitchell, 1848:416.
54 Select Committee on the Aborigines and the Protectorate, NSWLCV & P 1849/37.
55 Cartwright to Macquarie, 6 December 1819, BPP 19/261/1831.
56 Hale, 1889:10.
the natives out of contact with corrupting influences'. At Wybalena Robinson was able for a short time to believe that he had created an orderly and hierarchical society. He wrote to the Tasmanian Colonial Secretary in 1836 describing the celebration of the Sabbath:

At sunrise the Union Jack is hoisted at Mt. Arthur and hauled down again at sunset. The hoisting of the flag is the signal for the Aborigines to prepare for Church after which they wait about their huts in clean and neat attire until the tolling of the Bell when they join me in company and in an orderly and becoming manner proceed with me to the Church. Their conduct during divine worship is of the most exemplary kind. They are quiet and attentive to what is said . . . the Greatest possible respect is paid to the Sabbath, there is no strolling about, the religious services are well attended and all amusements are refrained from.

While colonial Australia was characterised by a hierarchical, unequal society with sharp gradations of status, the race question was, of necessity, also a 'class' question. Policy makers saw assimilation very specifically in terms of absorption in the lower orders. 'Civilisation' itself implied the inculcation of those habits of order, obedience and industry which were thought appropriate for servants and hired labourers. But the elite did not want the blacks to be assimilated into the actual working class. Rather they wished them to conform to an upper class vision of how the lower orders ideally should behave; and on reserves and missions the implementation of that vision was often carried to bizarre lengths. Aboriginal policy failed to resolve the deep contradiction of both wanting and not wanting the Aborigines to merge with the 'lower ranks of mechanics'.

For their part the Aborigines may have resisted whatever white society proposed for them. But in the circumstances their rejection of 'civilisation' was the rejection of the life of the poor and powerless. They resisted the demands of wage labour, the submissive role of the servant and the restraints which were 'imposed on ordinary labourers'. They quickly realised that what the whites were offering was for them to become, as George Grey put it, 'ever a servant — ever an inferior being'. That realisation continued to shape Aboriginal behaviour throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond.

58 Robinson to Montagu, July 1836, ML MSS A7044/23.

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Meetings between different Australian communities were, before the coming of Europeans, (and remain for Aboriginal Australians) highly structured affairs, with elements of ceremonial preparedness for conflict, formal peacemaking, reciprocal exchange of gifts, and sometimes actual conflict and resolution of conflict. The formal rules for the conduct of these public displays are structured by relationships between kin. Different age-grades have different roles, and male and female have different roles. Before strangers can approach each other, it is essential that each person knows where he or she stands relative to other individuals in these matters. The conduct of meetings between those who are not habitually in face to face contact seems to follow similar patterns all over Australia. It is part of a pan-Australian patterning, so that each party to an encounter knows what types of responses to expect, how to interpret them and the appropriate modes of reaction.¹

The European intruders must have caused bewilderment and consternation by totally inappropriate actions and sequences of reactions. I propose to examine a number of encounters, and to view them, as far as possible in the light of Australian (i.e. Aboriginal) expectations, and examine the extent to which Europeans met or fell short of those expectations, or reacted in inexplicable ways that lay outside the appropriate public structures for conflict or accord. My examples will be drawn from the southwest of the continent during the years when Aborigines were becoming increasingly aware of more and more intrusive groups regularly moving through and into their territory.

I begin with an account of an encounter between Aboriginal groups (although in the presence of European observers), which gives some of the dimensions of expectation. Although this meeting is from a different area and time, many elements of this fuller account are repeated in the more fragmentary accounts from the southwest, enabling us to fit those fragments into a wider synthesis.

**A MODEL FOR MEETINGS**

Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen were with an Arunta community near Alice Springs in 1901. They give a fascinating picture, in words and photographs, of an encounter which can serve as an archetype for the elements of such meetings:

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¹ See Sansom 1983.
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER

... just at midday word came that a mob of strange natives was coming up. There was much excitement in the camps as strange natives may mean a big row. As usual when coming in to foreign territory the strangers sat down some distance off down the creek until they were invited to approach by one or two of the men of the camp.

After about half an hour, during which time no notice had apparently been taken of the visitors, though, in reality, the local men had provided themselves with their weapons and gone to the spot where visitors were received, one or two of the older local men went to them, squatted down on the sand in front of them, and invited them to come up. After being thus invited they formed themselves into a solid square and approached at a fairly quick run, every man with his spear aloft and all of them adopting the curious high knee-action.

Then they came up — about 30 of them — all togged up with decorations — great bunches of eagle hawk feathers stuck into their waist belts in the small of their backs, flaked sticks in their hair and each man carrying spears, boomerangs and spear throwers. . . . they approach[ed] a small gap in the hills leading on to the open space. First of all one or two old women came out and began dancing about wildly in front of them, then two men armed with spears and shields appeared over the top of a low hill, standing out sharply against the sky and brandishing their long spears. Then the men in camp here came out and fell into line with the visitors and all of them came into the open space at a quick run and . . . like a regiment of soldiers danced wildly along brandishing their spears and boomerangs and led by one man who pranced along in front.

For a few minutes nothing was done or said, and all this time the local people, men, women and even children, were gathering on the ceremonial ground. Then without a word the leader of the visitors went round his party, collected all the flaked sticks from their heads — every man had two and some three and four — and solemnly presented them to the head man of the local group. This was a sign that the visit was meant to be purely a friendly one. The head man made a fire and at once burnt them.

. . . One of the local men had accused one of the visitors of having killed his brother some years ago. . . . The accused man stood up with his shield and the other man hurled three boomerangs at him one after the other. The former did not attempt to retaliate but stood still warding the boomerangs off with his shield, but one of them shattered this and wounded him in the arm, whereupon justice being satisfied some of the old men interfered and stopped the encounter.2

A number of critical features emerge from this account:

1. The meeting is at least partially pre-arranged. The visitors are decked out in finery; their hosts expect them.

2. The encounter is between groups who know each other or know of each other (one of the local men will later accuse one of the visitors of having killed his brother, etc.). The proponents thus stand in defined kin and classificatory relationships to each other. But the meeting is a rare and special occasion.

3. At first the visitors sit quietly at a distance, and for half an hour their hosts ignore them. The event is to be public and ceremonious, in an open space, and it cannot begin until an audience is ready to attend the proclamation.

4. It would follow that if the encounter were not properly arranged; or the hosts chose to continue to ignore the approach of the strangers; or the two groups were so distant they could not know the appropriate relationships and behaviour, then real meeting could not occur. A meeting is an event, a staged event. A chance encounter cannot become an event without deliberation. If two groups do not know how to behave to each other, they can either ignore one another, or owners may resist encroachment on their territory, or take advantage of the strangers to exact retribution for a death.

5. The entire proceedings are formalised, ritualised, ceremonious — a staged drama. The strangers advance in formation, with choreographed motions. And both visitors and hosts join in the movement.

6. The meeting revolves around the recognition by all concerned of the authority and status of the dignified old men who take leading parts in the conduct of proceedings. (Old women may also play a leading role.)

7. The possibility of conflict is inevitably present when strange groups meet. The formalised proceedings are designed to resolve conflict symbolically (for example, the destruction of the 'flaked sticks' indicating willingness to fight). Conflict may nevertheless occur, but there are formal mechanisms to keep violence within strict limits — in this case verbal abuse; then a fight in which the defendant does not retaliate, and the old men intervene once a minor injury has been inflicted and honour satisfied. The young men's role is to be prepared for conflict and indeed invite it, so that antipathies may be resolved and they may exhibit their prowess in defence of the group.

8. The defence of family and rights in territorial resources are central concerns, and potential conflict can become actual if these are seriously threatened.

9. If meetings are properly conducted they create reciprocal obligations, and may lead to amicable arrangements for land usage and exchange of goods, and marriage ties.

I shall examine the recurrence of some or all of these features in meetings in the southwest before 1850, following a logical rather than a chronological order.

MEETINGS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Invitation to approach: protocol and intermediaries

Pre-arranged encounters between Aboriginal landholders and European visitors only became a possibility once Europeans had established a foothold in the southwest and their presence had become known to neighbouring groups, who could assess the potential benefits of amity, and risks of enmity, with the new-comers. Early accounts reveal Aborigines staging, or attempting to stage, formal meetings with these strangers, who often show little appreciation of the honour preferred. Some Europeans, however, showed more empathy than others to the nuances of Aboriginal intentions. From the accounts of George Fletcher Moore, Sir George Grey and Bishop Salvado we can gain insights which other less sensitive writers lack. All the encounters are concerned, as was Baldwin Spencer's Arunta ceremony, with reaffirming rights to land, defusing or
or actualising potential conflict and hostility, and establishing links of reciprocal obligations and amity.

A most sophisticated Aboriginal appreciation of European intentions occurs in 1835 when Weeip, of the Aboriginal group based on the Upper Swan area, accompanied George Fletcher Moore’s reconnaissance party seventy kilometres northward, where Moore and his neighbour Lennard were to take up grants. Weeip had kin ties with a group centred on the locality where ‘Lennard’s Brook’ emerges from the hills, an area rich in yams and supporting intensive Aboriginal usage. Weeip had clearly described this to Moore as fertile land; and conversely had told his Aboriginal kin of access through settlers to the new plant food, wheat, and wheaten flour. Moore was already known to some of the northern group, who had encountered him in his previous expeditions up the Chittering Valley and along the Brockman River. People were gathering to greet the visitors. ‘Natives began to arrive and their numbers continued to increase until they amounted to nearly one hundred, men, women and children’. They were gathering for a formal meeting like Spencer’s Arunta ceremony: ‘... all appeared pleased to see us; but it must be confessed that their pleasure seemed mixed up with the idea of sharing our provisions’, recounts Moore.

As the European visitors examined the soils of the area with a farmer’s eye, they were offered food:

“Gigat” invited us to eat some “Baio” along with him. This fruit, which is esteemed by them as a great delicacy, is the red-skinned nut which is contained in the fruit cone of the “Zamia”. The fleshy skin, for it can scarcely be called pulp, is the only part which is edible, and even this is considered poisonous until it has been steeped so long in water, or buried in earth, as to arrive at a state approaching decay. The flavour is something like that of a “medlar”, or the taste of old cheese. By evening a full-scale reception had been arranged. The guests were offered plenty of kangaroo meat, creating formal reciprocal obligations.

We found the natives all encamped near us ... at night they entertained us with a corroberry, which was got up on our account ... The several figures did not differ materially from those which were familiar to us, but the words which accompanied each change contained strong allusions to passing events ... these ceremonials ... serve the purpose of historic records. It had been told to them that Mr. Lennard and myself had grants here, and were likely to form establishments on our respective grounds. This was alluded to in one of their songs, and was expressed to the following effect: ‘That the fires of “Dyandala” and “Millenden” (the names of our places on the Swan River) would soon be removed to Coonarup, and that we should have plenty of wheat, and they would have plenty of bread’. The songs were accompanied by dance, and the participants wore elaborate body-decoration, for example, arm-ornaments of “Gnow” (mallee-bird) feathers.3

Similarly, in December 1838, Jenna, whose favourite haunts lay just north of Lake Joondalup and eastward to the Swan, escorted Sir George Grey to meet his kin some sixty kilometres to the north, near the junction of the Gingin Brook and the Moore River, and organised his reception by that group. Again in 1846 Bishop Salvado’s

3 Moore 1835.
Aboriginal friends were solemnly granted usage rights by the old men of the Bindoon area, through a young man who acted as intermediary (see p.148).

Occasions such as these, in which an intermediary succeeded in achieving rapprochement between Aborigines and intruders, were balanced by others in which Aboriginal emissaries made similar generous offers, but were misunderstood or brushed aside by Europeans intent on other business.

In 1829, when Aboriginal Australians near King George Sound had come to terms for three years with the European military presence there, Mokare guided a party under Dr Wilson some sixty kilometres northward. They ‘received a visit from a native who came up to us with much confidence, and partook of our repast’. He must have been a man of status, empowered to make a formal approach on behalf of his group. ‘He invited us’, said Wilson, ‘to accompany him to the eastward, where the best lands lie, and where we would shortly meet “Will” with a number of his friends, who would be glad to see us’. This was not a casual invitation to drop in. A situation had been set up, between the Aboriginal kin groups, whereby Europeans would gain access to the rich Kalgan valley; and the Kalgan people, like the Lennard’s Brook people, would have expected to create reciprocal obligations. Wilson seemed quite unaware that he was turning down a serious diplomatic overture and slighting Mokare. ‘To this request Mokare added his earnest solicitation, and was exceedingly chagrined to find his eloquence of no avail’.

Similarly in 1831, a European party travelling northward along a native path alongside the Leschenault estuary, were met with delight by six men who knew them from a previous visit. Increasing numbers gathered in welcome. They were accorded the rare privilege of being taken to see the fifty or sixty women and children. The Europeans, however, wished to press on northward to the Murray. Again their Aboriginal hosts were much chagrined, pressing their guests to remain, when ‘they would bring the women, and get us some fish’. Whether both were on offer is not clear. Certainly the Leschenault group would have found it incomprehensible that the Europeans should have rejected this offer of formalising usage rights.

**A correct placing: kin and Dreamtime kin**

When Jenna and his companions took Sir George Grey to meet their kin to the north in 1838, they themselves had to make due preparation for an encounter with kin they rarely met. The function of their body decoration was no doubt similar to that of Baldwin Spencer’s Arunta visitors ‘all togged up with decorations’ — it created a sense of occasion, turning an encounter into a formal meeting, and heightening everyone’s awareness of the importance of the occasion and the role of the emissaries. Impressing potential sexual and marriage partners was part of this, perhaps overstressed in Grey’s account:

The country we passed over was still of the same sandy nature; and after travelling about ten miles, we made another lake. The natives here saw the recent signs of strange blacks, and insisted upon my coming to a halt, whilst they painted

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4 Wilson 1833.

5 Anon 1833:129.
themselves, and made sundry additions to their toilette. I urged my remonstrances upon this head, but it was in vain. They said that we should soon see some very pretty girls; that I might go on if I like, but that they would not move until they had completed their preparations for meeting their fair friends. I therefore made the best of it, and sat myself down, whilst they continued adorning themselves. This being done to their satisfaction, they came and requested my opinion as to their appearance; and as I intimated my most unqualified approval, they became in high spirits, and gave a very animated description of the conquests they expected to make.

This weighty affair having been completed, we again moved on, the natives keeping a careful look out for the friends they expected to see.

It is essential that the parties to a meeting know where they stand in relation to each other. At the Moore River Jenna had to establish his own placing in the scheme of things before he could arrange a suitable reception for his friend Grey. And, furthermore, Grey also had to be ‘placed’ by his hosts into their classificatory kin structure — with surprising results. As Jenna and his companions continued northward after decorating themselves:

They at length espied one sitting in the rushes, looking for small fish; but no sooner did he see the approaching party than he took to his heels, as hard as he could, and two others, whom we had not before observed, followed his example.

Our native comrades now commenced hallooing to the fugitives, stating that I had come from the white people, to bring them a present of rice and flour. Moreover, Jen-na shouted out to his uncle, “Am not I your nephew, why then should you run away?” This, and similar speeches, had at length, the desired effect. First one of them advanced, trembling from head to foot, and when I went forward to meet him, and shook hands with him, it re-assured the others, and they also joined our party; yet still not without evident signs of fear. An old man now came up, who could not be induced to allow me to approach him, appearing to regard me with a sort of stupid amazement; neither horses or any other of those things, which powerfully excited the curiosity of the others, had the least charm for him, but his eyes were always fixed on me, with a look of eagerness and anxiety which I was unable to account for.

Grey continues:

The oldest of the natives, who appeared to regard me with so much curiosity, went off for the purpose of collecting the women, whilst we proceeded to our place of halt.

The setting was impressive. The river lies in rather a deep valley, and at this point consisted of large pools, connected by a running stream about 20 yards wide. There was plenty of wild fowl upon these pools.

The scenery here was very picturesque: high wooded hills were upon each side of us, and the valley was open and rather thinly timbered; but the few trees it contained were of considerable size and beauty. After we had tethered the horses, and made ourselves tolerably comfortable, we heard loud voices from the hills above us: the effect was fine, — for they really almost appeared to float in the air; the wild cries of the women, who knew not our exact position, came by upon
the wind... Our guides shouted in return, and gradually the approaching cries came nearer and nearer.

The ceremony of acceptance was equally impressive:

... A sort of procession came up, headed by two women, down whose cheeks tears were streaming. The eldest of these came up to me, and looking for a moment at me, said, — "Gwa, gwa, bundo bal," — "Yes, yes, in truth it is him;" and then throwing her arms round me, cried bitterly, her head resting on my breast... the other younger one knelt at my feet, also crying. At last the old lady, emboldened by my submission, deliberately kissed me on each cheek, just in the manner a French woman would have done; she then cried a little more, and at length relieving me, assured me that I was the ghost of her son, who had some time before been killed by a spear-wound in his breast. The younger female was my sister; but she... did not think proper to kiss me.

My new mother expressed almost as much delight at my return to my family, as my real mother would have done... As soon as she left me, my brothers, and father (the old man who had previously been so frightened), came up and embraced me after their manner, — that is, they threw their arms round my waist, placed their right knee against my right knee, and their breast against my breast, holding me in this way for several minutes. During the time that the ceremony lasted, I, according to the native custom, preserved a grave and mournful expression of countenance... The men next proceeded to embrace their relation, Jen-na, in the same manner they had before done me; and this part of the ceremony was now concluded.6

This method of dealing with strangers who were difficult to fit into the system was by no means unusual. As Grey saw clearly, the Australians:

themselves never having an idea of quitting their own land, cannot imagine others doing it; — and thus, when they see white people suddenly appear in their country, and settling themselves down in particular spots, they imagine that they must have formed an attachment for this land in some other state of existence; and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations.7

Similar beliefs go far towards explaining the ambivalence in the Aboriginal attitude to initial European settlement. George Fletcher Moore was taken into the confidence of the Swan River Aborigines during the 1830s. He learnt the native tradition that their early ancestors, the men of the Dreamtime, were large men who came from over the sea (though others saw them as reaching the Swan coastal plain from the interior). The word djandga, djanga (or netingar) was used of the dead, and also of Europeans.8 It carries the sense of reappearance of those who have died. The Aborigines were so firmly assured of the close and indissoluble tie between them and their land that they could not envisage others coming, as the Europeans did, to take up an attachment to an area, unless they already knew it. So Europeans were 'supposed to be aborigines, under another colour, restored to the land of their nativity'.9

7 Grey 1841:1, 302-303.
8 Moore 1884b:60, 94, 20.
9 Moore 1885b:20.

140
Ambivalence in southwest Aboriginal attitudes to Europeans was consistent with the ambivalence in their attitude to the dead, who were feared but at the same time respected. The fingers of the dead were bound at burial so that the spirit could not dig its way out of the grave, and return to plague the living. A fire was lit between the grave and the camp so that the spirit would come to comfort itself there, and not return to the hearths of the living. Fear and propitiation are both appropriate.

Similarly, then, the Aborigines feared the Europeans, as they feared the dead. In several incidents in the early nineteenth century Aboriginal men bravely attempted to ensure that the strangers did not approach their camp, to harm those there. And yet, initially at any rate, they refrained from offering real physical violence, for one would repel rather than attack returned spirits; as, for example, Baudin's expedition at the Vasse in 1801.

Initial reactions to newcomers from the sea were predominantly terror. For men of the southwest, who had no watercraft, this reaction was exaggerated by the sight of the great sail-winged monster out of whose jaw the white ghosts emerged. Men on the Swan River described to Moore with great vividness their impressions when they saw the first ship approach the land. They imagined it some huge winged monster of the deep, and there was universal consternation: 'One man fled inland for fourteen miles without stopping, and spread the terrifying news among his own friends'.

The occasion may have been the visit of the Naturaliste under Hamelin in June 1801 (the first to disturb the Swan Aborigines since Vlamingh's foray in 1697). While the great mother-monster stood offshore, lesser monsters left it, one to Rottnest, one to ascend the river. From the heights of Gargatup (Mount Eliza/King's Park) the Aborigines could have watched the strangers settle for the night on the flats by the river below them, and in the morning climb the limestone bluff to view the promontory at the junction of the wide waters of the Canning and the Swan estuaries. They would have seen the intruders labouring across the shoals of Matta Gerup where the Aborigines habitually crossed the Swan River between Byerbrup (the ridge on which Perth was to stand) on the west side, and lands towards the mountains. They would have watched them penetrate upstream to the narrow portion of the Swan beyond the Helena entrance; and then return downstream becoming emeshed in the sand and mire of the shallows of Matta Gerup.

Was it only a brown bittern whose strange cry so alarmed the French that they stayed all night in their boat? Or was the 'terrible noise . . . something like the roaring of a bull, but much louder' which seemed to come from the reeds in fact a bull-roarer? Were the kin of Yalaganga, (who controlled the area where the city of Perth was to be founded) using their best 'boylyas' (or men of power), to drive away these disturbing phantoms from the neighbourhood of the ridge which controlled the flats and the ford?

10 Moore 1884b:11, 12.
12 Peron 1809:70-73; and below.
13 Moore 1884b:79.
14 Peron 1809:142-145.
Keeping a correct distance

At the Alice Springs meeting recorded by Baldwin Spencer in 1901, the first thing
the strangers did was nothing. They sat conspicuously, giving their hosts time to
inspect, assess, prepare a reception. The hosts took no notice for half an hour. And
even when the visitors had been invited to advance to the ceremonial ground they
waited quietly for the formal ceremony of greeting.

There are the same elements in the Grey episode. The party were taken to an
impressive arena to wait until the participants, led by the women, approach from the
hills around; just as the Arunta visitors had entered an open space through a gap in
the surrounding hills and awaited the old women who initiated the welcoming
ceremony, armed men then appearing on a low hill against the sky line.

The Aboriginal Australians must have found Europeans barbaric, for they ignored
the proper rules regulating meetings between groups. Bishop Salvado, who headed a
mission to the Aborigines on the northern limits of the settled area just before 1850,
and was himself a ceremonialist, gives a clear account of the correct procedures:

When two or more natives go to visit a distant family, they do not simply
announce themselves forthwith, even though they are on friendly terms. Instead
they stop at a correct distance, and when they have been noticed, sit down and put
their weapons on the ground, or lean them against a tree — this being a sign of
peace. The head of the host family and one other able-bodied man, both armed to
the teeth, go to meet the new arrivals, and after ascertaining that all is well, bring
them back with them to the campfire. When friendly families meet, either by
arrangement or chance, they do not exchange greetings, or indulge in any
conventional courtesies. They sit down together for a while in silence, and then
strike up a conversation and pool their catch, or any yams they have been able to
find.15

Europeans sadly lacked the restraint in movement and speech the Aboriginal code
required. Occasionally some instinct led them to do the right thing, as when Salvado
with his Benedictine monks first arrived at the Spring near Badji-Badji. They recited
their prayers, 'cut and dressed timber' and did not interrupt their labours when 'a few
natives appeared and looked on suspiciously from a distance', then 'took up a position
near the pool, perhaps forty yards from us, lit a fire, and after a while lay down to
sleep' while the monks sang Compline with full monastic solemnity, tried to sleep,
and continued work in the morning. 'Two hours after dawn the natives disappeared
without attempting to meet us'. But the monks had shown proper nonchalance.
'Towards evening they [the Australians] came back and more of them this time, with
weapons in their hands'. They had had time to assess and discuss the newcomers, and
reach consensus on their own course of action. 'They came a bit closer than before and
lit a fire about thirty yards from our hut'. Still the monks went on working, and again
'the natives disappeared a little after sunrise'. At midday, while the monks consumed
boiled rice and tea 'a crowd of natives appeared, armed with half-a-dozen or more
spears (or gidjis . . .)'. The monks offered tea and bread, but 'they ignored us and sat
down near the pool, where they palavered a great deal between themselves'.

15 Stormon 1977:165.
Eventually the monks approached with food and drink, and although 'the men resolutely seized their weapons and the women and children ran off howling' this show of protectiveness and armed resolve was sufficient to satisfy honour.16 Essential to rapprochement were restraint, dignity, a ceremonious display of armed power and the exchange of gifts.

But in many instances Europeans simply strode up to the landholders, without awaiting an invitation, totally ignorant of the need for ceremonious affirmation of friendship and formal working out of conflict. The Aborigines were left with few options – they could ignore such unmannerly intrusion, avoid encounters altogether, or as a last resort they could enter into hostilities, even with the djanga, the dead, whom they would more properly respect and fear.

Thus in November 1830 a party under Ensign Dale penetrated the forested uplands east of the Darling Scarp through to the Avon valley and beyond. On their return they crossed the Avon and then its tributary, the Dale River, and headed up its rich valley towards the watershed of the Canning (a rich area of swamps and wandoo woodlands which formed the core territory of groups ranging towards York on the one hand and the coastal plain on the other). Dale's party 'passed a party of natives sitting round a fire; they did not appear to take any notice of us, and we did not disturb them'.17

The man who wasn't there: decorum and avoidance

Many were the occasions on which Aboriginal Australians simply kept out of the way in order to avoid an encounter with men they did not know, where there were no correct forms to be followed. Salvado remarked that, even in the 1840s, 'Europeans travelling in the bush often fail to see a single native, whereas there are numbers of them hidden behind trees watching their every movement'.18 Before actual European settlement, many early explorers' descriptions of 'traces' of natives, fires alight, meals prepared, but no people, chronicle such avoidance.

In 1658, the Dutch ship Elburgh on its way to Batavia 'struck the South-land in 31½ degrees S.L.' (South Latitude), and a fortnight later in 33°S, 'round a projecting point . . . found a good anchoring-place . . . where the skipper, together with one of the steersmen, the sergeant and 6 soldiers landed round Leeuwinnen Cape, finding there three black men with skins like those at Cape de Bonne Esperance (Cape of Good Hope) with whom however they could not come to parley'. The Dutchmen found a burning fire round which the men had been sitting, spears, three 'hammers' (kodjas), each a heavy piece of stone mounted in gum on a wooden handle, and further inland a number of huts.19 From an Australian point of view what happened? A gigantic bird or a huge fish sailed into the bay just east of Australia's southwest tip, a smaller offspring left and reached the shore, and white ghostly manlike spirits moved up the beach. The three indigenes evaded the intruders, but no doubt observed them closely.

17 Dale 1833:71.
18 Stormon 1977:52.
19 Heeres 1890:81; Major 1859:65.
Willem de Vlamingh reported in 1697 that his ship and crew had ‘diligently skirted, surveyed and observed’ the southern part of the west coast of the Southland ‘without meeting any human beings, though now and then they have seen fires from afar, some of the men fancying that two or three times they have seen a number of naked blacks, whom however they have never been able to come near to or to come to parly with’.20 So elusive were the Australians that Vlamingh’s men were uncertain whether they were fact or fancy. Perhaps the Australians may have had the same doubts about these pale ghosts from the sea westward, who came briefly and then vanished.20

On 5 January 1697 a party of eighty-six European men crashed their way through the bush across the narrow neck which separates the present coast from a meander of the Swan estuary, pushing on east to its wide reaches (probably Rocky Bay) where they found ‘Several footstepes of men, and several small pools in which was fresh water’ (i.e. native wells) but, in spite of repeated searches, no men. They slept that night by ‘a fire which had been lighted by the inhabitants but whom, nevertheless we did not see’. Next day they saw huts and footsteps, but still no men. After sunset on the 10th they ascended the river in the ship’s boat ‘seeing several fires, but no men’. On the 11th they once more made their way upstream seeing swans, geese and a quantity of fish – ‘we thought we saw a crowd of men; but after rowing on shore we found none’. They found, however, every sign that men had been there: a pit with freshwater made fragrant by herbs, recent footprints and handprints in the sand, ‘a fire which had been just lighted, and three small huts’ with bark beds,21 even ‘fish lying on the coals to be roasted’.22 They reached the shallows, the first crossing point on the river where Perth now stands, and here they observed many footprints in the water and on the bank at the ford. Towards midnight they tried to approach the fires of an Aboriginal camp by stealth, but could not take the inhabitants by surprise; so they drifted downstream by moonlight. Two hours before sunrise, again seeing fires, Vlamingh and a few of his men crept ashore, and found eight fires ‘and around each of them a heap of branches of trees, but no men’. Quite a large group had disappeared into thin air. ‘The men, the birds, the swans, . . . the geese, the cockatoos, the parroquets, etc., all fled at the sight of us.’23

Leaving the Swan, Vlamingh’s two ships sailed northward along the coast, seeing great smokes. On 15 January they went ashore (near Jurien Bay) ‘but found neither people nor fresh water, only several footstepes of Men and prints like that of a Dog and Cossawary’. Again on the 16th (near the Hill River) foraging parties went inland, finding ‘fresh water with a little hut close by’ and ‘several footstepes of people’ and some three miles inland ‘many fires but no people’.24

On the 23rd (near the Hutt River) Vlamingh’s men reported ten men on the beach and the dunes, and saw them walk inland. But by the time the party landed and went

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21 Major 1859:91-93.
23 Major 1859:91-94; also 85; compare with Robert 1972:60-77.
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WESTERN FRONTIER

inland, none was to be seen. And so it went on. Near the mouth of the Murchison on 25 January, five huts were reported, footprints and paths converged on a fresh water pit, but no people were to be seen. By another account the five huts were an hour’s walk from the sea, and outside was ‘burning wood with some fish on it or near it, ready to be cooked, also some fish already eaten, only the bones were left so that the natives must have left in a hurry’. The puzzled explorers commented ‘it is interesting that, though many fires are seen, you see no people at all. It seems they are easily frightened and hide themselves in the woods’. It would be even more interesting to have the Australian comments on these brash intruders.

It was not until late in the eighteenth century that the English began to show interest in Western Australia. Captain George Vancouver’s ship Chatham entered King George Sound in 1791. Like the French explorer D’Entrecasteaux he noticed the absence of shell mounds, and inferred that ‘the land principally supplied their wants’ although he also remarked on the Aboriginal use of ‘fish wears [sic] on the shores’ (of Oyster Harbour) and deduced from this and ‘from the mouths of the brooks near the villages being stopped up’ (i.e. the King and Kalgan rivers) ‘that they sometimes resort to the rivulets and the sea for provisions’. Vancouver took an archaeologist’s interest in deducing subsistence and social patterns from material culture. ‘The natives appeared to be a wandering people’, he concluded, ‘who sometimes make their excursions individually, at other times in considerable parties; this was apparent by their habitations being found single and alone, as well as composing tolerably large villages.’ He noticed the settlement spacing — two miles between neighbouring hut groups (probably near the mouths of the King River and the Kalgan River on Oyster Harbour) and that one or two huts were larger than others; the artefact technology — how wooden spears were manufactured; the absence of canoes; and the use of firing for ‘encouraging a sweeter growth of herbage in their hunting grounds’. One of the villages had been ‘lately inhabited’, but once more the inhabitants had avoided an encounter. Ten years later they would be less cautious.

Due ceremony: ‘earnest and silent attention’

It was only when the participants had come to know each other that a chance encounter could become a formal meeting. The earliest recorded ceremonial occasion in the southwest involving Europeans occurred in 1801 at Albany.

After Vancouver in 1791 the next Europeans observed by the Aborigines of King George Sound were Captain Matthew Flinders and his crew. A month’s stay gave him extended contacts with the holders of the land. Flinders had anchored in the Sound on 9 December 1801, and though ‘marks of the country being inhabited were found every where’ it was not until the 14th that he eventually ‘met with several natives . . . shy but not afraid’ and next day ‘two (natives) approached with much caution’ and gifts were exchanged. Much later Europeans were to learn that the Aborigines

27 Vancouver 1801:170-177.
28 Flinders 1814:57-58.
believed these strangers to be their ancestors returned. Twice now the King George Sound Aborigines had observed the white ghosts come from the sea in winged monsters, and they had done no harm. Although the Aborigines had avoided contact a decade previously, this second visit must have made it clear that the strangers were not malignant and were seeking contact. After a week of observation and discussion the local Aborigines must have decided on the status and probable identification and kin placement of at least the apparently most prominent Europeans. They made a tentative approach, and followed it next day with a more formal greeting, to which Flinders’ group responded correctly with an exchange of compliments and gifts. The Aborigines did not regard the Europeans as in any way their superiors, rather the reverse. Indeed Flinders commented that ‘they left us, after the first interview, with some appearance of contempt for our pusillanimity; which was probably inferred from the desire we showed to be friendly with them. This opinion . . . seemed to be corrected in their future visits’.29

Gradually fuller relationships were established. On 17 December 1801, recorded Flinders, ‘one of our former visitors . . . brought two strangers; after this . . . they and others came almost every day’. Each new meeting had brought more of the senior men of the Aboriginal group into the slow process of discussion and assessment, and now at last they had reached consensus, and relations would proceed on a proper footing.30

Flinders and his companions were punctilious in observing the social niceties. On the 23rd they encountered ‘an old man [who was] very anxious we should not go further, . . . [we made] a circuit round the wood where it seemed probable his family . . . were placed’. This again was a correct response. The Aborigines were still not sufficiently confident of where the strangers fitted into the kinship system, to let them have any dealings with their wives and children.

Finally the strangers were ready to leave. Flinders recounts:

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 . . . when they saw these beautiful red-and-white men with their bright muskets, drawn up in a line, they absolutely screamed with delight; nor were their wild gestures and vociferation to be silenced, but by commencing the exercise, to which they paid the most earnest and silent attention . . . the old man placed himself at the end of the rank, with a short staff in his hands, which he shouldered, presented, grounded as did the marines their muskets . . .

The hosts were joining in the almost military manoeuvre of their guests, just as the Arunta hosts ‘fell into line with the visitors . . . like a regiment of soldiers’.31

And so, in a blaze of splendour, Flinders took leave of the natives, having staged for them a magnificent spectacle which they must have seen as a suitable gift bequeathed in exchange for their hospitality – they were being taught a new

29 Flinders 1814:66.
30 Flinders 1814:58.
31 Baldwin Spencer, in Mulvaney 1982:46.
ceremony! The delight of these colourful red-and-white men was to remain long in Aboriginal folk memory on the south coast. Daisy Bates found the new corroboree still being performed more than a hundred years later. It was called the Koorannup ceremony, the ceremony from heaven, for the King George Sound Aborigines had seen the white men as their dead ancestors returned, said Daisy Bates’ informant.

These intruders had not thrust themselves upon their hosts. Each group had shown respect for the other, and the leaders of each acted in a dignified and restrained fashion, so that the difficult process of fitting the new comers into the established scheme of things could proceed step by step with due deliberation.

‘Courtly seeming’: authority and status

We have seen that the Arunta ceremonial greeting between Aboriginal groups was conducted in a solemn and ceremonious fashion by the old men who had reached the highest ritual and social status, and carried themselves with the dignity and assurance of their position of power. There were numerous other occasions on which Europeans, ignorant though they were of Aboriginal social structures and procedures, recognised and acknowledged such formal dignity.

In the early 1830s, on the rich coastal plain alongside the lagoons through which the Vasse and other rivers reach the sea in Geographe Bay, three Aborigines encountered John Bussell, reconnoitring northward from the establishment he had set up on the River Blackwood, some eighty kilometres south. Perhaps they knew of the strange settlers. They waded across to meet him. Bussell supposed that they were ‘fearful probably that we were likely to interfere with some snares for fish which they had constructed near the spot where we were’ but continues ‘they carried spears, but approached with all with such friendly guise and courtly seeming, that I did not hesitate to advance to meet them alone and unarmed’.

In 1846 Bishop Salvado reported the same sense of gracious formality in an encounter in the Bindoon area, an open valley within the forest, midway between the most northerly penetration of European settlement on the coastal plain (at Gingin) on the one hand, and the grants in the open country east of the jarrah forest (York, Toodyay, Bolgart) on the other. Salvado was surveying the line of a new road to halve the travelling time between New Norcia and Perth:

On the morning of the second day we came across a large number of natives who were complete strangers, except to one of my companions who was born in this vicinity and had helped me greatly in fixing the direction of the road. This man came forward and explained to his fellow-tribesmen who we were and why we were going through these parts. Thereupon the oldest of the natives came to meet us, first embracing the oldest in our group and then all of the rest one after another, with his arms around each of them for more than eight minutes on end.

33 White 1980:34-35.
34 Bussell 1833:192-193.
They all followed suit, with the most profound silence reigning throughout the entire ceremony. The embracing over, there was a mutual exchange of weapons and products of the hunt. Then in a solemn tone the oldest of the strangers addressed our oldest member: 'Here is my fire, now it is yours, too. I stay here; you come and go, then you come back to go away and come again, and then you stay; now we are great friends.'

Salvado was most impressed by the solemnity of the occasion, the formality of the 'exchange of compliments' and 'demonstrations of courtesy'. There was nothing casual or offhand about the granting of usage rights. The approach was made through an intermediary known to both parties. The compact was sealed through 'mutual exchange of weapons and products of the hunt', and the lengthy solemn embrace between men of authority. The proprietors must already have known of the presence of European intruders to the north of them for some months, and have had time to consider their attitude to them and their protégés. Clearly what they were granting was an 'easement' in European legal terminology. The road makers were expected to pass to and fro. This occasion represented in no sense a ceding of territory. Usage rights of various sorts interdigitated and criss-crossed the Australian landscape, no one right obliterating the others. Nonetheless, there were very real proprietary rights, and the most extreme sanctions against infringement without formal granting of rights by the proprietors.

It is clear that not only the senior men, but also the old women, had an authoritative role in formal encounters. In the desert meeting described by Spencer 'one or two old women' initiated the proceedings. In the Moore River meeting with Grey the old man took no action until, in full ceremonial setting, his oldest wife had publicly proclaimed her identification of Grey as her son. It was often also the women who incited men to fight or desist from fighting.

The Bindoon and Lennard's Brook incidents show the senior men of Aboriginal groups negotiating from their position of advantage as landholders to ensure that Europeans would be put under an obligation, thus hoping to secure support for their group in difficult and changing times. Europeans, however, often did not acknowledge such obligations. An alternative strategy for the defence of kin and terrain lay in hostile rather than amicable encounters.

‘Armed to the teeth . . .’

The potential for conflict was not accidental but essential to meetings between distant groups; and ceremonial provided not only for the avoidance of conflict, but also for the channelling and control of that conflict which necessarily must occur.

In the Arunta meeting described by Baldwin Spencer, the two groups were explicitly ready for hostilities. The visitors were decorated for battle, and fully armed,


36 Only a few examples of formalised conflict can be given here, as this could be the topic for an entire paper. Examples are numerous in the records of the first decade of the Swan River Colony (W.A. Dictionary of Aboriginal Biographies, in preparation) and occur not only between groups some distance apart, but between families ranging over much the same terrain as each other.
the local men had their weapons. Although the decorations were given up as a sign of friendly intent, the weapons were retained. Following the greeting ceremony several incidents occurred in which men with offences to revenge satisfied the honour of their kin by inflicting non-mortal wounds.

Similarly at Moore River, after the initial joyous ceremony of greeting came a time to undertake responsibilities for retribution:

It appears that a sister of the native Jen-na had been speared and killed by a man, who at present was resident with this tribe; and although most of them were on friendly terms with this native, they conceived that Jen-na was bound to revenge her death in fair and open fight. The old lady (my mother) went up to him, and seizing his merro, or throwing-stick, told him, that the man who had killed his sister was at a little distance; "and if," she said, "you are not a man, and know not how to use this, let a woman's hand try what it can do," at the same time trying to force it from him. All the time that she was thus pretending to wrench his merro away, she indulged in a most eloquent speech, to endeavour to rouse his courage.

The initiative to do the right thing came from the women. The exhortation from the old woman set the scene.

... it had ... a great effect on Jen-na; and some young ladies coming in at the conclusion, his mind was instantly made up; indeed, the certainty that bright eyes were to look upon his deeds, appeared to have much the same effect upon him that it had upon the knights of old, — and jumping up, he selected three good spears (all the men being willing to lend him theirs), and hurried off to an open space, where his antagonist was waiting for him.

Such affairs were very formal:

The combats, one of which was now about to take place, much resemble the ancient tournaments. They are conducted with perfect fairness. The combatants fight in an open space, their friends all standing by to see fair play, and all the preliminaries, as to what blows are to be considered foul or fair, are arranged beforehand, sometimes with much ceremony.

Taking into account the fantastic ornaments and paintings of the natives, the graceful attitudes they throw themselves into either when trying to avoid the spears of their enemy, or about to throw their own; and the loud cries and wild motions with which they attempt to confuse and terrify their adversaries, I must confess that if any exhibition of this nature can be considered showy or attractive, this has no ordinary claims to admiration.37

Such displays were indeed impressive, but they might also be lethal.

As on this occasion, it was most often the young men of the group who had the most active role in conflict — carrying out retribution, or defending rights in territory, resources or women.38 As Aboriginal men were under an obligation to exact

37 Grey 1841:1, 304-305.

38 Retribution is another topic which cannot be adequately treated here. It occurred between members of groups which were quite close, geographically and in kin terms, as well as between distant groups in the southwest of W.A. (W.A. Dictionary of Aboriginal Biographies, in preparation.)
retribution for any death of a mature person (not only deaths from violence), and as many had little compunction about killing total strangers to whom they had no kin obligations, there was always real danger when an individual or group moved outside the circle of their close kin and acquaintance. Such danger extended to Europeans, unless they were 'placed' as kin.

'Desired us to return': defence of land and kin

Although Aboriginal groups sometimes proved willing, after due deliberation, to offer usage rights in land in return for benefits and obligations, they resisted any unauthorised encroachment on their preserves. It was this aspect of chance encounters which most impressed Europeans.

In June 1801 at Geographe Bay a dignified and self-assured old man, with a long grey beard and clad in a kangaroo-skin cloak, encountered the French naturalists of the Baudin expedition, who were reconnoitring southwest Australia at the same time as Matthew Flinders. At first he very properly ignored these apparitions from the sea, but when they landed near him 'he left the water and, without hurrying too much, reached a sand-dune opposite him. I noticed that although his step was assured, he frequently looked towards us', reported Baudin. From a position of advantage on top of the dune, the patriarch tried to stem the continued advance of the strangers from the sea. They had no place in this country and its scheme of things. 'Presenting himself before them with great spirit, he addressed them in a very animated manner pointing often to our vessels, and seeming to desire us to return to them'. Avoiding, ignoring, repulsing are the Aboriginal reactions which form a repeating pattern, and sometimes a sequence, in these encounters. The final movement was retreat. M. Depuch offered a glass necklace, 'the shine of which appeared to excite the most lively admiration [wonder] in the old man, but nevertheless . . . when M. Depuch attempted to advance, he retreated', snatching up his three spears, 'and disappeared with a degree of swiftness which astonished our party'.39

The old man had not, however, abandoned defence of territory and kin. This area of coast comprised low dunes parallel to the coast, with brackish lagoons and estuaries in the swales between them, alive with wildfowl. It became the heart of European settlement on Geographe Bay, settled by the Laymans at Wonnerup and the Bussells at Cattle Chosen. It was equally frequented by Aborigines. Baudin’s party found ‘several well-worn tracks’ through ‘a plain . . . at the edge of an immense forest . . . scattered throughout with fullgrown trees’, to large circular places where fires had just been freshly made, though the fire makers were nowhere to be seen. He concluded that ‘There were so many traces of fire every where and the paths were so well-worn, that it looked to me as if this place were much frequented’. On the shores of the Inlet, with its ‘large numbers of birds’ Heirisson found ‘a sort of well, dug by the natives’. He also reported that the mouth of the inlet was ‘barred across with rough wooden stakes that the natives plant there to catch fish brought in by the rising tide’.40 The land was fully taken up and developed. No wonder its owners feared, resented and repulsed the unmannerly intrusion of strangers.

These Europeans also provoked hostility by their insensitivity in failing to observe due caution in any approach towards women folk. M. Leseuer and M. Ronsard encountered two people on the beach. When they were near enough to think they could prevent the pair escaping, the French ran forward 'but with all their speed they could not prevent one of the two ... a man, from getting over the sands, running among the brambles, and disappearing in the middle of the marsh'. His unfortunate pregnant wife however, was petrified with terror: 'Despairing ... of being able to escape from the strangers, ... she stopped ... and sitting down on her heels and hiding her face in her hands, she remained as one stupefied and overcome with fear and astonishment, perfectly without motion, and seemingly insensible of all that passed around her' while the Frenchmen examined her naked physiognomy in detail and at leisure, found her unattractive, opened her kangaroo skin bag and identified the orchid bulbs she had gathered, and left presents beside her, as the poor woman lost control of her bowels from fear.41

Meanwhile a little boat from the Naturaliste, under Captain Hamelin, was reconnoitring the maze of channels, in the area for which Europeans later used the Aboriginal name Wonnerup. The boat party was sighted by several Aborigines emerging from the shelter of the forest of magnificent tuart trees, two or three hundred meters east across alluvial flats from the waters of the inlet. 'Shrill and repeated cries' rang out, 'directed to us' M. Depuch reported. The Aboriginal men looked at the Europeans with much curiosity. They kept their eyes upon the intruders 'and ran about on the shore in every direction, continuing to scream and make a great noise'. When Messrs Depuch, Freycinet, Leschenault, Heirisson and L'Haridon waded through the shallow water, the Aborigines drew back into the forest. Depuch and Freycinet, somewhat incautiously, made their way to the edge of the forest.

By now the natives 'seemed to be calling to each other; they spoke in haste and extremely quick'. The French distinguished only the word which they transcribed as 'velou', repeated. This may be Welo or Waylo, men from the north, or possibly waullu, the sky (the heavens?), or welle, a dream.42

The Aboriginal group had almost certainly discussed the source of the intrusion since the encounter between the old man with the fireband and these aliens. The strangers could not have come from neighbouring groups; all these were known, and each individual could be placed in a scheme of kin and cult-lodge groupings, so that the right reactions and responses would be known. The visitors were perturbing because no one knew how to place them and how to react. Why did they come? Were they alien groups, total outsiders, from the north? Or did they have some prior attachment to this land — ghosts from the past or the Dreamtime? Either way, they threatened the stability and order of the universe.

A dog began barking, the animal was commanded to be quiet, and the barking ceased. The four Europeans by now realised they had been rash, but they nonetheless tried to buy peace by leaving trifling 'presents' on the ground as they made their way back towards the inlet. However 'seven or eight natives ... were advancing in a hasty

41 Peron 1809:67-68.
42 Moore 1884b:75-76; Grey 1840:126-127.
manner to cut off our retreat towards the river'. At a distance of sixteen or so metres
the natives 'brandished their sagaies with all their strength, shaking their clubs . . . in a
threatening manner, and calling in a terrible tone of voice, mouye! mouye!' They
managed to get their meaning across. 'In their gestures', reports M. Depuch, 'they
appeared to invite us to retrace our steps; they even seemed to point out the way we
had come, and that which we supposed led also to the sea'. The Europeans, perhaps
fortunately, did not realise that the 'sagaies' or spears were 'very formidable weapons'
and so were not fully aware of the danger of the position in which they had placed
themselves. They continued to draw back to their landing point, but the Aborigines
pressed their advantage. The intruders retreated into the water, but 'neither the noise
nor the menaces ceased, the sagaies threatened us nearer and nearer, and the clubs
were brandished at us with more violence than before.' The Aborigines halted at the
water's edge, but though the four Europeans were now reinforced by the captain and
crewmen, the Aborigines kept up their defiance. Fortunately for the Europeans they
were issuing a formal challenge, rather than launching a physical attack. A single
champion advanced:

. . . one of them, who seemed to be the youngest, and consequently had more
temper, advanced to a third part of the distance between us and then, taking the
attitude of warrior, placing one sagaie behind his back with his club, and brandishing
another sagaie with all its force and suppleness, looking at us with much assurance,
and at the same time with great contempt, seemed to provoke us to single combat.
The others 'soon applauded him with all their voices and actions'. Note the role of the
young man here, and the public nature of his performance in repulsing intruders. But
they did not lose their curiosity and sense of humour. The Frenchman called out
'friend' and the champion 'repeated the word to himself . . . and then repeated it to
his companions, who also repeated it, at the same time laughing with all their might'.
The exchange continued, the Europeans 'called to them a few words of French, which
they repeated, looking at each other as if asking the meaning, and again laughing
heartily, they repeated our words with great exactness'. It might seem that the
Aboriginal threat had been a pose, and so it was in its formality; but it was also a
proclamation of the determination of the whole group to repulse intrusion, and
it was understood as such by the French. Despite the laughter, 'they did not move,
and their champion kept his post, and maintained the same contemptuous and martial
air'.

Depuch tried demonstrations of friendship, laying down arms and carrying green
boughs, but 'the natives repelled every attempt'. Even after the Aborigines had picked
up and examined a mirror and a snuff box 'the noise and menacing gestures were
renewed with as much frenzy as ever'. Eventually the Aborigines were successful.
The Europeans fled to their boat and 'all got into it without any attempt of the
savages to prevent us. Probably it was what they wished'.43 It was indeed. The
intruders had at last been successfully repelled.

It is noteworthy that there was no real attempt on the lives of the Europeans, who
would have fared badly (as they afterward realised) if the Aborigines had launched

43 Peron 1809:70-73.

152
their spears. Fortunately the Europeans did not open fire either, though they were on the verge of doing so.\(^{44}\)

The French were forced to remain encamped themselves for three nights behind the dunes when a violent storm prevented them from returning to their vessels. They felt, and were, totally exposed to Aboriginal attack.

The first night the Aborigines continued to howl defiance from the forest, but they did not attack, while the French did not intrude further.\(^{45}\) But almost certainly they kept the strange sea-creatures, and the ghostly intruders who came ashore from them, under constant surveillance. Baudin describes how he sailed along the coast close inshore, looking for his stranded men, seeing first 'several thick columns of smoke from behind the dunes'; then two people on the beach who immediately vanished among the dunes; then 'four or five other people walking along the beach' who also 'reached the dunes and disappeared' as did the smoke to which he had been heading.\(^{46}\) All this time the stranded naturalists were still camped in the shelter of those same dunes, and indeed, as Baudin feared, at the mercy of the indigenes. But while the white ghosts did not approach people, and particularly the camp with women and children, they were left strictly alone.

When the Europeans were finally rescued a seamen named Vasse was swept overboard and drowned. The speculation that he reached the beach and lived two or three years with the Aborigines seems to have no foundation,\(^{47}\) though a paragraph to this effect had appeared in a French newspaper before Peron's account was published.\(^{48}\) If this did happen, he was no doubt accepted as a long lost relative, and this would accord with the Aboriginal attitude of fear and repulsion, but no real violent hostility.

The unwillingness of Aborigines to embark on unnecessary violence should not lead us to assume that they did not fully claim and defend their lands. Perhaps the best known, and certainly the most quoted, account of Aboriginal and European encounters concerns Dampier's brief call on the western shores and islands of King Sound in the Kimberly region in January 1688. Although it lies outside the southwest, Dampier's description has been quoted so often that it should be put in the context of what actually occurred. The Aborigines on this coast depended on fish as a major source of protein, gathering them from stone fish traps at low water, and garnering also shellfish in the vicinity. It is clear that this made possible, and indeed necessitated, a semi-sedentary pattern of occupation in the neighbourhood of the fish traps, which yielded their produce ('as many fish as makes them a plentiful Banquet') with little effort on the part of the people, except the maintenance of the traps. We need not believe Dampier's deduction that the diet did not include vegetable food, or bird or mammal flesh, particularly as his observation that the Aborigines had no

\(^{44}\) Compare Peron 1809:73 with Marchant 1982:139.

\(^{45}\) Peron 1809:75.

\(^{46}\) Cornell 1974:180.

\(^{47}\) Marchant 1982:144-145.

\(^{48}\) Peron 1809:81.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:2

weapons of the chase is immediately disproved by his own account of their use of spears and clubs. The Europeans landed initially near one of the fishtraps, and the Aborigines immediately tried to frighten them away by a show of force, using a type of ‘wooden Sword’ (clubs) and ‘a sort of Lances’ — ‘a long strait pole, sharp at one end, and hardened afterwards by heat’. The later sequence of incidents is not clear from Dampier’s account, but it seems that on the first day that boats and white men were observed, the inhabitants hid themselves. On several occasions various Aboriginal groups made a show of hostile force, once to defend their fishtraps; once, in the Archipelago, the men ‘threatened . . . with their Lances and Sword’ when the Europeans made to land on a small island where women and children were present. The men stood their ground, while the women fled. On another occasion, a mainland group ‘came just against our ship, and standing on a pretty high Bank, threatened us with their Swords and Lances, by shaking them at us’ until they were scared by the beating of a drum. Dampier stayed a week, but although eventually hostility cooled, the Aborigines very wisely would not be persuaded to take on the role of underlings, and the Europeans were compelled to carry their own water supplies, though from Aboriginal wells.49

Eleven years later the Shark’s Bay Aborigines were visited by Dampier only a year or two after they had observed Vlamingh’s men on their shores. He sailed on north and, in the Archipelago which now bears his name, saw smoke which may have warned of his approach; ‘many great smokes’ again heralded his landing in Roebuck Bay (just south of Broome) to search for water, at the end of August 1699. ‘Three tall black naked men’ spotted the Europeans approaching, and went to tell others. With eight or nine companions they watched the strangers from a hilltop, and when they saw them digging into their land, came to a nearby vantage point and tried to drive the intruders away ‘menacing and threatening . . . making a great noise’. Eventually one of the Aborigines made an approach, perhaps trying to identify the strangers with deceased relatives. He was not more charmed by appearance of the Europeans than they with him, and eventually made his retreat and repulsed further approach. However, the Aborigines followed the movements of the Europeans closely and thwarted a foolish European attempt to ambush and capture one of their number. A European youth received a spearwound and one of the Aborigines was also wounded, by a shot from Dampier’s gun which they had at first despised. One young Aborigine, painted perhaps for a ceremony, stood out as the most active and courageous, leading the defence of the shell-gathering grounds.50

One particular excerpt from the story of Dampier’s visit has been told and retold, and children (and adults) continue to accept his perjorative description of Aborigines as justifying later European takeover of supposedly ‘unused’ lands. On the contrary, the events he describes show a landscape fully peopled and exploited, with permanent structures for using the resources of sea and land, and a people ready to repel unmannerly intrusion and defend their wives, children, installations and land.

49 Dampier 1697 in Major 1859:77-80.
50 Dampier 1729 in Major 1859:118-120; also 1981 reprint 120-123.
There have been many accounts of early European contact with Aborigines in the Australian continent, including the west. Most have concentrated on the content of European thought in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from 'the noble savage' to 'social Darwinism'. Recently some attempts have been made to redress the balance — to see the significance which the long prior Aboriginal presence had in shaping the landscapes Europeans entered; their vegetation, resources, wells, tracks, fords, zones of open country, and possibility of movement; and to gauge Aboriginal reaction to European intrusion.

To see contact situations through Aboriginal eyes is a difficult and perhaps impossible task. Nearly all of the records, even accounts of Aboriginal statements, have been filtered through European minds and given a gloss of European concepts and terminology. I have tried here to look for patterns in the ways that Aboriginal groups responded to non-Aboriginal intruders. And I have tried, wherever possible, to use illuminating accounts of some of these reactions, and to use these to elucidate other, less clear accounts of similar reactions.

In this attempt it has become apparent that reactions do follow certain patterns: a careful lack of response; avoidance and observation; fear and flight; hostility and defence of families and land; formal challenge; formal assessment and greeting; rapturous greeting or extreme fear of those who are seen as long-dead relatives; cautious and carefully staged approach, leading to exchange of civilities, goods, and even ceremonies; and sometimes a calculated establishment of reciprocal social and economic obligations. Any one or any combination of these approaches might be shown by Aborigines in any given area, or at some stage from the initial sighting of Europeans to the realisation that their coming was not an ephemeral visitation.

First encounters with visitors who did not make appropriate responses almost invariably brought to the fore the fear and hostility Aborigines felt towards unknown intruders who might put their families and land at risk. But once the intruders were settled on Australian shores, and known by repute, they found themselves encountering elders who were willing to seek a formal rapprochement. European reportage has many biases, yet these accounts reveal a common theme: in deliberate and formal meetings, Aboriginal people invariably made public declamation of their authority over the corpus of land, knowledge and society.

51 For example Mulvaney 1964; Crawford 1981.
52 Hallam 1975; Reynolds 1980; 1981.

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KOKO-BERA ISLAND STYLE MUSIC

Paul Black and Grace Koch

While studying the Koko-Bera language in Kowanyama, Queensland during 1977-1978, one of the authors of this article, Paul Black, had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the ‘island dance’ style that has become popular in many Aboriginal communities in Cape York Peninsula within the present century. It is interesting to see how the lyrics often encode social commentary or how they commemorate historical events. Traditional mainland Cape York Peninsula songs may also use such subject matter, but published accounts of traditional music have usually concentrated on songs used for ceremonial purposes.

This article grew out of a need to provide a brief and largely non-technical characterisation of island dance and its significance in an Aboriginal community, using Koko-Bera dances as concrete examples. A short technical description of the musical style is included at the end. Many island style songs have been recorded by ethnomusicologists, linguists, and others during the past two decades, but little about the style has been published although the unpublished work of Wolfgang Laade (1963-1964) and various works by Alice Moyle, Jeremy Beckett and Athol Chase do give useful information. Much musicological work remains to be done on the tape collection of Cape York Peninsula island style songs held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, which is the largest such collection in the world.

Three of the five Koko-Bera songs to be described here were composed jointly by the late Ephraim Gilbert (1927-1978) and Isaac Zingle (born 1934). The song, ‘Koko-Bera Ground’ was composed by Mr Zingle, who is also notable for creating a Koko-Bera version of the popular song, ‘Pearly Shells’. Working with the help of elders best able to advise on the wording of Koko-Bera lyrics and others in the community, both men have been prolific composers.1

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1 We are grateful to these composers and to others in Kowanyama for all the help that they provided, and to Mr Zingle in particular for his assurance that we may use these songs here; in doing so we recognise that copyright remains in the hands of the composers or their heirs. We would also like to thank Dr Alice Moyle, Dr David Zorc, Dr Anna Shnukal and Dr John von Sturmer for helpful advice and criticism, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for funding Black’s research.
THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF ISLAND DANCE

Although the present paper restricts itself to island style music as practised on mainland Cape York Peninsula, a similar style is found throughout a large portion of Oceania. Black has seen dances from both Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea that he would be hard pressed to distinguish from Koko-Bera dances in their general style of singing and choreography. ‘Sitting dances’ of the type performed in Torres Strait will not be included in this discussion.

Originally island dance came from Pacific islanders whose musical style filtered down through Torres Strait to Cape York Peninsula. When the London Missionary Society arrived on the shores of the Torres Strait Islands in 1871, they brought with them as preachers eight recent converts to Christianity from the Loyalty Islands. A second wave of missionaries in the 1890s included teachers from Samoa and Niue. Both of these waves brought Pacific island hymn tunes and island dance. Since traditional Torres Strait dancing was frowned upon by these missionaries, Pacific island dance was taught as a substitute, thus becoming the popular music and entertainment of the day. Laade has also discussed the arrival and development of the general style in Torres Strait and documents the introduction of the style to Australian mainlanders at Lockhart River Mission on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula. He states that three Torres Strait islanders came to the mission at the time of its founding in the early 1920s and taught the style of dancing and singing that they had learned through contact with other South Pacific peoples. In the early 1960s, in fact, Laade met one of the Murray Islanders who first instructed the mainlanders of the area in island style in 1925. Chase posits that island dance was popular amongst European administrators and Church officials because of its colour and drama and its lack of a mythological base, therefore separating it from mainland culture. The Anglican missions at Lockhart, Edward River, and Mitchell River facilitated the introduction of island dance by using islanders as religious teachers to the mainlanders.

Further contact came as Torres Strait men worked on pearling and trochus luggers with Lockhart men. Since the islanders were generally not allowed to go ashore and visit the mission in the early 1920s, much of the music instruction occurred amongst the mixed lugger crews as they worked and when they camped at night on uninhabited islands. The instruction was not totally one-sided. While Laade was recording songs at Murray Island in 1963-65, he found several songs in mainland style in Aboriginal languages that the islanders had come to refer to as ‘rob wed’ or ‘serenade song’. ‘Rob wed’ includes Torres Strait songs as well, and it would be interesting to know why the islanders put the Aboriginal songs into this category.

Conceivably island style could have come to the mainland even earlier. One Torres Strait Islander was involved with the founding of Mitchell River Mission (later

2 Moyle 1968-1969:13
KOKO-BERA MUSIC

Kowanyama) on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula in 1905, and crews from luggers were drawn from all parts of the Peninsula, although the seafaring Aborigines of the east coast were especially adept at the occupation. In any case, island style is found throughout most of the coastal areas of the Peninsula, especially in the communities that originated as mission stations. On the west coast, island style is found as far south as Kowanyama, but apparently not among the Aborigines raised on the cattle stations to the south and now concentrated in the town of Normanton. Island style has become popular in other parts of Australia as well, such as Roper River in the Northern Territory, but this paper will only concern itself with Cape York Peninsula.

ISLAND DANCE AND 'OLD PAYTEN' SINGING

There are several types of singing in Cape York Peninsula, some of which are as innovative as island dance. In this discussion we will limit ourselves to a comparison with the mainland style known as 'old payten' (suggested as a term for 'old fashioned').

'Old payten' songs may be used in initiation rituals and many are restricted in use. On the other hand, island dance is not used in initiation rituals. Occasionally, though, words from restricted ceremonies may be included in island dance songs, albeit phonetically rearranged. Laade documents one such song from Lockhart River, composed by Johnny Short. This form is always composed by initiated men with approval from the relevant leaders. Island dance is most commonly performed at public ceremonies such as house openings, sports days and other public festivals. Whereas portions of initiation ceremonies are closed to women and children, island dance is a form of community activity that draws everyone together, providing for an arena of competition.

This rivalry occurs amongst squads of dancers who compete for audience approval. Chase identifies the teams at Lockhart River as being created from amongst identity groups at the level of 'tribes' as they are recognised within the coastal groups. Inlanders have no separate teams; instead they support the coastal 'tribe' with which they believe their groups were traditionally aligned. Each team is named from a mythological figure associated with initiation ceremonies, and each has its own practice area, song repertoire and dance stories. No team may sing a song owned by another, and ownership is held either by the living composer or is inherited patrilineally from remembered ancestors. The dancers in the front row are considered to be the 'stars' of the performance. Each front row dancer exhibits a personal style, often exaggerating the dance motions, in order to win the cheering approval of the audience. During a performance, wives are expected to sit with their husbands' identity groups, but they may sing with and offer support to their own groups as well.

7 John von Sturmer, personal communication.
10 Chase 1980:226.
11 John von Sturmer, personal communication.
In terms of composition of songs, there is a basic difference in ‘old payten’ and island dance. People ‘receive’ or ‘find’ ‘old payten’ songs, often in dreams. They are a gift from ancestors or totemic beings and are seen as being pre-existent. Island dance, however, is consciously ‘thought up’, and is seen to be totally a creative activity. When an island dance is composed, certain formal elements must be observed. Unlike mainland styles, island dances give great emphasis to the entrance and the exit phases of the dance. Often the dances are performed in groups of three. Even the rehearsal techniques of island dance differ from ‘old payten’; the latter is always practised one at a time, whereas several island dances may be rehearsed simultaneously within earshot of one another.12

Finally, the use of props may differ in the two styles. Chase did not observe body paint, bush ornaments, or mainland weapons being used at Lockhart in island dance.13 Von Sturmer has seen shields used during island dance at Aurukun. The distinctive garb for island dance at Lockhart River includes long waistcloths and white bandages around wrists and ankles. White headbands and elaborate headdresses may be worn in other venues, and von Sturmer has seen props, such as small aeroplanes, tied to the bodies of dancers at Aurukun. Both men and women may dance and, unlike ‘old payten’ performances, dancers also may sing.

SUBJECT MATTER OF SONGS

The subject matter of the songs is typically drawn from the experiences of the composers, as is true for the songs to be described. This is not known to be the case with ‘old payten’ songs, although it may well be the case for ‘play corroborees’. Lyrics of island style songs often narrate a strong emotional theme, such as absence from one’s relatives or sweethearts or of the dangers of bad weather while working on lugger crews.14 In Aurukun, aeroplanes flying to the west are often mentioned, with ‘west’ being synonymous for ‘death’ and the ‘aeroplane’ standing for ‘change’.15 A ‘shake-a-leg’ song recorded by Bruce Sommer about the ‘cattle station manager’16 is pointed social commentary, and in Normanton Black recorded mainland style songs about such matters as ‘the mailcoach’, ‘the Chinaman’, the first arrival of an aeroplane, and using paper to wrap up a dinner to be taken out to Two Mile Creek.

Although the subject matter can be similar, the language of island style and ‘old payten’ song words often differs considerably. ‘Old payten’ lyrics of the area tend to consist of brief phrases, repeated with considerable distortion for musical purposes. For example, the lyrics of the mainland style ‘Dinner Paper’ song involve only two distinct English phrases, ‘dinner paper’ and ‘Two Mile Creek’. ‘Old payten’ songs also tend to contain archaisms — or at least, words whose meanings may be unknown even to the owner of the song — and sometimes even mixtures of different languages. One Kowanyama area song cycle contains a stanza that begins in a Koko-Bera dialect

12 John von Sturmer, personal communication.
15 John von Sturmer, personal communication.
16 Bruce Sommer, personal communication.
KOKO-BERA MUSIC

and ends in Oykangand. The lyrics of island style songs, on the other hand, tend to consist of sentences very similar to contemporary spoken language, although with such differences as will be noted later.\textsuperscript{17}

MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Musically island style differs from mainland styles in several ways. ‘Old payten’ music has a single melodic line which may be sung polyphonically whereas island style is sung in harmony. The influence of Western church hymns upon South Pacific songs may help to account for this. However, island style music tends to use 2 or 3 part harmonisations rather than 4 part hymn style harmony, and island style songs almost always end on a unison note or an octave instead of a full tonic chord sounded at the end of hymns and church songs. A second difference from the mainland comes in the range of songs. Mainland tunes may not use more than two or three adjacent tones, whereas island style songs easily encompass an octave or more.

Vocal technique differs markedly in the two styles. A ‘tense, tremulous vocal quality’ is evident in the singing of Fanny Parrot from Kowanyama in the performance of traditional Koko-Mindjen songs.\textsuperscript{18} Women’s ‘wuungka’ songs, used in mourning, display a constricted vocal tone. However, island style singing is characterised as having a more ‘open throated manner’ with a strong nasal quality which projects very far.\textsuperscript{19}

The instruments used to accompany island style music are quite different from those used in mainland music. Most songs are accompanied by chords played on guitars (or ukuleles) and by drums. The latter may be a flour drum placed on its side and played with sticks on either ends or in the middle. The Koko-Bera also use a Torres Strait style drum – a concave wooden tube with a single goanna skin drum head. The above-mentioned flour drum tends to assume an hourglass shape as well, owing to the pressure applied by the sticks to the middle. Some groups other than the Koko-Bera use seed rattles, or segments of the matchbox bean strung together.\textsuperscript{20} Apparently those in use at Kowanyama were purchased from Torres Strait Islanders. Body percussion, often handclapping, and shrill whistle calls to the dancers also accompany island dance. Both the dancers and the seated instrumental section sing as well as the audience.

The choreography of island dance differs from other mainland styles, such as ‘shake-a-leg’, in that it usually involves a military-like formation of ten to twenty dancers moving more or less in unison. ‘Shake-a-leg’ is performed solo or as part of a small group with the dancers using an extreme spread leg movement, but island dancers keep the legs stepping forward more closely together. As mentioned earlier, island dancers do not use body painting. The Koko-Bera decorate themselves with coloured strips of palm leaf hanging from the upper arm, lower leg, and over their shorts or trousers. Occasional dances involve one or two women wearing such ‘grass

\textsuperscript{17} See also Alpher (1976) for a comparison of the language of island style and mainland style music of the Yir Yoront of Kowanyama.

\textsuperscript{18} Moyle 1968-1969:10.


\textsuperscript{20} Moyle 1978:15.
skirts' over their clothes as they dance something akin to the hula amongst the male dancers. At Aurukun, men may also do this 'hula', and great merriment results. Some groups may wear headdresses, but the Koko-Bera were not seen to do this. During a dance, women from the audience sometimes march between the rows of dancers and sprinkle talcum powder on the backs of one or more of the dancers, thus showing formal recognition of relationship and support.21

THE SONGS AND THE DANCES

1. 'Koko-Bera Ground' and the dance competition

It seems appropriate to begin a discussion of the Koko-Bera dances with what is virtually an anthem, 'Koko-Bera Ground'. For this and the other dance songs we give the musical notation accompanied by the lyrics as sung, the lyrics as spoken accompanied by a word by word translation, and finally a relatively free translation into English. Some linguistic characteristics of the sung and spoken lyrics of the songs are pointed out in the following section; for the moment we will consider only the significance of the lyrics.

Koko-Bera Ground

\begin{verbatim}
Kan-pa yong-ko rrung-ga-le — kut mang-ke-chem-pa-le
Ngurr wa nham nhay yurr ngan-ta chel thorr-kong pi-li-ye
Koko-Bera wa nham wa-ka-tha-ka-le — Pa-tha lang-karr
Ko-ko-per ern-yin-te.
\end{verbatim}

(lyrics as sung, with added to show beginnings of musical bars:

'Kanpa yongko rrungale--'
'Kut mangkechempale-
'Ngurr wa nham nhay yurr nganta chel thorrkong piliye--'
'Koko-Bera wa nham wakathakale--'
'Patha langkarr Kokope-fermyinte--')

KOKO-BERA MUSIC

Kønpাা(w) yangko’ rrungά-l,
first together danced
Kut mangkещampa-l.
then separated
Ngurr wa(y) nha-m nha-y yurr nganta(y) chel tharrkόng pila-y.
just (question) see(s) see you (all) hither eye ('eye'?) keep
Koko-Bera wa(y) nha-m wάkathaka-l.
(question) see(s) entering
Path langkarr Kokaper-nyant.
place here of the Koko-Bera
At first we danced together,
Then we split up.
Just you watch and see, keep your eyes this way;
Watch the Koko-Bera coming in:
This ground belongs to the Koko-Bera.

The language of the lyrics

Island dance lyrics tend to deviate from normal spoken Koko-Bera only in a few respects. The most obvious differences are in pronunciation, as can be seen by comparing the lyrics as they are sung with the spoken versions of these lyrics. In this regard, note that most of the Koko-Bera sounds have been written in a 'practical' orthography much like that used for the more widely spoken and written Wik-Munkan language, to the north. Rather than dwell on details of pronunciation here, we simply list the consonants and vowels in an order commonly used by linguists to characterise the articulations of speech sounds:

p t th ch k
m n nh ny ng
i a
l e o
rr
w a
r y

The most obvious phonological characteristic of island style singing is the addition of the vowel e to words to make it possible to prolong the end of a melodic line; only a few Koko-Bera words, such as yangko (alternatively yangkόrr) 'together' or 'with', end in vowels in speech. The normal position of primary stress, marked acute in this and other words, is maintained in singing only to the extent that it is often made to coincide with the musical beat. Another difference is that the schwa vowel a, which occurs only in unstressed syllables, in generally sung as one of the other vowels, i, e, a, o, or u unless its duration is less than a quarter note. To some extent schwa can also be pronounced much like one of these other vowels in speech: for example, the sequences ay and aw are commonly pronounced as iy and uw respectively in both speech and song. Sometimes it can not be — lάngka-r 'here' is never pronounced as lάngkarr except in singing, for example — and in such cases the schwa is sung as the vowel a. (To linguists this could perhaps suggest that schwa is an unstressed equivalent of the vowel a, but for morphophonemic reasons it seems somewhat better to take it to be an unstressed equivalent of e. It would rarely be confusing to write it as either a or e in a practical orthography.)
The final consonants shown in parentheses are not pronounced when the lyrics are sung, but these are often elided in speech as well. Final w and y are almost never pronounced unless at least a brief pause follows; we have not bothered to enclose them in parentheses when their elision is not obvious, as in ay (usually pronounced iy or simply i). Such consonants as p, k, and l can be elided in speech when the next word begins with the same consonant, although alternatively the like consonants can be separated by a schwa-like vocoid. This elision can be seen in the name Kokapér 'Koko-Bera', which was originally a compound kok-kapér 'speech-proper'. We continue to use the English spelling Koko-Bera here, even though the hyphen is clearly misplaced, because such spellings are familiar to the people of Kowanyama. The song 'Koko-Bera Ground' seems to contain both the English pronunciation of the name — such English words are given in italics — and the Koko-Bera pronunciation, although one sung with the sequence er repeated at the beginning of the next bar of music.

The grammar of island dance lyrics deviates little from normal spoken Koko-Bera. In 'Koko-Bera Ground', for example, the subject 'we' of the first two lines is not given overtly; such ellipsis occurs in normal spoken Koko-Bera, but only when the subject is clear from preceding discourse or other context. Wa(y) nha-m nha-y, translated 'watch and see', seems ungrammatical in more traditional Koko-Bera, but possibly it is quite acceptable in the less fluent speech of the youngest (albeit middle-aged) speakers of the language. Wa(y) nha-m is commonly used as if it were an imperative verb meaning 'watch', but it is literally a question meaning 'do (you) see?', and such a question is not normally conjoined with a true imperative, in this case nha-y 'see'. Possibly the lack of occasional suffixes where expected in the lyrics of other island dance songs is also typical of less traditional Koko-Bera and thus does not represent a real difference between song and speech. We will not deal further with the grammar here, but in giving the lyrics as spoken we have used hyphens to divide words into roots and suffixes, and the glosses accompanying the words should suggest the functions of the latter.

2. 'Old Paintin' Dance' and social commentary

When Black first heard the term 'old painten', he interpreted it to mean 'old paintin' and associated it with dances where the performers 'paint up'. Like 'Koko-Bera Ground', 'Old Paintin' Dance' is a comment on the contemporary social situation, in this case on the passing of certain traditions. Both the 'old paintin' (i.e. traditional) dance called Warrangamélangan and the Crippled Old Man story belong to the Pekapénpéw local group, to which the deceased composer belonged.

As the last line says, the people who used to know these traditions are now largely 'dead and gone' — here 'in the west', because this is the direction of Pekapénpéw territory, just north of the mouth of Topsy Creek, from Kowanyama. That the Pekapénpéw have lost some of their main traditions is not surprising in view of how quickly this group took advantage of some of the more beneficial aspects of white culture; the father of the deceased composer had in fact been as far away as Sydney for schooling very many years ago. These traditions, however, were not entirely lost at the time the song was composed. In 1978 the Warrangamélangan was still remembered by an elderly and blind widow of a Koko-Bera man — she herself was from a more northern group; she sang this song at the ceremony that removed the
(lyrics as sung, with marking beginnings of musical bars:

Warrangamelngan ngenthentuw yinthuw rrungale-
'Pa kumpeny' pin pilim 'wangante-
'Pekapenpew Warrangamelngan' kanpa rrungale-
Liy thantuw kanpaw mungkunchal liy walpiye-

Warrangamelngan nganthentaw yinthaw rrungá-l,
(dance name) we (exclusive) before danced
Pa kumpény pin pilá-m wángant.
human crippled ear listening from the west
Pekapenpéw Warrangémléngan kanpá(w) rrungá-l.
(group name) (dance name) first danced
Liy thántaw kanpáw mungkunchá-l liy wálpay.
yonder they first became extinct yonder west

We used to dance the Warrangamelngan,
Listening to Crippled Old Man from the west.
The Pekapenpéw danced the Warrangamelngan before;
Those early ones are dead and gone in the west.

We used to dance the Warrangamelngan,
Listening to Crippled Old Man from the west.
The Pekapenpéw danced the Warrangamelngan before;
Those early ones are dead and gone in the west.
taboo on the house of the deceased composer some three months after his death in early 1978. It also proved possible to record several hours' worth of the Crippled Old Man story from the eldest 'Yir Yoront man in Kowanyama.

Aboriginal traditions are undergoing change and loss throughout Australia, but the forces behind this can vary considerably. The Koko-Bera people are luckier than most to the south because they have had relatively few changes forced upon them. It seems that the mission did actively discourage some traditional activities — for example, they built a cattle slaughtering pen on top of one of the initiation grounds. Yet they seem to have left many others undisturbed, and one of the first missionaries, the Reverend F. Chapman, O.B.E., who arrived in the 1910s, is said to have become fluent in at least Koko-Bera. The Koko-Bera themselves have actively embraced such cultural innovations as island dance, and they have found it useful to incorporate aspects of European culture into such traditional ceremonies as those concerned with death and mourning, in which the unveiling of a tombstone now plays a prominent role. In contrast, the Aboriginal peoples of Normanton, to the south, lost many of their traditions not only through active suppression by whites, but also by being decimated by disease and massacres and then being shifted about to work on tribally mixed cattle stations and finally to reside in a white dominated town far from most of their traditional territories.22 They have been left with a cattle camp culture that is both less traditional and less westernised than that of the people of Kowanyama.

3. 'Chellikee Hospital' and the commemoration of historical events

Many of the island dance songs tell of the composers' perceptions of particular historical events. Some of these events may seem minor to European eyes, such as the day a taipan was seen in the town, or the night the composer was flown into Cairns by air ambulance and was impressed by the multitude of lights. Other songs were more clearly composed to commemorate particular events of great import to the community as a whole.

Chellikee Hospital

22 See Black 1976.
(lyrics as sung, with ′ added to show the beginnings of musical bars:

Kowanyama e----
Chelokiy kutam therreme--
Purrmpang therremen pinche'lme- -langkarre---
Patha la paka liy mungkunchal thantuwe----)

Kowanyama, chehkdy kutám tharre-m.
   doctor new is standing
Purrpáng therramén pinche'l-m.
light(s) in a row are burning
Path la pako(-l) liy mungkunčhá-l thantow.
place this found yonder became extinct they

In Kowanyama a new Chelokdy is standing;
Lights are burning here in a row;
Those who found this place are dead and gone.

′Chellikee Hospital’ was composed on the occasion of the opening of a new clinic
in about 1976. The clinic was named Chellikee after the Koko-Bera word (pa)
chelokdy ‘(traditional or modern) doctor’; the first line of the song can thus use this
word to speak of ‘a new doctor’ as well as the name of the clinic. The second line gives
the composers' impression of one aspect of the hospital: it seems to refer to the row
of lights from the in-patient rooms along the corridor. The last refers to the early
missionaries in general, but especially to the Reverend Chapman, to whose memory
the clinic was dedicated.

4. ‘Magnificent Hotel’ and the poetry of the dance

Like the preceding song, ‘Magnificent Hotel’ commemorates a specific public event,
namely the 1977 opening of a beer canteen named after the Magnificent River, along
which Kowanyama was built. It is especially poetic in its lyrics, and it is one of the
songs for which the accompanying choreography can be reported here.

Magnificent Hotel

![Magnificent Hotel notation]
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1983 7:2

Magnificent Hotel, ma(y) rralcherr yongko perre tharrem-
food honey with open stands

Mim purrapurra wa kaninyin therreme-
animal feather heap above stands

Kunth yalkarrang therrem ngenniny langkarr-
line(s) long stand we (inclusive) here

Ma rralcherr kontam pathelm ngenninye--
food honey from baler shell drink we (inclusive)

Magnificent Hotel, standing open with honey,
Standing on the heaps of feathers;
We stand here in long lines,
We drink honey out of baler shells.

The song begins by picturing the canteen as standing open with 'honey', i.e. beer, because of its colour (like that of introduced honey, at least) and desirability. The 'mounds of feathers' in the second line relate to the fact that the canteen was built on an earlier kapmari (or cupmaori) ground — northernQueenslanders, at least, know the local English word kapmari, perhaps originally from a language of Papua New Guinea, to refer to the 'earth ovens' in which such animals as plain turkey and wallaby are cooked luau-fashion. At this point the dancers make an inverted 'V' with their hands over their heads, to represent the mounds. The third line refers to the fact that people form two queues in front of the canteen, one for men and one for women, as they wait for their thrice-weekly ration of five or six tins of beer.
KOKO-BERA MUSIC

At this point the dancers, who were in a square formation, themselves form two lines, and look from side to side as they march in place. This continues during the last line, but with the dancers raising their hands to their mouths as they ‘drink honey from baler shells’. In traditional times a mixture of sugarbag honey and water was in fact drunk from baler shells, but only indirectly by dipping it out with pieces of *pukán ngəmekath* ‘sugarbag grass’ (i.e. *Alloteropsis semialata*).

5. ‘Groote Eylandt’ and innovations in the style

From the musicological analysis in the following section you will see that island dance songs tend to follow a closely defined pattern; it would not be hard to program a computer to churn out typical island style melodies. Whereas the creative genius of composers is thus more often seen in such other aspects of the dances as their lyrics and choreography, it can sometimes be seen in the way composers have been able to deviate from the norms of the style and yet produce compositions that clearly fall within the genre. One strikingly beautiful example, recorded by Peter Sutton at Lockhart, was an island dance performed simultaneously with a traditional song in strange counterpoint. ‘Groote Eylandt’ is perhaps less striking in its deviation, but it does serve as an example of a song that is atypical in its failure to rise a perfect fourth from its beginning, and which, like ‘Chellikee Hospital’, is not in march time.

*Groote Eylandt*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{D. C. - 3 yong - ko ngan - then - twa ka - le - ne} & \quad \leftarrow \\
\text{- y wal - pi - ye} & \quad \text{yung - kal po - kor - ka - ni - yint ka - le - ne} \\
\text{Pa-tha lly wa nham the - rrem ngen -} & \\
\text{nginy wan-gan - te} & \quad \text{Groote Ey - landt.} \\
\text{path - a mu - nengk - tha - pal the - re - me}
\end{align*}
\]
(Lyrics as sung, with marking beginnings of musical bars:

\[
\begin{align*}
DC-3 &\text{ yongko nganthentuw kaleme li--y walpye}\\
Yungkal pokorr kaninyint kaleme &\text{--}\\
Patha liy wa nham therrem ngenniny wangante &\text{--}\\
'\text{Groote Eylandt} &\text{ patha munengk thapal therrre} &\text{--})}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
DC-3 &\text{ yangko ngonthentaw kale-m liy wålpo-y.}\\
&\text{with we (exclusive) are going there west}\\
Yungkal pokôr r kanînyant kalam &\text{.}\\
&\text{sea middle above are going}\\
Path liy wa(y) nha-m tharrê-m ngennany, wângant, &\text{place that (question) see(s) are standing we (inclusive) from the west}\\
'\text{Groote Eylandt, path mun-êngk thapal tharrê-m.} &\text{place on an island big are standing}\\
\end{align*}
\]

With the DC3 we’re going
There to the west,
Going above the middle of the sea.
Look at that place where we were standing,
Off in the west,
On Groote Eylandt,
Standing on a big island.

Isaac Zingle composed ‘Groote Eylandt’ after returning from a dance festival in northeastern Arnhem Land. The melody is sweeping and majestic, capturing the spaciousness of the Gulf of Carpentaria as seen from a DC3 aircraft evenly throbbing away in a slow 3/4 time. The choreography captures the mood by portraying people rowing boats and then pausing to point up at the DC3 crossing the sky. The main point of the lyrics is that when the travellers first saw Groote Eylandt from the air it looked tiny, but after they landed they looked around and saw that it was quite a big place indeed.

**MUSICAL ANALYSIS**

All five songs have four phrases each. Three of the five songs repeat a phrase, either the first or the last, to give a form of ABCC or ABCA. The other two songs have four different phrases. A number of island style songs rise or fall by the interval of an octave somewhere in the melody, and this is clearly seen in measure 3 of the song, ‘Groote Eylandt’.

Shapes of phrases vary, but in all but 4 out of 20 phrases in the five songs, the cadence consists of a descent to the tonic following a repetition of the supertonic.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{'Magnificent Hotel'} &\text{ supertonic} &\text{ tonic}\\
\text{'Koko-Bera Ground'} &\text{ supertonic} &\text{ tonic}
\end{align*}
\]
KOKO-BERA MUSIC

In all but one of the songs, the first intervallic leap is a rising perfect fourth followed by a rising major third. Since all of the songs begin on the dominant, a second inversion tonic chord is formed within the first few notes of the melody, as shown at the start of ‘Chellakee Hospital’.

If a triad is outlined in the melody, it is either the dominant or the tonic of the key.

‘Old Paintin Dance’

‘Chellakie Hospital’

Many island style songs include long syllable strings recited on one note. The ‘Old Paintin’ Dance’ does this in measure 10, where the family name, Pekanpenpew, plus other words, are recited on the submedient (11 syllables). This differs from many other island style songs where the reciting tone is usually on the first or third of a tonic or dominant triad.

The songs are based on the three primary chords, tonic, dominant, and subdominant, which makes guitar or ukulele accompaniment an easy matter. The vocal harmony found in island style is totally unlike harmonies in traditional musics of Australia. Such harmony may occur above or below the melodic line. LaMont West documents an Aboriginal term for descant, or harmony above, as being ‘kordo’ which may simply be a variant of the English word, ‘chord’.23 In ‘Magnificent Hotel’ we see harmony both below the melody and above it, especially in the final phrase. Whenever there is a cadence ending on the tonic note, the harmony (whether it is above or below the melody) goes from the dominant to a unison (or octave) tonic.

Island style melodies most commonly have a range of an octave to a twelfth with some songs notated as being as narrow as a fourth or as wide as a fourteenth. The five notated songs have a slightly narrower range than the norm, ranging from a sixth to a ninth.

Instrumental accompaniment

In island dance, the percussion tends to change its pattern at each place in the song where the vocal cadence comes to an end and there is a rest for the voices. We see this pattern in the two songs where the instrumental accompaniment is notated. In both cases, the instrumental part is notated for the beginning of the song only, but the same rhythm continues to the end of the song. In ‘Magnificent Hotel’ the drum part at the

23 West 1960:12.
musical cadence changes to a straight quaver beat after a dotted figure which serves to ‘kick off’ the new rhythmic intensity. The seed rattle part also changes to a straight crotchet figure at the cadence. In ‘Old Paintin’ Dance’ the drum part changes from a pattern of \(\text{\textdagger} \text{\textdagger} \text{\textdagger}\) to a straight quaver beat at the cadence. This technique of using a heavily accented quaver pattern at the place of rest for the voices gives an effective, exciting instrumental interlude that increases the emotional tension of the song so that the voices come in on a vibrant pitch.

Island style songs may represent the only oral literature that some Cape York people possess, and the songs form a vital part of twentieth century Cape York culture.

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TORRES STRAIT CREOLE:
THE GROWTH OF A NEW TORRES STRAIT LANGUAGE*

Anna Shnukal

Tracing the history of any language is a complex, many-stranded task that involves the weaving together of both internal linguistic developments and concomitant external — historical, social, economic and political — events. This paper, part of an ongoing study of the history of the English-based creole lingua franca of Torres Strait, briefly discusses a crucial period in its external development: the fifty years between 1890 and 1940.

In examining this period of indigenisation of the language, whose ancestor was the Pacific Pidgin English (also known as Sandalwood English and Beach-la-mar) spoken by South Sea Islanders and imported by them into the Strait during the first half of the nineteenth century, it became necessary to take account of Torres Strait Islanders' interpretation and response to isochronistic events and find a way of reconciling these with what I came to see as the Eurocentric bias of written history of the period. For it was only by attempting to understand the dynamics of Islander society during this time that I could explain the unexpected phenomenon of initial creolisation of the pidgin on two widely separated islands in Torres Strait, where it became the primary language of children born to Torres Strait Islander mothers and immigrant South Sea Islander fathers.1

TORRES STRAIT CREOLE

The language under discussion here is an English-based creole spoken either as a first or second language by almost all Torres Strait Islanders. According to the 1971

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* This is an expanded version of a paper presented at the session on pidgins and creoles at the 53rd ANZAAS Conference, Perth, 16-20 May 1983, entitled 'A crucial period in the development of Torres Strait Creole: 1890-1940'. It is based on three main sources of information: (1) conversations, narratives, personal reminiscences and genealogies, gathered while doing linguistic fieldwork among Torres Strait Islanders between March 1981 and December 1982; (2) written historical records, such as nineteenth century surveyors' reports, accounts by early traders, pearlers and missionaries, records of births, deaths and marriages, and reports of government officials; (3) anthropological and sociological analyses of aspects of Torres Strait Islander culture and society, particularly those of Haddon, Beckett and Sharp. I wish to express my gratitude to AIAS for funding through a Visiting Research Fellowship in Sociolinguistics and to Nonie Sharp, Tom Dutton and Bruce Rigby for helpful discussions during the writing of the paper. Since they do not agree with everything I have written, they cannot be held responsible for its defects.

1 The expected sociolinguistic development, as we can see today in Australia, Canada, the United States and so on, is for children to prefer to speak the community language, especially when one parent is native-born.
All Saints Anglican Church, Erub (Darnley Island).

Main road, Erub (Darnley Island).
TORRES STRAIT CREOLE

census, some 10,000 Torres Strait Islanders were enumerated throughout Australia. However, 1981 Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs figures indicate that there are at least double that number. About 5,000 Islanders (who are Australian citizens) still make their home in the Strait, the majority on Thursday Island, the administrative and commercial centre, but perhaps as many as 17,000 now live on the mainland of Australia, largely in the coastal cities and towns of Queensland.

At present, the creole is spoken as a first language by four generations of Islanders on Erub (Darnley Island) and Ugar (Stephens Island); three to four generations on St Paul’s, Moa Island, Yam Island, and Masig (York Island); two to three generations on Waraber (Sue Island), Purma (Coconut Island) and Hammond Island; two generations on Mer (Murray Island); and one generation at Kubin village, Moa Island and at Bamaga, Cape York. It is the lingua franca of Torres Strait, invariably used between Islanders who speak different traditional languages.

Islanders themselves refer to the language in question by various names: Broken; Pilin; Big Thap; Blaikman, but never as Langgus ('language'). This latter term is reserved for either of the two traditional languages of Torres Strait. Technically, however, it is a creole, having developed from an early form of the English-based pidgin of the Pacific and having acquired first language speakers in Torres Strait. It also acquired much of its phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics from the traditional Torres Strait languages, and for those reasons I shall refer to it here as Torres Strait Creole (TSC).

A CRUCIAL PERIOD

The years between 1890 and 1940 are significant in the history of the creole because it was during that time that it was adopted as a de facto Torres Strait language.

I have chosen 1890, since it is roughly from this date, as far as I can gather, that the pidgin lingua franca of the Pacific, brought to Torres Strait by South Sea Island crews on the beche de mer and pearling boats in the 1840s began to acquire native speakers among the children on the eastern island of Erub. By 1940, it had become the first language, both chronologically and in the sense of primary language, of the children on all the central islands of Torres Strait: Yam, Masig, Waraber and Purma, as well as on St Paul’s Anglican Mission, Moa, and the Catholic Mission on Hammond, two lower western islands of the Strait.

2 A rather simplistic definition of a pidgin is that it is a code formed through the fusion of two or more languages. It typically has a small vocabulary and is functionally restricted, being most often used in trade or commercial contexts. Most importantly, it has no native speakers. A pidgin, however, becomes a creole if it 'acquires native speakers', that is, if, through social factors, it becomes the first language of a group of children. In such a case, it quickly develops the means of encoding all the (actual and potential) communicative needs of its speakers and becomes a fully expressive language in its own right.

PRE-EUROPEAN CONTACT

When Europeans made their way into the area, only two indigenous languages were spoken in Torres Strait: Meriam Mir, a Papuan language spoken in the eastern islands; and Kala Lagaw Ya (often referred to as Mabuiag in early texts), an Australian language of the western and central islands. There was probably more contact between these two linguistic groups than was formerly believed to be the case. We know, for example, that there was some trade, name exchange and intermarriage between Saibai and Mer and the central Islanders had intermittent trading contacts with the eastern islanders. However, although some adults were bilingual, there were no bilingual communities in which every member had at least a passive knowledge of two languages (as there are today on Badu, Mabuiag, Kubin and Mer).

EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACT

From around 1770, European ships began to pass through the Strait, sometimes trading with Islanders who thereby learned a few words of English, but it was only from the late 1840s, after surveys by British navy ships and the discovery first of beche de mer and then of pearlshell, that there was an influx of vessels. These were generally captained by Europeans but manned predominantly by South Sea Island crews. The men came from all parts of the Pacific and included both Polynesians (chiefly from Rotumah, Samoa and Niue) and Melanesians (from the Loyalty group, New Hebrides and Solomons) and they arrived in the Strait by various routes: some came direct from Sydney; others via the canefields of northern Queensland; yet others jumped ship at Thursday Island. All were attracted by the possibility of great wealth to be had from the waters of Torres Strait. From the beginning, the common language of these men, who spoke many different tongues, was a variety of Pacific Pidgin English, established as the lingua franca of the marine industry in the Strait.

It is important to note that the South Sea Islanders at this time were regarded as aliens, allies of the white invaders, and that they were largely responsible for the disruption of Islander lives — raiding the islands for garden produce, water and women. In 1888 a missionary of the London Missionary Society (LMS), Samuel McFarlane,
described an incident which appears typical of those early clashes between Torres Strait Islanders and the newcomers. Two days after the LMS had landed South Sea teachers at Dauan, a trading vessel called there in search of pearl shell.

The captain, ignorant of our arrival in Torres Straits, sent two boats with armed crews of South Sea islanders, in charge of two white men, to plunder the plantations of the natives. Some of these men stood guard with loaded muskets, whilst the others helped themselves to yams, bananas, coconuts, etc., filling their boats, and returning to the ship without giving the plundered people anything in return. As a natural consequence, the savages were enraged, and thirsting for blood.\(^\text{10}\)

They determined to take revenge on the LMS teachers, assuming that they were of the same tribe as the plunderers and probably associated with them.

By the early 1860s land had been leased to Europeans on some islands for the establishment of beche de mer, and later pearling, stations.\(^\text{11}\) Many South Sea men lived on those stations, often contracting marriages with Torres Strait women, although the majority of these were later dissolved.\(^\text{12}\) Nevertheless, although now living on the islands, these men continued to be viewed as intruders, called nog le ('outside people' or 'foreigners') by the Eastern Islanders and they were marginal men. As marginal men, the language they had adopted for intergroup communication, the Pacific pidgin, had little influence on community language choice.

With the coming of greater numbers of foreigners (South Sea Islanders outnumbered Europeans by at least five to one), the traditional life style of the Torres Strait Islanders came under siege. Primarily through disease, the population declined by half during this period, falling to between 1,500 and 2,000.\(^\text{13}\) Thus when the London Missionary Society sought to place South Sea Island teachers on several of the islands during the decade following 1871 as a first step in the planned conversion of New Guinea to Christianity, the Torres Strait Islanders agreed, although reluctantly. After all, the LMS teachers were under white protection; their presence provided a curb on exploitation; and they offered in exchange to teach the Islanders the ways and language of the Europeans.

The arrival of the LMS is still referred to as the 'Coming of the Light', and is celebrated each year on 1 July as the Torres Strait national day. For the two decades that followed 1871, during which the Queensland Government formally annexed the islands in 1879, the South Sea teachers were the de facto rulers on most of the major islands where they had been deposited by the European missionaries. There is no doubt that the LMS deliberately chose South Sea Islanders for this work. Langbridge comments that the 'colour' of the LMS teachers 'made them immediately more acceptable [to Torres Strait Islanders] than the [white] missionaries', and McFarlane explicitly states that the South Sea teachers were 'well adapted to fill the gap between

\(^{10}\) McFarlane 1888:45-6.

\(^{11}\) Moresby 1876:25, 135; Murray 1876:447, 450.

\(^{12}\) Haddon 1904:235; 1908:121.

\(^{13}\) Langbridge 1977:73. For estimated populations for twelve of the nineteen islands inhabited at the time, see Beckett 1963:40.
the debased savage and the European missionary', believing that they could 'get at the
heathen of their class, and influence them in favour of Christianity, quicker than
European missionaries'. They were the interpreters of European ways to the Torres
Strait people, as well as the mediators between the new power structure, in which the
LMS and the Queensland Government were seen as working in concert, and those on
whom it was imposed. From this they derived great prestige and authority. They are
still regarded by Islanders as the bringers of 'civilisation' to Torres Strait. The time
before their arrival is known as bipotaim, whereas pastaim events happened long ago
but after the coming of LMS.

As younger Torres Strait men became more involved in the marine industry, links
between them and the South Sea pearlers were increased. Those Islanders, many
encouraged by their families, who wished to learn the white man's ways, sought
information from the South Sea Islanders, many of whom were quite Europeanised
and sophisticated. A majority of the Rotumans and Samoans, it seems, could read
and write. Many had lived among whites for years and some were world travellers.

The status of the South Sea pearlers and the South Sea teachers was thus mutually
reinforced. As we have seen, the South Sea Islanders were all seen as belonging to the
same 'tribe'. Haddon mentions that the teachers invariably took the part of the South
Sea men in any dispute with the Torres Strait Islanders, and I was told that there
was frequent visiting between the teachers and their families and the other Pacific
Islanders living on Erub. There are, moreover, numerous indications of South Sea
Islander ‘solidarity’ in the writings of European missionaries, both LMS and
Anglican. One may infer such solidarity in stories such as that of the Lifuan, Mataika,
one of the South Sea Island teachers left at Erub with instructions to proceed to Mer.
Having no boat, he set about constructing a canoe ‘with the aid of his brother teacher
[also from Lifu], and two Lifu men who were on the island’. Not only did two
Lifuans accompany him to Mer, but a South Sea Islander living on the islands
provided him with a boat in which to make the return journey.

By the 1880s and 1890s, the pidgin was widely spoken in Torres Strait, particularly
by male Islanders on those islands close to pearling stations: Mabuiag, Badu and Moa
in the west, Tudu, Gebar and Nagi in the centre, and Erub, Ugar and Mer in the east.
An important aspect of this spread was that the Islanders thought they were speaking
‘proper’ English. After all, they knew that the language of the Europeans was English
and saw that the Europeans and Pacific Islanders communicated by means of a
language which both understood. The obvious conclusion was that this language was,
in fact, English. There is considerable oral evidence for this. In the early 1920s, for
example, the Murray Islanders became aware that Erub people had abandoned Meriam
Mir, their traditional tongue, and adopted Kole Mir (‘whiteman’s talk’). Even today
older Islanders from the western and central islands who rarely interact with whites

15 Several elderly Eastern Islanders have told me how their mothers encouraged them to ‘copy
the white man’. However, close contact between Islanders and Europeans was rare, such
contacts as there were usually being carried out through the mediation of the South Sea men.
16 Murray 1876:471.
believe the creole to be English, a belief reinforced by its usual names of *Broken* (*Inglis*) ('broken English') and *Pizin* (*Inglis*) ('pidgin English'). The prevailing opinion among Europeans, too, now as in earlier times, is that the creole is merely an ungrammatical or nonstandard form of English.

In 1898, the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition spent several months on Mer and Mabuiag studying the traditional life of the Islanders. They did not visit Erub, since traditional customs there were believed to have almost entirely disappeared following prolonged contact with foreigners.\(^{17}\) If the men of the expedition had visited Erub, they would have found that the so-called ‘Jargon English’ of Torres Strait\(^{18}\) had already become the first language acquired by the children of the South Sea Island men living there.\(^{19}\)

How had this come about?

When we examine the situation in retrospect, four factors appear to have produced the change: (1) the numerical superiority of the South Sea people on Erub after 1885;
(2) their integration into the community; (3) their high status among Islanders; and (4) the fact that the immigrants were of the 'same colour' as the original inhabitants. The first two, which do not appear to have been reproduced elsewhere except (later) at the Anglican Mission for South Sea Islanders on Moa, therefore appear critical in explaining what happened.20

Erub seems always to have been less socially cohesive than Mer, the centre of the Bumeo-Malo religious cult and the acknowledged cultural focus of the Meriam people. One oral tradition has it that these people migrated to Mer from the Fly River area of New Guinea, and later spread to the surrounding islands of Daur, Erub and Ugar, whose inhabitants spoke Meriam Mir ('the language of Mer'). Erub people also have long had a reputation as outward-looking. They are known as the innovators of the Strait, a reputation which contrasts with that of the more conservative Mer people. They tended to be the middle men in the canoe trade between the eastern islanders and New Guinea and in contacts with the central islanders.21 Moreover, they had had a longer period of contact with foreigners, as Europeans and Pacific Islanders had lived there quite peacefully for some twenty years before the arrival of the missionaries in 1871.22

By that date though, the Islander population of Erub had been reduced from some 400 people to 120.23 Increasing numbers of South Sea men had settled there, but, as I have already mentioned, they generally lived apart from the Islanders. However, in 1885, the Government Representative in Torres Strait expelled sixteen South Sea men and their families (thirty people altogether) from Mer after a series of disputes.24 They were sent to Erub and given land by the government, which thereby created, I would argue, a de facto South Sea Island settlement on Erub. By 1888, they constituted a majority of the population there, in contrast to the situation on other islands.25 By 1894, for example, only seven South Sea men remained on Mer, living amongst 400 Islanders.26

Perhaps because of their long association with foreigners and their eagerness to acquire European goods, the Erub people appear to have quickly established a closer relationship with the Pacific Islanders than was the case on other islands. Many of the newcomers were taken as 'brother' or 'son' and those fictive kin ties remain to this day, still constraining terms of address and possible marriage partners, for example. The South Sea men were given land to cultivate, not only by the government in 1885

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20 I discuss Erub here, but the same factors operated on neighbouring Ugar at about the same time. The peoples of Erub and Ugar have always had close ties and consider themselves to be members of 'the one family'. Ugar, however, has always had a much smaller population than Erub and has thus been even more vulnerable to outside influence.


22 Murray 1876:450.

23 Murray 1876:451.

24 Report of Mr Douglas on Visit to Murray Island 1885:1. I am most grateful to Nonie Sharp for drawing my attention to this document and sending me a copy.


26 Bruce 1894.
Torres Strait (adapted from Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait, Vol. III, 1907). Currently inhabited reserve islands are in bold and the English names of all inhabited islands are given in brackets. (Courtesy of Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.)
as I have indicated, but apparently even before that. Even more remarkable was that
the sons of the last headmen of both Erub and Ugar married daughters of Pacific
Islanders. For financial and status reasons, such women were almost invariably
permitted to marry only other Pacific Islanders or their descendants.

Thus it seems that the South Sea Islanders and their families were fairly rapidly
integrated into the Erub community. Disputes continued to occur, mainly about land,
but the newcomers were no longer the marginal men of before. They were now
recognised as full and valuable members of the community with high prestige and
skills (including language) greatly in demand by the Erub people.

Yet another factor appears significant. Although the Pacific Islanders gained
prestige through their usefulness to Europeans as allies and mediators and were also
considered more 'civilised' than the Torres Strait people, they could never, in
European eyes, attain the status of whites. Their housing was better than that of the
Torres Strait Islanders; their clothes, songs, dances, food, and gardens were more
acceptable to European tastes (and quickly copied by the Islanders); they received
higher wages than the Islanders; and yet they would always have less prestige than
whites. On the other hand, the Islanders, on whom none of this status differentiation
was lost, could therefore feel closer to the newcomers, who represented, as it were, an
attainable goal.

These four factors, then, explain the adoption of the language of the newcomers as
somehow more appropriate to the future and more potentially useful to the coming
generation. Along with traditional custom, the traditional language became identified
with 'lack of civilisation'. It should also be borne in mind that Torres Strait Island
societies (like those of the Pacific) were societies in which a high degree of social
(and linguistic) conformity was maintained through sanctions, the pressure of public
opinion and the fear of being shamed.

Moreover, the factors which I have just outlined satisfactorily account for the
adoption of the pidgin as their first language by the children of St Paul's village on
Moa Island. This was officially founded in 1908 as a Church of England mission for
those South Sea Islanders and their families who were allowed to remain in
Queensland after the deportation of most of their countrymen in 1906. Actually,
it had been established in 1905, when two South Sea men and their families had left
Mabuiag after years of dissension. (The final quarrel concerned the refusal of one man
to allow his daughter to marry a 'full native', the son of the headman.) Many South
Sea families moved to St Paul's after 1908, and the privileged position they were
accorded by both church and government during the years that followed led to
resentment and envy on the part of their Torres Strait affinal kin.

From the beginning, the pidgin was the dominant language on St Paul's, where
Pacific Islanders predominated. Because this was now their own community, the
immigrants ran it according to their own ways of doing things. They were in
authority, subject always to the Government Resident and the Anglican Bishop
on Thursday Island, and their prestige continued to be reinforced by both church
and state. From conversations with older St Paul people, it is clear that the pidgin
was adopted here not only because of its utility as lingua franca among the Pacific
Island men, but also to reinforce feelings of identity and separateness.
TORRES STRAIT CREOLE

The effect of this is most evident in those early families who emigrated from Mabuiag. The children born on Mabuiag spoke Kala Lagaw Ya, their mothers' language and the language of Mabuiag, whereas those born after the move to St Paul's spoke the pidgin as their first language even though they could understand their mothers' language. (This, of course, is not an unusual phenomenon among immigrant families everywhere.) Moreover, the adoption of the pidgin was supported by European teachers, who discouraged the use of the traditional language and encouraged what they mistakenly believed was a 'quaint' form of English, although their observations make it clear that this was, in fact, not English but a developing creole.27

Thus by 1910 the Pacific pidgin was spoken as a first language by the children on Erub, Ugar and St Paul's, but nowhere else. It had earlier become the lingua franca of the marine industry (among Torres Strait Islanders, Aborigines, New Guineans and Europeans) and then, by common consent, the language used between eastern and western language speakers in the Strait. To have spoken either one of the traditional languages would have implied the superiority of one over the other, an impolite and unacceptable implication, whereas the pidgin was perceived as neutral in this regard and therefore a suitable compromise. Besides, those situations which required cross-linguistic communication would have tended to be non-traditional ones, thus favouring the pidgin in any case.

DIFFUSION OF THE CREOLE

The use of TSC as inter-island lingua franca seems to have been the impetus for its diffusion to the central islands of the Strait and to Hammond Island. It became the first language of children born during the second decade of this century on Masig and Yam and of those born after about 1930 on Waraber, Purma and Hammond.

From 1904, when the Islanders came under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction on the Sale of Opium Act of 1897, their freedom of movement was increasingly curtailed. The limited measures of self-government instituted after annexation in 1879 were dismantled and day-to-day control passed to the European administrator-teachers. These officials had been appointed to the most populous islands from the turn of the century and, as representatives of the government, they quickly displaced the South Sea teachers as the foremost authorities on the islands.

During the years following 1904, the use of traditional languages was discouraged by the European teachers and parents were encouraged to speak to their children in English to improve their schooling, which was given in English. From my conversations with older Islanders, however, it is clear that parents used the (already creolised) pidgin English of the Pacific Islanders with their children. (There was never more than one European teacher on even the largest island to serve as a language model and his or her contacts with the Islanders were generally limited to a few formal situations.)

From the second decade of this century, Torres Strait Islanders began to be trained as assistant teachers, at first informally and later at a Teacher Training Institute established on Mabuiag. These Islander teachers were soon being sent to communities...

27 See, for example, the account by a Miss Robson who visited Moa on several occasions before 1910 (The Carpentarian, 1 January 1910:299) and quoted in White 1918:196-198, together with various reports in The Carpentarian, 1909-1912.
other than their own home island, often across the major traditional linguistic barrier. They were therefore forced to use the pidgin not only in their teaching (which contributed to its prestige and to the general belief that it was English) but also in their daily encounters with the inhabitants of the island with whom they shared no traditional language. At the same time, Islander police were deliberately being posted to other islands, as were the newly trained clergy.

Therefore, at a time when inter-island movement was being restricted, only certain categories of Islanders were leaving their own islands to live elsewhere. Those same Islanders (many, incidentally, of South Sea descent) were people of authority who had made a place for themselves in the new order, and they were the ones who appear to have spread the language to other areas of the Strait.

Moreover, while east-west marriages had been extremely rare during pre-contact times, a few began to take place in the more peaceful period following the missionaries’ arrival in 1871. The universalist philosophy of Christianity and the encouragement of (controlled) inter-island visiting for religious festivals, church openings and so on, contributed to the coming together of eastern and western Islanders and consequently to the spread of the lingua franca. South Sea people, for whom traditional tribal (and, consequently, linguistic) barriers were of small consideration in arranging marriages, sent their daughters to relatives or countrymen on far-away islands in order to find suitable (that is, South Sea descended) marriage partners.

These factors, together with the common experience of government control, were instrumental in creating and strengthening pan-Islander ties, and the language which represented these was, necessarily, the pidgin. When in 1929 a Roman Catholic mission was established on Hammond Island, primarily for the children of Filipinos and Malays who had come to Torres Strait to work in the marine industry, many Catholic families left their homes on islands throughout the Strait and resettled there. Almost immediately, the pidgin was adopted as the language of the community, and the new generation of children born there spoke it as their first language.

CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined part of a longer study of the history of Torres Strait Creole. That study came about because, when I began to examine the past linguistic situation on Erub, I found that it did not conform to the expected pattern. Before I went to Torres Strait, I had been told by Islanders and knowledgeable Europeans that the language had creolised a mere two generations before, presumably as the result of increasing European influence since World War II. What I found was therefore not what I had expected to find, and it was puzzling in that the European presence in Torres Strait (in terms of numbers and direct influence) had been quite negligible before World War II.

If my explanation of the development of Pacific Pidgin English in Torres Strait is correct, then the factors which led to its creolisation (i.e. to its acquisition of native speakers) are different from those which promoted its diffusion, which is an unusual phenomenon.

Furthermore, as I have explained, a particular set of historical and social circumstances was responsible for the creolisation and spread of Pacific Pidgin English,
and the language developments discussed above cannot be understood without reference to those extra-linguistic factors.

It is evident too that, contrary to current general belief among Islanders and Europeans, the South Sea Island immigrant settlers played a crucial role in the indigenisation of the language. Most European historians concentrate on the effects of Europeanisation in the Strait. Perhaps it is time to reassess the influence of the South Sea Islanders on the cultural and social history of the area, an influence which seems to have been ignored or at best underrated. There is a great deal of evidence (both cultural and linguistic) that the dominant external influence in Torres Strait between 1870 and 1940 was not European. Rather, European-influenced South Sea Islanders assumed the role of cultural middle-men, transmitting their own version of European ways and language to the Islanders of Torres Strait.

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Coastal archaeology in Eastern Australia is a collection of sixteen papers given at the Australian Archaeological Association Conference at Valla, New South Wales, in 1980. According to the editor's introduction a broad and good cross section of modern Australian archaeology is provided here despite the focus on east coast prehistory. For the most part the papers present results of recent fieldwork carried out on the coast from New South Wales in the north to Bass Strait and Tasmania in the south. Six of the papers are concerned with various aspects of island archaeology, two deal directly with stone technology, two with osteology and two are syntheses of regional and chronological data.

Taking the papers as a whole, one recurring theme which is also one of the most interesting and important taken up here is environmental and technological change. In most instances this has been handled in connection with changes in shell midden composition over time and associated with the apparent impact that the introduction of the fish hook had on procurement patterns. Barz, who reports on an estuarine midden site at Tweed Heads, New South Wales, sees the transition from oysters to whelks and cockles as indicative of the rapid silting up of the estuary. There is also a respective change in fish types and sizes with a responsive increase in terrestrial exploitation — this being the last expression of traditional Aboriginal lifestyle in the area. Blackwell makes similar observations for a Bowen Island midden off the southern coast of New South Wales — in this case gastropod dominance gives way to bivalves.

Noel Broadbent at present teaches and undertakes research at the Avdelingen För Arkeologi at Umeå University, Sweden. His work on the prehistoric settlement at Lundfurs and its natural and cultural setting, carried out from Uppsala University, has been published in Coastal resources and settlement stability: a critical study of a mesolithic site complex in Northern Sweden (Uppsala 1979).

This takes place between 1200-500 B.P. and is here explained using Bowdler's hypothesis that the introduction of the fish hook changed the women's collecting patterns. Less time was spent collecting the larger but more time-consuming gastropods as women assumed more responsibility for fishing, a previously male-dominated activity. Changes in fish types and sizes add credence to the hypothesis as seen by the paralleled sites of Bass Point and Cemetery Point. Finally, the now apparent intensive exploitation of islands could perhaps be due to population pressure on the mainland, a proposal forwarded by Hughes and Lampert in another article.

Hall follows similar lines of reasoning for Moreton Bay, south-east Queensland. The very rich and abundant coastal resources of this bay are described using ethnohistorical references and ecological data. Survey and excavation data in the region which is today 'virtually paved over' do not conflict with this impression. Settlement goes back to at least 4500 B.P. Changes in sea levels between 6000-3000 B.P. led to the silting up of the bay and the formation of tidal flats, sea grass beds and mangroves, the basis of a rich vertebrate and invertebrate fauna upon which those people thrived. Bowdler and Lourandos, who write of Bass Strait farthest to the south (north-western Tasmania and Cape Otway, south-western Victoria), note some changes in shellfish as well. At Cave Bay Cave on Hunter Island between 6600-4000 B.P. there is an emphasis on limpets and small crabs which in time give way to abalone and also crayfish. According to them this was perhaps due to changes in fishing strategies. Bowdler argues that the bone awls found there were used in making fishing nets and the selectivity of fish types and sizes indicates use of nets. At the Seal Point site seal bones decrease in time as fishing increases, evidencing varying levels of sedentism, nomadism and perhaps changes in scheduling practices. The similarities between north-western Tasmania and south-western Victoria relate partly to similar environments and partly to early historical connections. One common feature is the bone awl/fishing connection which ceased at ca 3500 B.P. on Tasmania but continued in Australia. The economic strategy, based on varied resources in both regions suggests that fishing played a relatively minor role, the loss of which has been overemphasised in the literature.

Fishing is a major theme in two of the papers: Dyall writes of the Newcastle coastline (New South Wales) and Campbell has studied the fish traps 'automatic seafood retrieval systems' on Hinchenbrook Island, North Queensland. The richness of this island in food resources supported most or all of the Bandjin tribe. The remarkable fishtrap at Scraggy Point consists of raceways, loops, pools, funnels, breakwaters, arrowheads, and covers an area of some 21,600 m². This trap which encompasses at least 3 systems evidences considerable planning and longterm proceeds — the traps still function and experiments could render information as to their productivity. A nearby midden evidences a change over time from oyster dominance to nerite; fish remains were not yet analysed. This trap/midden association offers a unique opportunity for study. Coleman also emphasises the importance of fish traps in her paper on the north coast of New South Wales. Using ethnohistorical evidence she reconstructs a picture not of mobile and scattered populations, but semi-sedentary and rather dense settlement.

Dyall's paper goes beyond a report of fieldwork at the Birubi and other sites in 1978-1979 to perceptive observations on fishing on the Newcastle coastline (New
South Wales). Midden deposits bagged at the site and sifted through later, have provided extensive material for study. He discussed the selective loss of bone on sites and aspects of angling. Most fish which were caught are in fact not listed in the angling books and fish are certainly not limited to their ideal habitats. The best practice to follow when judging fishing is to consider the assemblage as a whole. Experimentation with hooks and baits etc can shed much light on such problems.

In the area of technology, Hiscock, using material collected from the Mumballa Creek area (New South Wales), directs attention to quartz technology which is still poorly studied and understood. Of importance in this connection is the problem of bipolar technology which he addresses using concepts of inertia and depositional thresholds, reduction pathways etc. Stockton approaches an equally difficult and important problem – large tool assemblages in surface collections. Using comparative material he finds that they antedate the small tool (Bondaian) tradition but also continue into recent times. Surface finds of such implements are not automatically of older date.

Island archaeology is discussed in papers by Morwood, Rowland, Bowdler and Lourandos, Blackwell, O'Connor and Geering. Morwood demonstrates, using the case of Wild Duck Island off central Queensland, how rich these islands can be in archaeological remains and with the increasing tourist exploitation how critical their plight has become. O'Connor shows how Hunter Island off north-western Tasmania was effectively exploited in the past using a mid-island shell midden settlement and resource area within reach of two coasts (the Stockyard Site). This is seen as representative of a 'small island strategy'. Excavation was partly directed toward collecting large faunal samples (in particular the Tasmanian pademelon or Scrub Wallaby) to use as a seasonal indicator. Although ethnohistorical sources only indicated seasonal use of the island, a wide variety of resources were apparently utilised and site location represents a balance of these interests.

Geering's paper is an analysis of the pademelon jaw material (using a mandibular molar index) from this same site. Using seasonal age compositions as a basis the summer season is predominant but results are not seen as conclusive since this method does not function equally well on young and old individuals. The last island paper, by Rowland, is a presentation of the remarkable Keppel Islands' population which showed quite distinctive racial characteristics. These people lacked canoes, stone axes and boomerangs. They were truly specialised marine exploiters, unique from the mainland but not in relation to inlanders to the north. This uniqueness is probably due to isolation more than anything else and Rowland suggests we are perhaps looking at 'strandloping Austronesians', part of the island adaptation in the Southern Great Barrier Reef Province.

Although islands and coasts were the focus of the conference, one paper, by Flood, reminds us using documented tribal divisions and stone technology, that coastal archaeology cannot be divorced from the interior. There is in fact a correlation between Tindale's coastal tribal boundaries and interior drainage patterns. Last but not least, a paper by Hughes and Lampert attempts an overview of settlement for the southern coast of New South Wales. Using roof-fall rates (seemingly connected with intensity of site occupation), windblown sand and numbers of artifacts in rock shelters, they sketch long-term trends of site occupation/population. They observe a low but
continually increasing number of sites from before 8000 B.P. Between 8000-6000 B.P. new site locations start appearing in conjunction with the arrival of the sea at present levels. From then on there are progressively increasing numbers of sites with an increase on the order of two to three-fold over the last 5000 years for new sites and a 6-10 fold increase in intensity for sites already in use. This pattern is compared with material from the Sydney area and found in agreement. While increased use of marine resources can in part explain the growth at 5000 B.P., after 3000 B.P. the population growth is seen by the authors as due to other causes. Various sources of error are discussed including tool types and numbers and site visibility but it is concluded that only a population increase can explain the trends.

The research results presented at the Valla conference have raised a number of fundamental questions concerning coastal adaptation and prehistoric settlement in Australia. Most of this research is in its incipient stages, however, and one must see this publication as a progress report, the interpretations as working hypotheses. Undoubtedly much more solid knowledge of eastern Australian coastal archaeology has been gained since 1980. Considering the nature of this volume it is for this very reason lamentable that the discussions at the conference were not also published. This would have greatly enhanced its value for Australian archaeologists and elucidated the problems to outside readers. Hopefully this will not be overlooked in future.

There are two marked methodological emphases, the ethnohistorical approach and the use of ecological data (primarily zoological analysis) as a basis for understanding economic and cultural change. The former is one of the known strengths of Australian archaeology, here put to much critical use. Even so, almost more space was given to zoological identifications in the individual papers. While this is a positive effort vis-a-vis 'the economic approach to prehistory', this data will require much more critical testing before cultural-historical use can be made of it. (The considerable sources of error involved are illuminated by McBryde's and Meehan's publications.)

There seems also to be vague knowledge of cultural affinity and chronology. Many of the analysed cultural deposits have been dated directly or indirectly using single radiocarbon dates, a highly uncertain sampling and statistical procedure. This problem is simply illustrated by Campbells' article: the two dates from the Scraggy Point midden are anomalous — whereas single dates never are! Another serious source of error using marine samples is that of 'apparent age' due to sea water contamination, which should be a matter of concern here. Although chronology may not be the end of this research, ecological and cultural change can hardly be understood without it.

These papers reveal ambitious and thoughtful studies by enthusiastic and independent thinking archaeologists pursuing one of the most interesting and lesser known aspect of Australian archaeology. The articles are concisely written, refreshingly free of extraneous jargon and the illustrations are quite adequate for a report of this kind.

II

The second perspective in coastal archaeology Coast and Estuary, as the title indicates, deals with two sites on the northern coast of New South Wales. The first 50 pages deal with the Wombah site on the Clarence River estuary, a shell midden investigated in 1963 and 1964. The Schnapper Point site is a dense scatter of stone
artifacts which had been exposed among coastal sand dunes near Evans Head by heavy storms in 1971. It was mapped and collected that same year.

In the introduction the author defines the goals and significance of these sites. This coastal region with its characteristic wide resource-rich estuaries is known historically as supporting a dense Aboriginal population. It is an ideal region for archaeological studies of coastal adaptation and utilisation. The Schnapper Point site, only recently exposed and therefore not previously collected, provided a good opportunity to examine stone technology as well as a challenge — how to assign a cultural context to surface scatters?

Both investigations were salvage operations but McBryde does her best to extract information from them. She is certainly adding to the data base with these reports but the real value of the work is in greater measure the source-critical analysis she makes of these site types. Midden accumulation is clearly no simple matter. Besides being dumping grounds, often peripheral to occupation sites, they show considerable variation in size, thickness and composition. They consist of aggregates of many lenses of shell and she makes the point that correlation of stratigraphic sequences from pit to pit may not always be valid or even possible. Indeed, what is typical of such a site? Can one draw general conclusions from a single trench or column?

In excavation she employed rows of 5 foot squares rather than a trench in order to maximise the number of faces explored at any one time. At Wombah this approach was implemented in defining different activity deposits as well as the differential growth of the midden. Certain traces of structures were not observed in the midden although artifact concentrations, ashy lenses and bands of crushed shell as well as some possible postholes could indicate hut location. Ethnographic studies (cf. Meehan) and experimentation can serve an important function here by helping to define the character of structure types and their remains. The stone artifacts at Wombah, although few in number, reflect the major trends of the eastern New South Wales sequence with Bondaian elements in the first millennium B.C. but gradually becoming less important over time. The most recent material includes retouched glass of 19th century date. In addition to components such as the uniface pebble tools and backed blades, special attention was given to bipolar pieces (flake fabricators). The function of this relatively important artifact at Wombah (they seem to be more common on coastal sites) is examined. Although the general opinion today is that these bipolar pieces are nothing more than residual cores, the lack of local evidence for stone armed ‘death spears’ and the like leads the author to question this interpretation, in north-eastern New South Wales at least. The ethnographic evidence speaks instead of a wide range of wooden tools suggesting these pieces were chisels. This question is nevertheless left open. Whatever the functional interpretations, the use of greywacke for edge ground artifacts at Wombah shows that not only local stones were used but those from farther up river — an important indication of exchange and/or seasonal movement by these people (refer McQueen’s contribution for an analysis of local chalcedonies). The stone tool assemblage is in fact non-distinctive as far as coastal adaptation is concerned and there is nothing which seems to relate to fishing — fish bones were not abundant on the site.

Wombah was situated back from the main river and by a small tidal creek. Dense rainforest vegetation behind the site could have forced concentration on the river and
estuary. Curiously, however, a pollen sample from the cultural deposits showed a dominance of grasses and no arboreal pollen, but the potential sources of error are considered to be too great to make this binding.

The overall evidence indicates that the collecting of oysters was the primary economic focus. Using flesh weights for the estimated volume of oysters, average daily consumption and the like, a population of 24.3 is estimated for Wombah. For an annual visit over the period of ca 2900 years estimated at the site, the occupation would only have been a few days at a time. This is unlikely, but the point is made that site occupation must have been of brief duration and undoubtedly seasonal. Other evidence — ethnohistorical, the ground stone axes, inland finds of shells — suggest that this exploitation encompasses the Clarence river valley drainage as well. The coastal region was probably used between September and November, the prime oyster season.

McBryde is careful in her interpretations of population estimates, seeing them more as academic exercises rather than accurate reconstructions. This is in line with her basic and most salient points: (1) We just know too little of the processes and complexities of midden formation. (2) The chronology of even this rather well dated site is necessarily coarse; we cannot therefore determine actual length of any one seasonal stay or assume continuity for that matter. (3) Shifts in site location (large and small) and changes in group size can have been frequent and quite random in character. They do not necessarily relate to changes in resource utilisation and depletion. (4) Lastly, a number of food resources may have left little or no traces. Among these are plant foods and especially fish which are historically known as having been important. Very few bones were preserved (refer Wakefield's contribution). One highlight is a find of one canine tooth dated to \( 3230 \pm 100 \text{ B.P.} \) making it the oldest dated archaeological dingo recovered so far in Australia. The Wombah site, it is suggested, should not be seen as an entity in itself but as one focus of a larger occupation site. The middens merge and overlap forming an almost continuous band of locales.

A particularly insightful contribution to this study is V.M. Campbell's analysis of shell content at Wombah. The question of seasonality and ecological change are approached along with questions of shellfish utilisation over time. Sampling was carried out using columns and so-called grab samples and a critical analysis is made of the deposits. Of special interest are conclusions which relate changes in shell composition to human exploitation. Decreases in numbers of oysters over time are correlated with valve length and weight. Continued human exploitation of the larger oysters led to a rapid turnover of age groups and thus an overall decrease in shell size. The beds were not depleted, however. They continued to be used and in fact valve size remained well above modern samples. The change in shell composition is thus not seen as having been due to environmental change, rather, 'the explanation appears to be a cultural one' (p.48). This interpretation conflicts with a number of conclusions presented at the Valla Conference. Changes in midden (oyster) composition over time are mostly attributed to environmental causes (for example silting up of the estuaries). Needless to say, this observation is of great theoretical significance for archaeological interpretation. The problems are complex and much more critical analysis is needed to define and segregate the cultural aspects of midden remains.
The last section of this publication treats the Schnapper Point site and includes appendices on petrology (McQueen), nearby midden sites (V.M. Campbell) and historical evidence for mining at Schnapper Point during the 19th and 20th centuries (K.H. Lane). As mentioned earlier Schnapper Point is important by virtue of being only recently exposed and thereby protected from collectors. The point is a rocky coastal headland south of the Evans River, a mythological site of the Bandjalang Tribe.

The large exposed surface provided a collection of material. Seven distinct areas were sampled. No traces of settlement were discerned, indicating that this was a specialised stone tool manufacturing site. Statistical comparisons of artifacts (pebble tools, elouera, edge ground artifacts, scrapers) with other north coast New South Wales sites, including Wombah, suggest a dating to the recent past (17th-18th centuries A.D.), a conclusion supported by C-14 dates of nearby middens. Interestingly enough, geological data suggest that periods of extreme storminess 300-500 years ago may have shifted the dunes and exposed the pebble-rich Pleistocene beach, thus opening it for exploitation. Finds of pipi shells in the contemporary middens indicate that the sandy beaches provided local food resources. This well-preserved site adds yet another important technological and chronological dimension to the archaeology of this coastal region.

III

The last publication, *Shell bed to shell midden* contributes to coastal archaeology on an entirely different level. This is an account and analysis of the Anbarra people of Arnhem land in the Northern Territory of Australia. These Gidjingali speaking people live by the mouth of the Blyth River and when investigated by Meehan 1972-73 were actively involved in shellfish collecting. These 400 people are divided into four loosely knit communities. They utilised the region from various home bases and very numerous 'dinnertime camps'. Of the four groups the Anbarra were described by an informant as sitting at the mouth of the river living off the abundant resources — the bourgeoisie of the an-gatja Wana! The opportunity to assess the nature of their economy, in particular the role of women, was exceptional — it was widely believed that fully functioning hunting and gathering societies no longer existed in Australia. So, although originally planning an archaeological project, Meehan shifted to ethnography when confronted with this opportunity for study.

The book consists of 10 chapters. Chapters 1-4 give a background and introduction to shellfishing in history, the Gidjingali people and their region, as well as their year, 1972-73. Chapter 5 deals with aspects of shellfish classification, theirs and ours, chapters 6 to 9, patterns of predation, collection, cooking and disposal, hunting performances and the role of shellfish in their diet. Chapter 10 relates these findings to archaeological evidence in this and other areas as well as the effects of an eco-disaster in 1973-74.

The exploitation by a group of Anbarra (an average of 34 people) of the available shellfish environments (sandy beaches and mudflats, mangroves and rocky shores) is documented for one year. Some 30 species of shellfish were collected on 194 (58%) of 334 days of observation. The wet season (November to March) was the period of highest gathering frequency although shellfish were collected year-round. A purely cultural activity could nevertheless alter the pattern. The Kunappi ceremony, for
example, kept the men so occupied on a dry season camp that the women had to increase shellfish collecting to a level above that for a normal wet season settlement. Bivalves were greatly preferred over gastropods (98% by weight) but the latter were regularly collected and consumed as hors d’oeuvres. Although over half the number of species eaten in a year could be collected on any one day, each gathering expedition was normally directed to only one species. It was common practice to clean or consume the shellfish at dinnertime camps or processing sites which were located closer to the shellbeds than the home camps. Shellfish remains at the home bases thus represent only a small fraction of the total amount eaten. Shellfish functioned as a staple food, a subsidiary food, snack and alternative food. Although it was calculated that shellfish only contributed a monthly average of 10%-30% by meat weight, 6% to 17% by energy, for the year, they were a dependable and less opportunistic energy source than that provided by hunting and even many types of fishing.

The Anbarra were affluent ‘hunters’ with high gastronomic standards and their diet (energy intake) and health were good by standards for Australia, comparative peoples and according to recommended daily allowances. Of equal significance is the ease with which this women’s activity fulfilled energy requirements. Only an average of two hours was spent gathering each day, during which an equivalent of 2000 kcal was obtained. The rest of the day was free for other pursuits. Besides collecting shellfish, the women hunted goannas and freshwater turtles. The men provided fish, birds and mammals. For the coastal Anbarra, animal and vegetable foods were of about equal importance.

Meehan’s observations on consumption and disposal patterns are, needless to say, of special interest to archaeology. Disposal at the home camps was complex and bring to mind McBryde’s analyses of the Wombah midden . . .

Various parts of base camps are continually being moved, distances ranging from a few metres to several hundred metres . . . At regular intervals, every week or two, the entire camp is cleaned up with rakes, sticks or feet. The rubbish is dumped in various places around the periphery of the hearth complex, usually in areas that are unimportant for use and access . . . This process of scraping and piling continues as long as the camp is occupied. Sometimes debris from a previous occupation is discovered and incorporated into the contemporary rubbish heap (p.114).

On processing sites it is common to find only a single shellfish species — a reflection of the collecting strategy. Dinnertime camps, like home bases, were also complex and shell materials was repeatedly redistributed and the deposits mixed. Anbarra males eat more flesh than the women and often eat larger quantities of their own catches (fish and wallabies) at their dinnertime camps. In my opinion, this can very well be hypothesised as explaining why so few fish and mammal bones were found on sites like Wombah (cf McBryde p.34). The shell middens are primarily reflections of female economy, and only part of it at that!

Meehan relates her findings to older midden deposits in the region, those of ‘dead men’, and finds their structure to be similar to those of modern Anbarra camps although shellfish frequencies are quite different. The latter is true of even older midden mounds ‘dreaming mounds’. The same shell types are represented but in very different proportions. The reasons for this are not speculated on other than saying that they probably relate to an older and different coastline.
Comparisons with other archaeological sites are also briefly made, most notably Galatea Bay in New Zealand. Shawcross has put an extreme economic emphasis on shellfish (45% of the energy), requiring gathering at 10 times the daily Anbarra rate. Meehan suggests that unless some mechanical aid (?) were available in New Zealand, these figures need revision. On a positive note, Clark’s 1975 calculations on an Ertebølle midden are seen as more realistic and in line with the Anbarra model — 5-16% of the energy derived from shellfish for a group of 20-24 people occupying the site for 6 months.

Last but not least is an account given of the Anbarra response to the destruction of the main shellfish resources by storms in 1973-74. They simply shifted around their other resources (fish, turtles, goannas, wallabies and vegetable food) although shellfish were never completely abandoned. They were evidently fully aware and prepared for such disasters — shellfish gathering was not as essential to their economy as it appeared in 1972-73. This implies that ‘economic change’ is a mechanism of survival for these people, not in terms of centuries but on a yearly and seasonal basis. Economic change as an historical event is perhaps not as important as we archaeologists conceive it!

Meehan has made a major contribution to archaeology with this ethnographic study. Her work is full of the kind of hard data which we need, particularly within the area of coastal archaeology. As so many times before, Australia has provided invaluable insight into the workings of hunting and gathering societies. These are real people and Meehan has written of them with humour, perception and sensitivity. Finally, this is above all a rare ethnographic study by a woman about women. The author, with all right, claims that the ubiquitous shell midden is a fitting monument to the unappreciated contribution made by women to the maintenance of human society.

In summary, these three works complement each other by adding different dimensions to questions of coastal adaptation. The Valla Conference presents an overview of the ‘raw material’ being produced by archaeological field work in eastern Australia and the directions being taken to synthesise and interpret it. McBryde’s report illuminates a number of source-critical aspects of coastal archaeology and, lastly, Meehan’s investigation of the Aborigines of the Arnhem Land coast provides invaluable insight into the actual workings of a coastal gathering society. Although much of the information contained in these books is of interest primarily to Australian archaeologists, they have made very stimulating reading from both an American and North European perspective. The problems of coastal adaptation are remarkably similar which makes these contributions of value far beyond the coasts of Australia, even where I sit now at 64 degrees north latitude.
BOOK REVIEWS


When he died in 1977 Grant Ngabidj was the last of the very old Gadjerong men, of the Kimberley country north-east of Wyndham. He began giving Bruce Shaw his life story in 1970, and this book is an edited transcript of the result. It is the first of six proposed volumes presenting thirty-two Kimberley life histories and reminiscences Shaw was given: the second volume, *Banggaierri: the story of Jack Sullivan*, was published in 1982.

Shaw describes the book as a life history, an autobiography, and an Aboriginal insight into their recent contact with Europeans (p.l). This is perhaps an adequate description for Aboriginal readers, but for Europeans it is much more. It is an assertion of the worth and permanence of traditional Kimberley values. It does not defy or condemn; on the contrary its calm pragmatism is striking, conveying its owner's conviction that people are not the pivot of creation, that things will endure beyond any passing generation of men.

Grant gives information in order to impart knowledge or values, and a reader expecting a straightforward account might be disappointed. In describing even a short journey for example, Grant is instructing his audience in geography, tides, botany, traditional ownership, pre-contact history, and aspects of bushcraft such as how to choose campsites or find easy walking. Visiting a camp becomes a lesson in totems and clan allegiances, a reference to the weather becomes a course in meteorology — see pp.61-8 for example. In particular Grant has much to say of the Law and its importance, and clearly this was central to his being, but his didactic purpose persists even in small things — where a European might say, for example, someone 'rode a mule', Grant says a man 'changed to a mule, saddled it up and rode it, galloping all the way from the Twenty Mile right to the Nine Mile' (p.43).

Despite their enormous impact Europeans were marginal to the real purposes of Grant's life and thoughts. He refers to the adoption by younger Aborigines of European marriage customs in this way: 'Mothers, daughters, they take them anyway. See, they are going a bit stupid now like dogs, true. A lot of blackfellers behaved well in the early days' (p.60). His upbringing was not traditional in the sense of being pre-European — it was interrupted by the massacre of almost all his clanspeople when he was about four, and by forced or voluntary labour for Europeans later. Yet Grant's essential problem with Europeans was in which ways their presence might be accommodated within existing value systems, and in which ways ignored as beyond the pale. For him neither God nor bullets nor the gospel of work break the links between men and places and traditions; despite its new disorder the world retains its old unity.

His values are also clear in how Grant tells his story. Natural phenomena or traditional law are explained in some detail, but killings are recounted briefly and economically, reflecting Grant's pragmatism and perhaps the relative inconsequence of human life: 'that blackfeller chucked one shovel spear, a big long one too ... It shot her like a rifle, knocked her out, took the heart and killed her, poor bugger. He was a bloody good shot' (p.104). Yet Grant has all the great skills of storytellers who cannot write. Bruce Shaw tells how effectively he used hand, eye and body movement and changes in pace and tone (pp.4-5), and even the printed narrative evokes a play, particularly in its ready use of direct speech and its skilfully drawn word pictures.
For Europeans the most obvious difficulty with such a narrative is in their knowing how adequately they understand it. Grant's comments on his name, for example, suggest how impossible it is to decide whether or not he has withheld information he considers truly valuable:

My proper name, given by my mother, is Wilmirr. I do not like to use it when dealing with white men. It comes from another dreaming, that of the pelican marrimarrri . . . My father’s dream was the pelican too, but it all comes from my mother, for it is from her dream that you get your skin name. That is in the Law (p.32).

Grant also told Bruce Shaw what was publishable. The term he used in assuring him was that there was ‘nothing it it’ (p.8).

How much is missing may never be discovered by Europeans: nonetheless a better question here is whether or not what is given has value because it preserves for Aborigines some part of their past and their being, or because it opens doors of understanding for Europeans. This is a problem which concerns Bruce Shaw greatly, as his lengthy introduction and a 1982 talk to the Australian Historical Association entitled ‘Writing the East Kimberley Series’, make clear. He recognises losses in transit but he has gone to considerable trouble to minimise these, in particular by striking what I think a very good balance between Grant’s mode and content and the need to make the narrative comprehensible to Europeans. Obviously he thinks the compromise works, and that the book is a fair representation of what Grant wanted to say.

What does it tell? Even for the most archive-bound historian some things are valuable. Details of contact which Europeans had reasons for suppressing emerge to enlarge our knowledge of what happened in the Kimberleys: the ‘killing days’ there, for example, continued until the 1940s. More importantly, no matter what is missing, Grant’s story offers non-Aboriginal readers a glimpse of the nature, strength and resilience of Aboriginal value systems, and that is knowledge vital for all Europeans to accept. Perhaps above all, Grant is using a trusted intermediary to pass to the future these tales of the days when men were able to perceive a unity in creation, and when a sense of order and continuity regulated their behaviour. He meant his gift of that knowledge for Aborigines, but Europeans might also take it gratefully as well.

BILL GAMMAGE
UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

All published by the Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit, Darwin.

These volumes are the results of conferences or work sponsored by the North Australia Research Unit (NARU) of the Australian National University. They reflect
the recent interest in Aboriginal themes taken by the Unit, and as such are to be welcomed.

The volumes on service delivery to remote communities and outstations are collections of papers presented at a conference sponsored by NARU in December 1981. The range of topics they cover is broad, and papers of a length to fit in with conference time-slots sometimes cannot do justice to their subject. Editing could have been a bit more stringent. The papers presented are of varied quality: some are excellent, some anecdotal, and some trivial, some are comprehensive (such as the paper by Bryan and Reid on communications in Eastern Arnhem Land) others are skimpy. One disadvantage is that, even though most papers concern themselves with Arnhem Land settlements, they cover a wide range of topics (health, education, water, banks, stores, vehicle maintenance, communications, just to mention a few) and a number of communities, so that it is difficult to make any comparative judgements. The factors which are particular to one facility may not apply to another, and factors pertinent to one community may not be pertinent in another. A valuable overview is made by Bell in the volume on outstation service delivery.

Some of the papers present a statement from a departmental point of view, while others present very particular personal reactions to situations or communities. These are to be applauded, since there is very little of this sort of recording. Most reports on Aboriginal communities attempt a detached, or so-called objective, viewpoint. But any person who has worked in an Aboriginal community cannot fail to have been affected by the experience, whatever its flavour, and the reactions must surely affect the viewpoint presented, however objective a stance one might attempt.

Unfortunately, there are not many papers that try to present matters from an Aboriginal point of view, and very few that explain Aboriginal actions. Even to use the word 'remote', as pointed out by the Hon. P.A.E. Everingham in his Opening Address, reflects a rather particular ego-centric point of view; what is 'remote' to one community may be 'home' to another, and vice versa. The crucial point is not distance per se, but distance from desired facilities, goods, and the over-reaching decision-making powers of government departments and other agencies. 'Remoteness' could also be equated with 'unawareness' or 'insensibility' which is associated with the distances in question. This is amply reflected in Heatley's paper on the Kimberleys, in Snowdon's paper on 'remote control for remote communities', and in Sanders' paper on social security. The paper by Sanders on changing government positions regarding self-determination and self-management points out very well the woolly thinking on policies applied to areas where the predominant public is Aboriginal.

Problems for councils, and their management and funding, are outlined in papers by Oakes and Coburn. Yet there is no 'deep' understanding of the factors which are relevant; for a better account, see Thiele's volume.

Gerritsen presents two thought-provoking papers on outstations, although one should mention that he does not exhaust the range of factors which come into play in establishing them. In particular, he fails to mention the role of women, whose presence is crucial to the existence of outstation communities, if they are to reproduce themselves physically and socially. Further, men often use their wives' and mothers' affiliations to land to make their own residential choices, and the women must agree to these manoeuvres to legitimise them.

Wade-Marshall's paper outlines the position of women in Aboriginal communities, but this too needs to be placed in a wider context. Aboriginal men's public domain has widened considerably over the years; they find it relatively easy to muster support
from agencies outside the community. However, women's public domain has shrunk, relatively speaking; they do not have such easy access to resources outside the community. In this connection it is interesting to note that there is often an outcry whenever a woman is appointed to some position in Aboriginal affairs, the implication being that men will not deal with her. Not only does this assumption require deeper examination, it also ignores the fact that Aboriginal women are greatly disadvantaged by the appointment of men to positions of power.

Other papers examine the role of bank agencies, shops, and other aspects of a cash economy. Being in charge of a bank agency is a position of some power in an Aboriginal community, because it enables one to know who has what amounts of money. The same sorts of factors need to be examined in the context of shops in Aboriginal communities, and the control of resources and provisions. In contrast, Bagshaw's paper in the outstation volume makes allowances for the realm of Aboriginal politicking. More case studies of this sort are needed.

Walker's paper on water provision to communities also brings out some of the factors which are alluded to in other papers, but the resolution of which is left in the air. He believes that Aborigines desire benefits while disliking the demands generated to support the infrastructure that produces the benefit. Until they reconcile themselves to one or the other the clash will persist. Walker believes they will forego the benefit. Further he says that a community will not accept the social responsibility for maintaining a system, and so a 'boss' has to be appointed. This has implications for a culture-bound model of technology. The case of a handpump (pp.38-9) which turned out to be much cheaper than windmills or tanks, makes one reflect on the uneconomic side of living in 'remote' areas. If the user really had to pay for equipment and facilities, would people be more realistic in their demands of government agencies?

The volume on arts and crafts (which is also a collection of papers presented at a NARU conference of the same title, held in Darwin in August 1982, together with an exhibition of Aboriginal art at the Museum), while being more unified in theme, also suffers from a lack of editing. Questions posed in one paper may be answered in another.

There are many aspects of Aboriginal art examined, including papers by Gillespie and Chaloupka on the marketing of art which is not 'purchasable', that is, rock art, and the management of cultural tourism in national parks. But once again, there are not many papers which look at art from an Aboriginal perspective. How do Aborigines view their art? Why do they choose to market it? It is not sufficient to say that they are awarded status for being artists, because one then has to ask what validity that status has in Aboriginal contexts, and if the status comes from having money or recognition in non-Aboriginal eyes, why is that important? Experience in some communities shows that it is the underdogs who turn to arts and crafts to make money, because all other avenues have been monopolised. Painters who get jobs tend to stop painting, or at least have very diminished output, and often painters cease painting when they get a pension. There may not be sufficient time to have both a job and to paint; but why should the choice be to have a job, rather than paint? A suggestion might be that painting does not provide one with as good a power-base as most jobs. One should then examine the role arts and crafts play within the dynamics of a settlement. Why, for example, are there no local entrepreneurs in the art market? It may be that there are very strong 'whitefella' aspects to the marketing of arts and crafts.

There is also no discussion as to whether Aborigines divide art into 'fine' and 'tourist' art. Or, if they do make distinctions about art, what types of distinctions
they make. If Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal classifications do not coincide, then what value is there in making distinctions of the 'fine' and 'tourist' variety? To increase the values of individuals' and museums' collections?

The volume on the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) election of 1981 is timely, given the $7 million given to the NAC in the last Federal Budget. The volume presents material on the problems associated with the conducting not only of an election, but also of an electioneering campaign in the Northern Territory. The material reveals some interesting information: that people with jobs that allowed them to travel had advantages over those that did not, especially since there are no travel allowances for candidates. There also seems to be a dichotomy between people who use an urban organisational network for support, and those who rely on 'tribal' networks. Both these factors have implications for the types of people who are elected to the NAC.

Yet once again, there is no examination of how Aborigines viewed the election or what they thought of candidates, except in results tables. Aboriginal politics are not considered, nor the social field in which they operate. The election process could be seen variously as being perplexing, interesting, mystifying, or just another part of 'whitefella' business (note in this regard that there are no elections for the members of the Land Councils). Why is it necessary to have Aborigines representing Aborigines (consider the lack of success that Aboriginal candidates have had in NT Legislative Assembly elections, even though they were standing against non-Aboriginal candidates in predominantly Aboriginal electorates)? If there is no electoral roll, how are electorate sizes determined? What importance is there in maintaining equality of size versus maintaining the integrity of a cultural bloc? In other words, why does representation have to be based on geographical, rather than cultural notions? Why does an age barrier have to apply for voting: why are people of 18 to be considered adults, whereas in fact in Aboriginal communities maturity is based on other factors — the bearing of children, and initiation?

Further, the NAC has to be put into a wider world, if one is to understand its relevance. There are other organisations in the Northern Territory which have power and money, the most notable being the Land Councils and associations which derive money from mining royalties. How is the NAC placed relative to these?

The volume by Thiele is excellent. It is an account of the establishment, evolution and demise of the Yugul Cattle Company at Ngukurr. He outlines the history of the community and the role that missionaries and those who attached themselves to the mission played in the events prior to the formation of the company. He examines the social parameters operating in the community, and the influences these had on the development of the company, and the power wrestles that went on.

Until an examination of the economic role of Aboriginal settlements is undertaken, no sense is made of 'developments', or why part of the self-managing image is that of economically self-sufficient Aboriginal communities. This volume goes a long way towards explaining why so many of the schemes evolved for Aboriginal communities are doomed to failure. It is all the more pertinent since many Aboriginal communities are seeing cattle and/or buffalo projects as strategies to make their communities partially independent of government revenues. Thiele fully understands the predicament of such communities. Government departments ultimately control settlement finances, and so are the ultimate employer, not the Aboriginal company. Government tends to fund community projects, as though there were such an entity, in spite of the evidence of factions found in settlements. (There are echoes here of Gerritsen's paper.) This, and the fact that there is 'no institutionalized system of
political opposition in the Ngukurr Council (p.26), mean that a non-Aboriginal presence is necessary on settlements, not merely for the skills provided, but also because it provides the social mechanism for the community to function.

Thiele tries to understand the Aboriginal perceptions of what went on. He believes there is an inability of Aborigines at Ngukurr to take political and economic control as a community. He also believes that Aborigines suffer from misconceptions about non-Aboriginal economic ventures; they believe that they are all profitable. Understanding how Aborigines perceive money and business conduct in the non-Aboriginal sphere might make such schemes as the Yugul Cattle Company more realistic.

Thiele presents the crux of the problem as being that Aborigines have to decide their options, reconcile contradictions, and that they have to reconcile responsibilities with duties. Otherwise government funding of such projects will merely increase Aboriginal dependence on the non-Aboriginal economy, not only in economic terms, but also socially. The implications of this study can be applied in other spheres, and one can only ask, as many of us continue to do, why Aboriginal associations are given mining revenues, when settlement politics revolve around what faction is getting what proportion?

The meaning of 'Yugul' is not explained. It is the name of a language. In some parts of Australia one 'owns' languages, just as one 'owns' land. One can own a language even if one does not speak it. Are there implications for who might have owned this language and the role they subsequently played in the company?

Concerning presentation of the volumes, more attention could have been given to maps. Some of the places mentioned in the volume on the NAC (for example Lajamanu, Napperby, Oenpelli) do not appear on the map, while the only map included in Thiele's volume is to be found on the cover obscured by a photograph.

In the context of Aboriginal history, those papers which deal with case studies and those that deal with personal experiences will count for more than those which present a departmental point of view. Especially useful will be those papers that do not flinch from revealing possibly unflattering episodes in the realm of politics in the Aboriginal domain. The pity will be if accounts which present this sort of material are censored in the name of privacy, or to recreate history in a more favourable light.

SUE KESTEVEN

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES


This volume is the second of a series of six, which will examine in detail the Aboriginal component in the contemporary Australian economy. The first volume covered tribal communities in rural areas, and subsequent volumes will cover smaller rural communities (e.g. cattle stations), urban Aborigines, specialised communities (e.g. mining settlements) and a final overview of the Aboriginal economy and its relationships with the total Australian economy. The present volume contains four case studies of Aboriginal non-metropolitan urban minority populations and an introductory chapter by E.K. Fisk, which summarises the trends apparent from the case studies.
Elspeth Young analyses demographic and socio-economic data from a survey organised by Charles Rowley of 183 urban, non-metropolitan Aboriginal households in New South Wales, which contained at least one member who had been interviewed in a similar survey in 1965. The results indicate that while housing conditions for this group have improved since 1965 real incomes have not. Compared with the non-Aboriginal population the non-metropolitan urban Aboriginal families have a younger age-structure and more dependants, higher occupancy rates per house, lower health status and lower formal educational achievements. These and other factors lead to higher rates of unemployment, concentration in lower status occupations and lower levels of income.

Jenny Bryant reports on a study of Aborigines living in the Murray River town of Robinvale in Victoria, where Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders form at least 13 percent of the town population of about 3000. Ms Bryant examines the reasons why Robinvale has become a centre of Aboriginal residence (mainly because of the availability of seasonal work in grape and citrus fruit industries nearby). She traces the progress of an ‘experiment in assimilation’ conducted in the late 1960s, when Aboriginal families living on the Murray River banks were moved into a transitional settlement at Manatunga and later into houses located in the town, and examines employment, incomes and expenditure of Aborigines in detail, including patterns of seasonal migration to opal fields, other fruit or vegetable growing areas, shearing and cane-cutting. The picture that emerges is of a relatively stable community still heavily dependent on government support in various forms, and facing difficult dilemmas in housing, employment, health and education. The re-vivified Aboriginal Co-operative is now playing a major role in community leadership, and it is to be hoped it will receive continuing support from within the community and outside to further the security and well-being of the Aboriginal community at Robinvale.

David Drakakis-Smith reports on Aborigines living in town camps around Alice Springs (about 40 percent of the town’s Aboriginal population, itself about 15 percent of the total), and dispels some of the myths perpetuated in the white consciousness about them. He shows, for example, that most of the camp sites were originally settled in the late 1940s, that many of the campers have been resident in Alice Springs for longer than most Europeans, and that many people of part-Aboriginal descent (as well as full-descent Aborigines) live in camps. He traces the gradual emergence of efforts to upgrade conditions in the camps, and the role of the Aboriginal Housing Panel and Tangetjira, the campers’ council. His surveys reveal tenure and living conditions and economic status vary fairly markedly between camps. These results will provide a useful benchmark for future comparisons.

The fourth chapter, by Hans Dagmar, is a description of the ongoing process of urbanisation of Aborigines who make up about 21 percent of the total population in the town of Carnarvon, Western Australia. Economic activity in this area has been dominated by work in the pastoral industry but as opportunities here decline the tertiary sector has become the major employment source. For Aboriginal males the shift to tertiary employment in town has been hard to make because of a traditional attachment to station work, and because of the necessity to learn new skills suited to urban work. Dagmar analyses income and expenditure patterns and shows how small and fragile are the margins of economic survival for these Aboriginal communities in the white man’s economy.

Each of the four studies is thorough and illuminating. Together they present reiterated evidence of the lack of employment opportunities, scarcity of suitable housing, difficulties of health and education, racial prejudice and economic
exploitation which face Aboriginal communities in small towns. Current conditions of economic recession only aggravate an already disadvantaged position. This volume, and the rest of the series, will be required reading for all those interested in the contemporary Aboriginal condition.

MARION W. WARD CANBERRA


The present volume of essays, choreographed by Janice Reid into a related series of themes, is a refreshing addition to the growing literature on Aboriginal health. It should be read widely, particularly by those who have an involvement in health care delivery to Aborigines.

The first section reviews some of the contemporary health problems of Aborigines. Jack Waterford draws extensively on his experience whilst travelling with the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program team and many of the statistics he quotes are from the 1980 report prepared when the team had completed its survey of some 60,000 Aborigines in all parts of Australia. Waterford stresses the conclusion, reached by many who have been concerned with Aboriginal health in recent years, that a number of the diseases afflicting Aborigines, particularly those in the younger age-groups which have very high morbidity rates, will disappear only when there is a real change to Aboriginal living conditions.

Gillian Cowlishaw's chapter on family planning reviews extensively other reports on factors affecting reproductive performance, both for Aborigines and for peoples in other parts of the world. Unfortunately she does not relate these directly to her experience with Aboriginal communities except superficially. By contrast Annette Hamilton's study of child-health and child-care at Mimili, in north-western South Australia, highlights some of the factors in the physical environment and the complex of economic and social factors which form the background against which the development of the child must be viewed. She concludes that means must be found for improving the health of children if there is to be adequate Aboriginal development in the future.

A quite different problem is addressed by Maggie Brady and Rodney Morice. Many reports have appeared in the press about petrol-sniffing at various Aboriginal settlements but little attempt has been made to determine either the true extent, harmful effect or causes of this practice. Brady and Morice suggest that the history of the Yalata settlement is part of the explanation for excitement-seeking behaviour on the part of young people; they point to the failure so far of intervention strategies attempted at Yalata and elsewhere.

The second theme of the book is concerned with analysing information on traditional Aboriginal health systems. Betty Meehan gives a fascinating account of the food collecting and preparing activities of an outstation group living at the mouth of the Blythe River in Arnhem Land. She emphasises that the people who moved from Maningrida back to their own territory have benefited not only by having access to the rich variety of traditional foods, but are also healthier and happier because they now control their own well-being and can think rationally about the direction in which they wish to go in the future. The chapter on bush medicines by Neville Scarlett, Neville White and Janice Reid is complementary to that by Betty Meehan.
The main part of the chapter is a valuable analysis of the medicinal use of various plants in the area. They suggest that the introduction of modern drugs provided by health centres has resulted in a reduction in recourse to traditional herbal remedies, although in many instances people will try both as an insurance against failure.

Catherine Berndt's discussion of traditional concepts of sickness and health based on her own experiences in Arnhem Land is important for a better understanding of the way in which Aboriginal people think about disease and treatment. Traditional healers, at least in western Arnhem Land, were resorted to when ordinary remedies were believed to be of no avail. They derived their power from the spirit world and special men could have a large or small amount of such power: some women also had power though of a more limited kind. Yet new diseases, such as leprosy, tuberculosis, or influenza, introduced after contact with Europeans or Malays, were recognised as beyond the power of the traditional healer.

The need to view health against a wider community setting is argued forcibly by David Biernoff. He challenges the western psychiatric interpretation of aberrant behaviour and argues that only through an in-depth study of the culture of a particular community is it possible to understand what is aberrant behaviour in that context and to appreciate how the people in that community can cope with the 'deviant' individual.

The final theme of the book is the most important, but also the most disappointing. Medical strategies of change imply a discussion of new approaches to the problem of bringing the health status of Aborigines up to the levels of the rest of the community. The two chapters dealing with this theme are very different. Diane Bell, using her experience of the desert community at Warrabri discusses the important role which women played in the past in maintaining health and passing on instructions about health care. Now, with the aggregation into larger communities and the imposition of another value system, their role has been diminished. But Bell believes women still have an important function in trying to interpret the changes taking place at present and providing some cohesiveness to the social structure.

Myrna Tonkinson deals also with a desert community now concentrated at Jigalong in Western Australia. Her analysis is pragmatic, as is the behaviour of the people she observed. They make use of the medical care provided by the white medical staff but they also use the traditional healers and/or home remedies, depending on the type of illness and also the circumstances at the time. She concludes that the Aborigines at Jigalong attempt to utilise fully all the medical resources available to them. Further, she urges that there is a need, not only for an improvement in social conditions, but also for the white doctors and nurses to improve their communication with their Aboriginal patients and to understand the basic ideas and values of the society to which their patients belong.

*Body, Land and Spirit* is a book which, as I remarked at the beginning of this review, should be read by everyone who is concerned about, or involved in, the delivery of health care to Aborigines; but there are some important omissions. The various contributors, with one exception, project their anthropological training onto the problem of health in Aboriginal communities. The communities where they have gained their experience are in the remoter and more traditional parts of the country. There is nothing at all about the health of Aborigines who work on rural properties or who live in the fringe communities of country towns or in the centres and suburbs of our large cities. Another gap is in the absence of any assessment of the work of one of the Aboriginal Medical Services. Some of these have been operating for ten years and it is time we began to take stock objectively of the impact they have made on the health of the communities they serve.
Finally, throughout the book there is implied criticism of white medical staff and the imposition of the values of western medicine on people with quite different values. Nearly all the contributors stress the need for improvement in the social fabric of Aboriginal life, including the physical environment of Aboriginal communities. Many white doctors and nurses are well aware that their work is mainly palliative and that improved social conditions would eliminate many of the diseases with which they now try to cope. However, as in the wider community, they will still be needed for their palliative remedies. These services can be applied with understanding and sympathy and, as Myrna Tonkinson has shown, Aborigines will make use of these services when they perceive that they need them. If this book helps to increase understanding and sympathy it will indeed have performed a valuable service.

R.L. KIRK AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


All but one of the contributions to this volume published to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the journal *Mankind* deal with aspects of the history of Australian anthropology. The exception is a paper by Hinton and McCall on the recent expansion in the publication of anthropological journals in Australia. Of the five historical papers, three deal directly with the study of Aborigines. Ronald Berndt provides a personal account of the changing face of Aboriginal studies from the 1930s to the early 1970s. He has elsewhere provided other views of the development of Aboriginal studies as one centrally involved in the process; later historians will undoubtedly find his views useful in assessing the history of Aboriginal studies in the light of other documentary sources. Newton presents a text of an interview with Arthur Capell concerning his research into aspects of Aboriginal linguistics. Unfortunately Newton, though providing a few notes, could have made more of his task as editor. Most of his notes are brief, the text is anecdotal and no attempt is made to provide a proper account of Capell's role in the development of the study of Aboriginal linguistics. McCarthy's paper on anthropology in Museums is competent; it is a pity that he did not present a more detailed personal account of the subject as he has been a central figure in the development of museum anthropology in Australia. No doubt he has fascinating tales to tell.

The two remaining papers in the volume consist of an introductory article by McCall and a longer piece on anthropology in Australia by Annette Hamilton. Both articles lack depth. Hamilton's paper is disappointing in its judgements on the nature of anthropology and the work of anthropologists which appear to be based on very little evidence. McCall's article contains a number of errors in the spelling of names. Both authors neglect the extremely interesting work of Mulvaney on the history of anthropology in Australia, particularly his general overviews, his detailed work on A.W. Howitt and his preliminary comments on W.B. Spencer.

It is a pity that this celebration of the publication of a major anthropological journal in Australia has been so poorly served, especially by younger Australian anthropologists. The history of Australian anthropology, the development of Aboriginal studies which was pioneered by anthropologists, and the institutional
roles of anthropology in Australia are fascinating subjects. But it will require more solid research and a better appreciation of the past than is exhibited in this volume before such a history can be achieved.

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Carmel Schrire's publication *The Alligator Rivers: prehistory and ecology in Western Arnhem Land* marks the first major monograph to appear on the archaeology of the East Alligator River region, which is one of the most intensively investigated in Australian prehistoric research. The research for the work was principally carried out between 1964 and 1967 as part of a doctoral thesis, which Schrire has updated with the addition of new chapters extending the historical and environmental background, and included her present views of the interpretation of the archaeological evidence from the original work.

The first three chapters serve as general introduction, covering landform, ecology, early ethnographic contact, the background to her earlier research, methods and techniques. These chapters are a very usable summary and serve as a good introduction to the archaeology of the area. The main body of the monograph is devoted to reports on five sites excavated in the 1960s: Paribari (Padypadiy), Malangangerr, Nawamoyn and Jimeri (Tymede) I and II. Although these detailed and well illustrated reports will provide prehistorians with much easier access to the finds from important sites, their specialised nature will probably be of limited interest to the more general reader. The concluding chapter discusses the evidence for environmental change; the nature of the early and late stone industries; the relation of the Arnhem Land sites to those of Australia, New Guinea and Asia; and finally the implications of Schrire's results for some current theories on the origins and identity of Early Australians.

The two pieces of research which contribute to this volume, separated by over twelve years, present in Schrire's words an 'uneasy marriage', as both her interests and the intellectual climate in which the research was carried out have changed in the intervening years. Schrire's initial 'culture history' approach to her research, which aimed at the selection of sites with substantial stratigraphic depth, was successful in investigating sites which at their time of excavation proved the earliest dated in Australia and produced the world's oldest examples of edge-ground axes. More importantly, it established a series of major questions about Western Arnhem Land prehistory which are again addressed in this work.

These questions centre on the interpretation of the variation between two groups of sites which, although contemporary and separated by less than twenty kilometres, have very different remains. The 'plain' sites (Paribari, Malangangerr and Nawamoyn), as Schrire calls them, are on the edge of the flood plains of the East Alligator River. The second group, the 'plateau' sites (Jimeri I & II) are in a valley of the Arnhem Land escarpment. During the period of occupation, the plains, (which were up to three hundred kilometres from the sea) have changed from a woodland to an estuarine, to a fresh water environment. The material remains in the 'plain' sites reflect these changes, along with the broader two phase technological sequence which is also evident in the 'plateau' sites.
The changes in Schrire’s interpretation of the differences between her ‘plain’ sites and ‘plateau’ sites have reflected the changes in the focus of prehistoric research in Australia. Initially the dichotomy between the two groups of sites was emphasised and seen as the product of two distinct cultural groups, which exploited the ‘plateau’ and ‘plain’ environments with separate economies, exchanging resources between them. This view was modified in 1969 in a paper with Nicolas Peterson, suggesting that the variation between these sites was a result of the differences in economy and technology of a single cultural group moving between the ‘plain’ and ‘plateau’ in response to seasonal change. Although Schrire believes that the seasonal use of ‘plateau’ and ‘plain’ resources is still valid as a general model, she argues that it does not explain the complex intra and intersite variation in both areas. The rapid and extensive environmental changes which have occurred over the last 6,000 years in the region, are seen as playing a greater role in determining the resource exploitation patterns documented in the sites, and in explaining the variation in the appearance of new resources in the record. Evidence of the present Aboriginal exploitation of the region also confirms Schrire’s less deterministic interpretation of the evidence.

There are, however, at least two areas in which her interpretations can be questioned: the suggestion of recent environmental change in the upper levels of the ‘plain’ sites, and the equation of essentially technological variables with population ‘identity’.

Schrire shows some inconsistency in interpreting the later appearance of fresh water mussel shells in the upper levels of middens in the ‘plain’ sites. In discussing this appearance at Paribari (p.52) she concludes that it indicates a ‘real dietary change’. This accords well with the suggestion that the change from estuarine to the freshwater conditions seen in the region today may have been very recent. In the conclusion (p.234) she argues, however, that fresh water species would have been available for the last 6,000 years and that preservational factors have destroyed their presence in the lower levels. Subsequently, she argues that the recent introduction of the buffalo is responsible for the destruction of estuarine mangroves in the area and the present freshwater conditions. This is an unconventional view of the damage caused by buffalo which are generally seen as having the opposite effect. By cutting swim channels into the freshwater swamps, buffalo allow tidally affected rivers to back-up into the swamps increasing their salinity. Schrire’s suggestion that this is not occurring in the East Alligator river region requires much more supportive evidence than is provided in this publication.

Schrire’s continued interest in ‘culture history’ is evident in her discussion on the ‘identity’ of the early Arnhem Landers. The suggestion that these people were a population of ‘gracile’ Homo sapiens who entered Greater Australia some 20,000 years after the arrival of their more robust predecessors, were the makers of the Core Tool and Scaper Industry and probably stemmed originally from China and Japan, should be approached with some caution. Although she argues that the difference in industries between the ‘plateau’ and ‘plain’ sites can not be seen as reflecting any of the present cultural or population divisions and did not do so in the past, Schrire seems to suggest that such connections can be made on a much larger scale.

The evidence upon which this is made is tenuous on at least two grounds. Firstly, it is questionable whether the paleoanthropological evidence demonstrates the existence of two ‘totally distinct’ groups as clearly as the above suggestion maintains. The earliest published evidence for ‘gracile’ Homo sapiens in Australia are the Lake Mungo remains dated between 25 and 30,000 years BP. No comparable populations
have yet been found in Arnhem Land sites. Secondly, although the Mungo remains are associated with a Core Tool and Scraper industry, similar to that which Schrire identifies in the Arnhem Land sites, the southern industry is not associated with edge-ground axes. These do not appear in southern Australia for a further 10-15,000 years. The Arnhem Land axes, which are one of the major pieces of evidence for a technological connection between Australia and the earlier axe making industries of Asia, do not therefore support connections between distinct early populations and industries in Australia itself. Although the evidence certainly suggests long standing cultural links between Australia, New Guinea and Asia, the connection of specific populations with specific technologies is extremely doubtful over such large spans of space and time.

This work is complex to review, as it maintains a claim as both an historical document, through the publication of the site reports and as a contemporary work via Schrire's recent research. From an historical perspective the publication of the site reports can be seen as the more valuable part of the publication. Its success as a contemporary work, by necessity, depends largely on the initial research design.

Schrire's work in the East Alligator region was aimed at establishing the antiquity of occupation, and providing a cultural sequence. This can now be seen as limited in its ability to answer the more detailed questions which her early work helped to frame. The desirability of updating the original thesis for publication has been diminished by these limits, which have reduced the ability of this work to add new information and the scope of its re-interpretation. For example, the sites excavated are not representative of all the archaeological sites in the region, only of those with deep deposits. Investigation of other site types, combined with further environmental research, would be necessary for Schrire to fully investigate the region in terms of her new interest in human ecology. Schrire has also presented the original analysis of the stone industries without the extensive revision which new approaches to stone industries over the last decade would have facilitated. Both these tasks would be a major undertaking and were not possible in the year which was available for the preparation of this work. Given these limitations, it may be argued that it would have been more in keeping with the now historic nature of Schrire's original PhD work, for it to have been published in its own right as an important pioneering piece of research.

BARRY CUNDY

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Its slightly punning title may promise more than this report of an archaeological excavation actually delivers. The sub-title, 'Art and archaeology in the Laura region', narrows down the focus somewhat and when one starts reading the close-up study of Early Man Shelter near Laura in Northern Queensland is revealed. The shelter is simply one of hundreds discovered in the last two decades by Captain Percy Trezise, amateur painter, genial Svengali of Aboriginal transitional art, indefatigable conservationist and pilot extraordinary. In 1974 Rosenfeld and her colleagues carried out excavations and analysis of not just the artefactual material but the rock-art of Early Man Shelter and the surrounding area. In the shelter a combination
of painted and pecked symbols clearly continued below the observable floor of the
cave. In contrast to the rock-art of many other regions of the world one of the major
problems in Australia has been to discover evidence for the reliable absolute dating of
such art. Thus at Early Man the comparatively rare chance was given to date in
absolute terms the rock-art and relate it to changes not only in stylistical terms but the
contemporary material culture of the prehistoric occupants of the shelter.

In 1964 Professor Richard Wright had excavated a large rock shelter which he
named after the Laura township, though it is now known as Mushroom Rock Shelter.
Here unfortunately the site's rich painted rock art could not be related to its
obviously long period of human occupation. Trezise's discovery in 1972 of Early Man
Shelter with its engravings, suggestive again of considerable antiquity, was reason
enough for detailed investigation of the site's art and archaeology.

Since many, nay most, readers of Aboriginal History will not be too interested in
the minutiae of artefactual analysis, that this is presented in a clearly illustrated but
somewhat abbreviated form will not be a matter of lasting concern. Briefly, insofar as
definite stone 'artefact types' (= prehistory-speak for distinctive tool forms which
may or may not have been so regarded by their makers) go, there seems to have been
an earlier tradition of larger implements with roughly worked cutting edges associated
with edge-ground axes. There was a more recent 'industry' of identifiable small flake
implements. This technological change some dozen radio-carbon estimations indicate,
occurring about 5000 years ago during the shelter's 15,500 year history. This industrial
change, part of what seems to have been nearly an Australia-wide phenomenon, was
also noted at Mushroom Rock. It may possibly be associated with a stylistic change
from pecked linear designs to those produced by shallow pounding or executed in
paint. Although clearly the most recent phase of Early Man's art history (the painted
figures of birds and stylised humans) is unfortunately here restricted to a single figure
taken from a photogrammetric survey (published by Clouten originally in Australian
Institute of Aboriginal Studies Newsletter 7 (1977) pp.54-59), Rosenfeld's discussion
of the so far uniquely datable earlier art of Early Man, will I think, remain the report's
lasting interest. Thus, because of the dated archaeological layers covering the
extensive pecked frieze of what are termed pits, grids, rounded enclosures and
tridents (the latter being called 'bird tracks' by other workers, which raises an
interesting point to which I wish to return by way of conclusion) has a minimum age
of some 13,000 years.

In a detailed comparative study of other examples of engraved rock art in the
general region – which occasionally include indisputable human figures, particularly
on exposures in the Laura River bed – Rosenfeld makes some important comments
on what has until recently been almost accepted doctrine as to the presumed earliest
stages in the development of prehistoric 'art' in Australia. More than ten years ago
Robert Edwards propounded the view that over much of Southern and Central
Australia there was a common archaic style marked by what certainly seemed
unequivocably to be macropod and bird tracks but including also non-figurative and
mainly curvilinear motifs – what more recently Lesley Maynard has referred to as the
'Panaramitee Style'.

That Rosenfeld's detailed regional survey should have produced significant
variations from what is now beginning to be regarded as a much over-simplified picture
is hardly surprising. One does not have to have a background in Old World rock art
studies, as Rosenfeld has, to consider this only to be expected in the context of the
growing evidence for variation in prehistoric Aboriginal culture throughout time. To
comment – though in view of chronological difficulties it remains unproven – that the
figurative Laura River complex and the 'non-figurative' (non-figurative I wonder to whom?) engravings may well be contemporary, seems to me eminent art historical good sense.

Good sense too, but a view that many interested in *Aboriginal History* may find at first unpalatable, is the almost throw-away comment offered by Rosenfeld in the opening pages of this study. In a sentence which is well-worth quoting in full she states:

The question of the extent to which aspects of traditional life are known, practised and valued among the Aboriginal people of the Laura area has important implications well beyond the bounds of archaeology, for current politics and for the further survival of the Aboriginal people themselves as a viable cultural group (p.2).

Rosenfeld goes on to suggest that Percy Trezise's pioneering work in conjunction with Dick Roughsey to collect contemporary traditions associated with the Laura area, while clearly demonstrating the resilience of Aboriginal culture in the face of introduced cultural and sometimes clearly dominating elements, does not necessarily assist the problems of unravelling meaning in its prehistoric art. There is for example growing evidence from not only Queensland but the north-west of Western Australia that contemporary Aboriginal interpretations of prehistoric rock-art sites differ significantly even from those first recorded by European observers.

While this in no way denies the valid claims of Aboriginal society in the twentieth century AD to be guardian over the still extant remains of Aboriginal society in the twentieth century BC, it does (at least in this reviewer's mind) make something of a nonsense of the attitudes of some younger — European — and obviously well-intentioned archaeologists who refuse to publish the results of their prehistoric rock art studies in deference to contemporary Aboriginal groups, groups who in certain cases have quite obviously not even been aware of the existence of such sites.

Equally, to use such terms as Rosenfeld does in her survey as 'figurative' and 'non-figurative' in the context of prehistoric symbols (such as the Laura 'tridents') may be just as partial — in both senses of the word. But then it is a measure of the value of such still-all-too rare detailed rock art studies as *Early Man in North Queensland* that they should raise such far from parochial and controversial problems.

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The *Handbook of Australian languages* provides case studies of particular languages, presented with the intention of being as useful as possible to 'European and Aboriginal school teachers . . . and specialists in other fields such as anthropology and ethnomusicology' (p.5) as well as to professional linguists. The first two volumes contain nine grammatical descriptions (each mentioned below); there is a third and final volume to come.

Both editors have long been concerned to see Australian languages as fully recorded and as widely appreciated as possible; and both have recently and independently published books introducing the languages' general characteristics, each at a different level of specialisation (Dixon 1980, Blake 1981). The *handbook* is a complementary enterprise.
In echoing the title of Franz Boas’s key contribution to American linguistics (part I:1911), the editors pay homage to an ancestral presence and at the same time provoke comparison. Like Boas’s, this Handbook promises ‘sketch grammars’ (p.5). For Boas in America at the beginning of the century, sketches were a principal ‘step in the progress of our knowledge of American languages’. They were short partly through the deliberate exclusion of certain types of material, (e.g. vocabulary, because ‘many vocabularies had been collected’; phonetic details and questions of historical development, as belonging ‘to the next step’ [1911:v]). Dixon and Blake make no such linguistically-based claims for the strategic aptness of their Handbook’s normally shorter ‘sketch-length’ grammars, assuming that where possible more comprehensive ones are preferable, and will follow. The Handbook of Australian languages is modestly offered as a convenient publishing outlet for grammars that are ‘too brief for monographs and too long for most journals’ (p.5). The standardised format for contributions aims simply to ensure the similar presentation of comparable material and roughly comparable overall coverage. This includes background information on the language and its speakers, accounts of its phonology, morphology and syntax, a few pages of illustrative text where possible and either a 500-word vocabulary selected in accordance with a standard list, or, if limited, all the vocabulary known to the writer.

Each of the first two volumes contains different amounts of equally useful kinds of preliminary information. In the very considerable introduction to volume 1, which recapitulates in condensed form some of the themes of the editors’ recent general books (Dixon 1980, Blake 1981), attention is drawn to the way in which ‘languages are dying all over Australia’. The Handbook’s timeliness as a publishing strategem is partly predicated on a correlation between the length of a grammar and the state of health of the language being described: the series is envisaged particularly as an ‘avenue of publication for grammars of dying languages’ as well as for ‘sketch grammars of living languages’ pending fuller studies (p.5). The nine sketches under review lend support to the association of moribund languages with short grammars. Only one (Haviland’s 153-page Guugu Yimidhirr) is of a language with an impressive number of speakers (600). The other languages described have at best a handful, except for Watjarri (Douglas) with about 50 a decade ago.

But in fact languages must be not merely dying but dead (or, to get at the reality behind the metaphor, everyone in a position to transmit them must have died) before scarcity of information can determine in any absolute way the length of a description (Crowley’s 21-page ‘Yaygir’). Even then, woefully inadequate information can be space-consuming to assess. Crowley and Dixon’s ‘Tasmanian’, an object lesson in how to approach poor evidence, could only have benefited from ampler illustration of their procedures. Whenever any kind of fieldwork is possible, the constraints on a grammar’s length are far more complex. Questions of time, money and skill apart, its length will depend most of all on the extent to which speakers or rememberers and linguists can fire and sustain each other’s interests in the project.

Breen says that none of the five people on whose information his ‘Margany and Gunya’ is based ‘found the task of answering questions about a long-disused and half forgotten language congenial’. The reverse is often the case. People who feel that their language will be lost for all time when they die are often particularly interested in opportunities to create a record of it. Haas’s Tunica (1940), which forms the final volume of the Handbook of American Indian languages, grew from the surfacing memories of a single person who had been spoken to by his mother, but had preferred to reply in French. In Australia most of the few lengthy and detailed grammars so
far written have resulted from close collaborations between a linguist and a limited number of elderly people with knowledge of the language.

If I labour the point, it is not because Dixon and Blake are unaware of it (Dixon's own description of Yidiny [1977] is one such grammar); but because their Handbook will not be received just as a welcome experiment in publishing methods, but as a substantive contribution to the study of Australian languages and a model for further work. It would be a pity if the shortness of its sketches were to encourage linguists working on 'dying' language to lower their expectations, or lead them to suppose that working in communities where languages' transmission is more secure will of itself bring more substantial results. An interestingly greater variety of types of linguistic study and methods of fieldwork may be attempted there. Yet it may be more rather than less difficult to find common interests with the community in achieving the undertaking.

This Handbook contributes to 'progress in our knowledge' of Australian languages (to use Boas's phrase) in part because of its non-programmatic nature. The format is flexible enough not to inhibit explanatory discussion of the idiosyncracies of particular languages (startling phonology in Crowley's 'Mpakwithi dialect of Anguthimri'); or the presentation of subsidiary information, such as appendices on earlier writings, or related dialects (Blake's Pitta-Pitta). There is scope for authors to pursue their enthusiasms (suggestive historical speculation in Dixon's 'Warrgamay'); and to relay those of speakers (Buchanan's in story-telling and songs in Eades' 'Gumbaynggir'). The Handbook of Australian languages deserves not to end with the third volume, but to become a continuing series; a handbook so named not only by way of a pious gesture, but for its function as a cumulatively more representative concise guide to Australia's oldest languages.

To close on a matter of presentation of interest to anyone concerned with Aboriginal history: it would be good to see the consistent provision of typeable equivalents to linguistic symbols for 'dying' and 'dead' as well as 'living' languages. Others besides professionally-equipped linguists need to be able to make written references as easily to Aborigines' linguistic past as to their present.

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This work by Judith Wright describes the pastoral invasion of central Queensland. It covers the period between Leichhardt's explorations in 1844 and the end of the century. Wright introduces the subject with a long exposition which outlines the pastoral expansion into south-eastern Australia generally to about 1850. This introduction occupies three chapters, and is a useful commentary on what follows.
Since, though, this is one of the few areas and periods in Australia for which reasonable descriptions of race relations in the pastoral industry already exist, it seems a little long.

The next three chapters describe the early pastoral expansion north of the Dawson, and concern in part the exploits of the curious Frederick Walker, one time leader of the Native Police. In this section of the book, a sub-theme emerges: the physical destruction of the country. The cessation of the Aborigines’ annual burning, the effects of over-grazing, and the general ignorance of the long-term damage caused by pastoralism changed the country utterly in two generations. Prickly-pear, spear-grass, lancewood and rosewood invaded the Eucalyptus forests. Dense scrub impeded men and animals in 1880 in a manner unimagined in the first, optimistic years of the pastoral invasion.

At chapter 7, the narrative turns to the second theme of the book — an account of the career of the squatter Albert Wright. He first managed ‘Avon Downs’ Station, in Jangga country (inland from Mackay), and after 1868, ‘Nulalbin’ Station, in Wadja country, (inland and south-east of Rockhampton). His fortunes and misfortunes are followed until his death by pneumonia in 1890, the onset of which was hastened by years of financial strain and hard physical labour. Albert (for so Judith Wright calls him instead of the more objective Wright), followed the career of a typical Queensland nineteenth century pastoralist. He was a self-made man, who drove himself (at cost to himself and his family) desperately hard. Despite his labours, he died in debt, and today none of his descendants own land in the region. From this point the description of Albert’s wrestles with his creditors, cattle disease and the seasons largely takes the place of the narrative of his relations with the Aboriginal station and bush people of ‘Nulalbin’. The detailed treatment of Albert comes a little unexpectedly, since it appears in the first half of the book that race relations is to be the theme of the rest.

The shift in focus from a general survey to a description of the life of a single individual runs the risk of too close an identification with his interests. It is in the description of Albert’s ‘Nulalbin’ years that this work resembles somewhat Margaret Kiddle’s powerful *Men of Yesterday*. At several points this danger is manifest. Two Aboriginal stockmen are referred to as ‘blackboys’. An Aboriginal, Tony, who stayed behind at a pub in Rockhampton, is described as a ‘deserter’. These are minor slips. Wright does not attempt to justify Albert’s actions, but sometimes her commentary on some of them seems a little bland:

But on Avon Downs Fred [the manger] was in trouble. The cattle were so wild that horsemen could not get near them, and the Janggawere driving them off into the scrubs and spearing some. He had too few stockmen to hope to get a good draft for the autumn and finish his branding. Albert, as the senior partner, must write and ask for more visits from the Native Police.

Wright’s difficulty is that her principal source for this period is Albert’s diary, which deals with a vast number of subjects besides Aborigines. Wright’s comments on daily relations between Albert and the Wadja are (evidently like Albert’s) numerous, but not very informative. This lack of local records is often a problem for historians of race-relations. What can be said if there are no local sources? One answer lies in the use of source material elsewhere in Australia, where the pastoral invasion occurred so late that Aboriginal oral accounts have survived. Such records indicate that frequently the first decade after the white occupation was a ferment. There was constant and urgent debate among Aborigines over whether, and on what terms, there should be participation in station life. It appears that many older people, after
debate, stayed in the bush, and obtained the valued European possessions through their kinfolk. Some younger people who stayed or worked at the stations had a different set of problems, philosophical as well as physical, to which there were no certain answers. At such periods all was change, whether perceived by the pastoralists or not. I would like to know a little more about the Wadja in, say, the 1870s. How had society changed? How did the community see the pastoralists? At what point, if at all, did the Wadja believe that their lives had changed irrevocably? Any such discussion must of course be speculative, but it is worth the trying, and a very close reading of all the available local sources can often throw up a surprising number of hints from which inferences can be made. Though the actual description of how the sway of the pastoralists in Australia came to be established is still very far from complete, in my view the historian of race relations can no longer be content with its narrative alone. Any study will be the more penetrating by the attempted analysis of the changes in organisation and perception of both sides, not just one side, of the frontier.

In the task which Wright sets herself, she succeeds admirably. Her spare, unadorned prose is a model of good writing. She allows herself no polemical passages. Readers have to work for themselves to follow her argument, and it is only in the closing chapters, and even then only by implication, that the separate themes are united. The cry for the dead is not only for the Aborigines, but for the country too, both brought to destruction by the greed and stupidity of the pastoralists. For at the end of the century, millions of acres stood empty, alienated not only legally but morally. The aching sense of loss of something precious is made more poignant by the knowledge that the agents of destruction were for the most part squatters who ultimately failed to hold the country they had won at such terrible cost.

Wright concludes with the melancholy reflection, made the more powerful by the lack of such reflection earlier, that through the continuing operation of repressive legislation, 'perhaps none of the descendants of the Wadja, if any remain, have seen the country that once was theirs'. This final paragraph is a reminder to those who argue (quite correctly) that Aboriginality was not and is not fixed, but lives and changes. That Aborigines now, or in the future may, identify as Wadja and live within the traditional boundaries, cannot change the central fact of the destruction of one particular kind of Aboriginality, which once existed, and now is extinguished forever.

PETER READ


This is a sombre book, but worth reading for those who wish to understand the continuing poor state of race relations in Queensland. It tells how the population of the Jiman Aborigines of the Upper Dawson River declined within twenty years, from several hundreds living in well-watered country to a poor remnant. A Nest of Hornets serves as a companion volume to Judith Wright's The Cry for the Dead, with which it shares many characters and incidents, though seen from a different viewpoint. Wright tells of the virtual disappearance of the Wadja Aborigines, Gordon Reid tells an even more violent story of the near extermination of their neighbours, the Jiman.
These accounts and Reynolds' book *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1981) should lay to rest once and for all the tendency among previous historians to suggest that the Aborigines gave up their lands and livelihood with little resistance. Reid reveals that on the Dawson River neither side was peaceable nor without a degree of violence and cruelty. Moreover, to use today's jargon, there was an escalation of violence and cruelty. The Jiman had suffered from 'dispersal', a euphemism for getting rid of Aborigines by fair means or foul. Not only had they suffered murder by gun and by poison, but in addition the women had suffered sexual abuse. Using the method of divide and rule the government (still from Sydney until 1859) had set up the Native Police Force, recruiting Aborigines from distant areas. There was mutual hostility and fear between these recruits and the local Aborigines, feelings which were encouraged by the European officers, whom Reid reveals as unscrupulous and often unreliable. Some of the most flagrant acts of cruelty, including rape, were perpetrated by the Aboriginal members of this force.

White settlement began in Jiman country in 1847 after Leichhardt's return from exploring the district, with good reports of its potentialities. The first contacts were friendly, but conflict arose as the squatters occupied more and more land. The Jiman could pursue three courses: they could become servants and beggars on the stations; they could retire to the less fertile margins of their land, not yet occupied by the settlers; or they could resist the invasion and kill some of the newcomers in the hope of scaring all of them away. They used all three of these options, with those who were employed on the stations combining with those who had retired to the margins when attacks were made on the settlers. The answer of the settlers was not to retire but to employ more and more violence, by arming themselves more heavily and combining with the Native Police in wholesale killing of all Aborigines whether responsible or not, wiping out peaceful groups of men, women and children.

A brief resume is in order here of the events at Hornet Bank on the night of 27 October 1857. This station was founded by Andrew Scott in 1853 and in 1854 he made John Fraser his manager. John Fraser died in 1856 and the management passed to his oldest son William, who in turn left his next oldest brother in charge while he was occupied in a carrier business. On the night in question the station homestead was occupied by the widowed Mrs Fraser, eight of her children and a tutor; two shepherds slept in an outbuilding. At dawn a group of Aboriginal men — estimated to number a hundred — descended on the homestead and slaughtered three of the sons and the tutor, then raped and killed Mrs Fraser and two of her daughters, aged 19 and 11, and killed two younger children. As the two shepherds emerged from their hut they too were murdered. One son, Sylvester, aged 14, had fallen under his bed after being hit with a club and escaped to give the alarm. It is not surprising that he and his oldest brother William swore vengeance and were active in the indiscriminate retribution that followed. (William alone was credited with taking one hundred Aboriginal lives.) The surrounding settlers formed vigilante bands and together with a troop of Native Police systematically shot all the Aborigines they could track down for many miles in all directions. Though some of these had in their possession goods pillaged from Hornet Bank, others had had nothing to do with the affair. Reynolds (*Other side of the frontier* p.100) reckons that in Queensland ten Aborigines were slain for every European killed by Aborigines. Here the toll of vengeance was even greater.

It is not entirely clear why Hornet Bank was chosen for this planned and organised massacre by the Jiman. Possible reasons are that it was an isolated station, and that it was unprepared for such an attack. The most likely reason is that the Fraser brothers had imperilled their own lives, and those of the rest of their family, by their ill-treatment of Aboriginal women.
Reid has an interesting suggestion for the reason why Aboriginal retaliation met such violent retribution in the Queensland of the nineteenth century. He explains that the Aborigines had a system of justice in which the related group of a murdered man itself exacted a strictly controlled vengeance by taking a life for a life (even though the life taken need not be that of the actual murderer). The Europeans were accustomed to a quite different system in which punishment was operated by the state. On the frontier, without their customary legal system, Europeans followed the Aboriginal system and exacted their own revenge, but without the restraints that kept Aboriginal retribution within strict limits. This seems to me a tenable hypothesis, but alternatively, while reading the shocking story of the Hornet Bank massacre and its consequences, one could come to believe that the Queensland settlers were willing to tolerate the loss of a few of their fellows because this gave them an excuse to pursue their ultimate aim of wiping the Aborigines off the face of the earth — an aim they almost achieved. It should be noted, however, that this harsh judgment does not apply to all the settlers, for a small minority put high value on the lives of Aborigines and, despite the opinion of their neighbours, continued to treat them as fellow human beings.

Reid presents a meticulous and interesting account of the Hornet Bank massacre and its sequel. However, I found the details hard to follow, because of the multiplicity of names of settlers and their stations, impossible to keep in mind unless the reader is a Mastermind winner. This difficulty is compounded by the lack of an index. A list of the settlers and their stations, with their distance and direction from Hornet Bank, would have been of great assistance in following the actions of the characters.

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REFERENCES

The Other Side of the Frontier by Henry Reynolds. History Department, James Cook University, Townsville 1981 and Ringwood 1982.


Historians of Aboriginal Australians cannot avoid the need to know about the total situation within which their particular concerns are set. However the standard histories of the continent, of which there are now so many, are remarkably silent on those parts of Australia where most Aborigines live. Even for non-Aboriginal matters, the neglect by historians of the third of the country lying in the tropics is very striking.

It is against such a background that this straightforward, general history of the Northern Territory is so much to be welcomed. It does not pretend to be original in detail, but it draws together and reports other specialised research work, including several papers by Dr Powell himself. There is a lot to get through in some 300 pages of text, but the coverage of what is reasonably knowable is remarkably complete. It ranges from a sketch of the geological and prehistoric past, through Dutch exploration, British settlements, the South Australian occupation, the Commonwealth administration earlier this century, an excellent chapter on World War II, and recent events up to 1981. The many illustrations are carefully chosen to help the text.
Dr Powell has a gift for pithy summary and his style is splendidly readable. His publishers have provided for a system of referencing that does not disturb the flow of the text, yet is easy to use, precise, and totally appropriate to the nature of the book. With such scattered and diverse sources, it is inevitable that recourse will often be made to secondary discussions of them, but the range of references to unpublished theses, oral accounts and official publications is most impressive.

In the present state of Northern Territory history and for those wanting to use the book to set the context of their particular concerns, there is much to be said for the essentially narrative structure of the work and the frequent reference to external factors impinging on the Territory, whether they be the worries of London politicians, the wars of Europe or the political uncertainties of the American beef market. Yet I would have preferred a little more attention being given to the texture of life in the Territory and to an analysis of the ideas in Territorians' heads. 'Tropical fatigue', the call of 'the Never-Never' and the unquenchable enthusiasm for 'northern development' require subtle untangling — and perhaps a different sort of book.

Any general history has problems weaving disparate threads together and in any Australian history, still more that of the Territory, there is the challenge of integrating the experience of Aborigines and other non-European groups into the overall account. Here, these groups are given, if not the attention they might deserve to meet the interests of some readers, at least as much as reasonably possible given the state of current research. Again and again, the Aboriginal view is remembered, as in the account of Stuart's journeys, and occasional individuals, such as Neinmil at Port Essington, flit briefly across the stage. Where his sources allow, Dr Powell sees beyond the generality of Aborigines to the local group involved in some issue. It is very hard to do more. Even when the will is there, it is not easy to shift the focus away from the well-documented concerns of government. Occasionally Dr Powell seems happier with the official line than imagining alternative possibilities. For example, I doubt that many readers of this journal will be convinced by his defence of the attempt to frustrate the Kenbi land claim. Yet he does so much better than most historians (and others) in his discussion of such issues that it seems churlish to cavil.

Indeed, it is just the fairly orthodox 'good sense' of the book as a whole which make it so valuable at this stage of understanding the Territory's history. Those wishing to promote revisionist views can be confident that they have here an accurate account of what they have to overturn. Those working on issues of detail can see how their conclusions confirm or conflict with orthodoxy.

People already interested in the Northern Territory will need no recommendation to buy this book, and it will clearly serve as the standard work on its subject for some time to come. It should also be read by those primarily concerned with other parts of Australia. Northern Territory history is not just a variation of the story elsewhere on the continent, but is, in many ways, more diverse. It also raises very clearly the problem of how to define success and failure. It is very hard to maintain a simple Whig confidence here, which is one reason why history is so important in the north. Perhaps that is a lesson for both 'black' and 'white'.

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BOOK REVIEWS


Although there were a number of missionaries from the British Isles working in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century it is an interesting comment on the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic tradition that so many missionaries to the Aborigines came from continental Europe. German Gossner and Basle trained men pioneered Aboriginal missions in Queensland, Moravians worked in Victoria and Queensland, and German Lutherans in South Australia. Among the Catholics, Italian Passionists worked in Queensland, Austrian Jesuits in South Australia and Spanish Benedictines in Western Australia. George Russo has written a masterly biography of Rosendo Salvado (1814-1900), the real founder of the Benedictine monastery and mission at New Norcia. The narrative, though sometimes verbose, is eminently readable and the volume should be regarded as a companion to Salvado’s own account, *Memorie Storiche dell’ Australia* (Rome 1851), translated into English by Father E.J. Stormon in 1977.

The first half of Russo’s book is a biographical portrait of Salvado set in the political, social and religious context of Western Australia and Europe while the second half concentrates on the Aboriginal mission detailing Salvado’s policy and instancing his successes and failures. While Russo’s research has been thorough and he has aimed at an impartial account, one feels that he has allowed his own view of twentieth century Catholicism to guide his hand. He seems to play down the nobility of Salvado’s ancestry (made much of by earlier biographers) and gives inadequate indication of the intensity of feeling and the seriousness of the rift between the Benedictines and Bishop Brady so graphically portrayed by Professor Garrad in his article on ‘New Norcia and the Great Schism of Perth’ (*Journal of Religious History*, VIII [1974-5]:49-74). Yet these two matters need to be explored in order to understand fully Salvado and his place in the story of Catholic missions to the Aborigines.

Russo is one of the few writers who does not use the word noble in relation to Salvado’s family. Indeed it is not clear where Russo places Salvado’s parents in the social hierarchy. It is as if he hoped his readers would assume an affluent middle class background understandable to most Australians. Yet it was Salvado’s patrician background, his membership of the universal noblesse, which enabled him to be so successful in Western Australia. With the courtliness of an ancient Celtic saint and the devotion and musical talents of a self-effacing Albert Schweitzer, Salvado was warmly received by Perth society, was accepted by the leading pastoral families, and had the friendship of at least two governors one of whom was a Catholic ‘gentleman’ like himself. Salvado and his colleague Bishop Serra, who was a Spanish knight, could deal with officials and had entree to circles denied to Methodist missionaries or peasant Irish priests. This separated the Spaniards from the majority of missionaries of the nineteenth century.

The cleavage between the Spanish Benedictines and Bishop Brady highlighted the differences between a cultured cosmopolitan order and an insular priesthood smarting under discrimination. Irishmen did not make good or willing missionaries to the Aborigines. If Brady had a vision for the work, the Irish priests he appointed failed, and he himself was pessimistic. Similarly in South Australia the Jesuits were unable to persuade their Irish priests to undertake a mission and Austrian Jesuits had to be brought in. It was as if Irishmen felt insecure in the presence of a people who seemed to be placed in a social position inferior to themselves. Discrimination seemed to breed discrimination.
The code of the nobleman emphasised the connection between status and responsibility. It did not recognise the artificial class barriers so important to the middle and lower orders. Salvado applied that code to his Aboriginal parishioners, treating everyone with equal respect.

Russo seems to infer that the Aborigines of the Victoria Plains were 'superior' to those of other parts but this can be taken as a reflection of bias. If Europeans were well disposed they started off with the assumptions that the local Aborigines had the right potential and they tended to get the response they were looking for. The other attitude, which still persists in many rural centres, is that Aborigines elsewhere might be successful at what they take up but that the local Aborigines are always an exception, intellectually inferior and incapable of social advancement. Salvado and his colleagues did not doubt the capabilities and potentials of those brought into 'civilisation'.

Perhaps the most pathetic episode in the story of the New Norcia mission is the history of the two Aboriginal novices Francis Conaci and John Diririma who accompanied Salvado to Rome and spent over five years in Europe. Conaci died in Rome and Diririma died shortly after returning to Western Australia in 1855. Russo seems to think their deaths inevitable. Yet reading between the lines one gets the impression that the rapport between the Bishop and his students was so great that he failed to see that they were doing things for him rather than because of a straight out vocational choice. They told him what they believed he wanted to hear. It is likely that if they had returned to Australia with him in 1852 they would have lived.

Too much can be made of the 'uniqueness' of the Benedictine experiment. It was certainly the most successful mission in Western Australia in the nineteenth century and it was also successful in the general Australian context, but it held this position largely because it did not lose all its Aboriginal population to big towns as happened in many of the early east coast missions. Nor was Salvado unique in his hope that Aborigines could become small landed proprietors. This was also a view held by the Protestant missionaries such as L.E. Threlkeld of Lake Macquarie. That Aborigines should work with livestock was encouraged by other missions. Indeed when Salvado was accused of making New Norcia 'a sheep and cattle mission' and the Benedictines were portrayed as shepherds of sheep rather than shepherds of souls (pp.237-8) in the 1870s, these charges were but an echo of similar charges against earlier Protestant missionaries in the east.

In the last analysis it was not policies which were important but the quality of the relationship between men. It was the missionary who could overcome his squeamish dislike of insect larvae or eat damper made with masticated flour who won respect and held an Aboriginal community together. Such men as Salvado rarely recognise the rarity of their own quality; they expect others to behave and think as themselves, particularly those sharing the same vocation. But Salvado at least understood this problem. He emerges as a complex and rounded character equally at home at the colonial soiree displaying his musical gifts for his own charity or travelling for days with an orphan child on his shoulders. But when Dr Parry, the Anglican Bishop of Perth, told him that he was proposing a mission on similar lines in October 1878, Salvado was not impressed: 'Where could he get the humble, hard-working and dedicated men necessary for such an enterprise?' (p.218). A monastic order where patrician and peasant were made equal provided that hope.

The integrating theme of this valuable and timely book is reflected in its subtitle: Aboriginal reactions to European invasion and oppression were rarely those of passive fatalists but of a people with an abiding sense of injustice. Their anger impelled them into conflict, first in the form of guerilla warfare and since then in more subtle but equally determined ways. In their continuing quest for justice, the Aborigines have employed successfully many and varied strategies of resistance in the assertion of their human rights and their distinctive identity. The author deals authoritatively with both historical and contemporary developments and is highly successful in conveying the complexity of factors contributing to the present woeful status of Aborigines in Australian society and the contemporary political realities that perpetuate inequality and injustice. This book for the most part achieves a nice balance between indignation and objectivity in its tone, and I recommend it highly as a text for high school and tertiary courses with Aborigines as their subject matter.

Interpretive summaries are provided of a wide range of subjects: policy development and change, health, economy and employment, legal constraints, media influences, and the changing content of children's literature. These are interspersed with more detailed case-study material; for instance, there are excellent accounts of the Queensland government's takeover of Aurukun and Mornington Island (Ch.5), enlivened by the author's personal experience of a heavy-handed state bureaucracy in action, and of the Noonkenbah dispute in Western Australia in illustration of the growing political consciousness of Aborigines (Ch.9). The overview chapters are greatly enhanced by the inclusion of relevant statistics, which underline the major points made concerning differences between Aborigines and other Australians in health and housing levels, numbers in prison, income and educational levels, and recent demographic trends. Most of these statistics relate to the late 1970s and are thus reasonably up to date; furthermore, the author's interpretations of them are consistently insightful as she documents the nature and extent of the Aborigines' severely disadvantaged position in the wider society. Her tone throughout is nevertheless positive, in the sense that she depicts Aborigines as actively engaged in resistance and refusing to accept without opposition the indignities that have been heaped upon them since their country was invaded in 1788.

The book's considerable strengths easily outweigh its weaknesses, a few of which deserve comment. The weakest chapter is the first, in which the author attempts the difficult task of depicting 'traditional' society in all its complexities and regional variations, in only eleven pages. This account lacks both accuracy and balance. The clan is not 'the fundamental unit' in the organisation of society, since large areas of the continent had no such form of grouping; ritual knowledge was not 'limited to certain men of high degree'; social control was predicated much less on 'supernatural punishment or reward' than on self-regulation achieved via strongly inculcated feelings of shame and embarrassment plus the threat of physical punishment; apart from avoidance and joking relationships, few behaviour patterns were 'tightly laid down', for as the author notes on the following pages, 'individuals enjoyed considerable social freedom'; the terms 'estate' and 'range' in reference to local organisation were coined by W.E.H. Stanner, who should be cited; it is meaningless to speak of Aboriginal languages as 'well-structured' (name one 'poorly-structured' language?); and the description of the Aborigines as 'semi-nomadic' is less accurate than depicting them as nomadic but with strong territorial anchorages.
To omit discussion of important but more negative aspects of traditional societies (such as sexual inequalities and conflict, both interpersonal and intergroup) is to distort the picture. Hopefully in the next edition the author will rewrite this chapter, making it a more accurate and balanced portrait of 'traditional' life. She should also correct the map and put such places as Oenpelli, Amata, and Myall Creek in their right places, as well as showing Pilbara the region rather than Pilbara the station, since the former is what is being discussed in the text.

In the final section of Ch.2, dealing with events after Federation, I was surprised to see that there was no mention of the appalling activities of the Aborigines Protection Board in New South Wales. In discussing the policies of the 1970s (Ch.5), the author overlooks the great significance and far-reaching consequences of the incorporations policy of the Federal Labor Government. This was the corner-stone of its self-determination policy, based in part at least on Professor Rowley's suggestion that only through incorporation could an effective socio-economic carapace be provided for Aborigines, 'whose autonomy has been shattered without the compensation of full participation in the settler society' (The Remote Aborigines, 1972:128). Today there are more than 830 incorporated Aboriginal bodies, which supply the power base and support facilities for almost all the major Aboriginal activists and spokespersons at both state and national levels. On the role of the Aboriginal Legal Services, one great success, particularly in remote areas, has been to make Aborigines aware of the limitations of police powers while at the same time learning about their basic rights under law. True, policemen are still feared by many, but the Aboriginal perception of the policeman as God is a thing of the past.

Quibbles aside, the author has succeeded admirably in demonstrating her central thesis on the nature of Aboriginal reactions to their loss of land and autonomy. The struggles have been long and hard and are certainly not over. The author is realistic in her assessment that the future of the Aborigines as a viable minority depends on the willingness of other Australians to cede them some real power and a measure of true control over resources. The recent failure of the strongly united New South Wales Aborigines to prevent the passage of a watered-down Land Rights bill in the state parliament, despite prolonged, varied and well publicised protests, reveals the raw facts of continuing Aboriginal powerlessness. This reality makes the author's final suggestion one of major importance: that 'white' Australians must be brought to an awareness that the Aboriginal struggle is in fact their struggle as well. All Australians should battle against '... the fierce pursuit of economic growth which reduces people to mere instruments of production; it resists monstrous economic forces and impersonal bureaucracies and seeks instead a more individually responsible lifestyle, with greater conservation and increased local autonomy' (p.229). Let us hope that this book gets the large readership it deserves.

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'This history', writes Richard Broome, 'is an attempt by an Australian of European descent to help set the record straight' (p.6). Except when he deals with recent years, his main sources are numerous works of historians, anthropologists and others who published during the 1970s. Although he makes good use of well known authors,
BOOK REVIEWS

especially Charles Rowley, and draws effectively on Aboriginal writers like Margaret Tucker, Jimmie Barker and Dick Roughsey, his most valuable contribution lies in communicating to a wide readership research findings which might otherwise have remained hidden in specialist monographs and journals.

Broome begins by looking at 'Traditional Life' as part of the background to black-white conflict. As he says (p.11), it is impossible to convey the complexities of Aboriginal society in a brief space; but he might have devoted a few lines to something like fire technology to combat the general reader's over-simple perception of a 'hunter-gatherer' economy. The ten chapters that follow are arranged thematically along a loose chronology, beginning with the response of the Gamaraigal people to the British invaders and ending with the issues of the 1970s—land rights, mining and Aboriginal self-determination. Matters discussed along the way include cultural resistance, reserves and missions, and Aboriginal workers in the northern cattle industry. He selects well and writes persuasively about, for example, the bureaucratic attack on Coranderrk and Cumeroogunga reserves, racism in 'the grubby capital of the Northern Territory' between the wars, and the visit of the 'Freedom Riders' to Walgett and Moree in the mid-1960s.

The best parts of the book deal with the last hundred years or so. Broome is less confident on the earlier period, and less accurate: Governor Gawler's egregious speech to the Kaurna is dated before Adelaide was founded (though the endnote gets it right), and Yagan, the Swan River patriot, is translated to Victoria ten years after he died, which is especially unfortunate as nineteenth century Western Australia is otherwise hard done by. Here Broome is a victim of a dubious source. His explanations are occasionally confusing, as when he suggests (p.26) that the view of the Aborigines as 'noble savages' was nonsense, having a few pages earlier congratulated Cook for glimpsing 'the underlying nobility' of Aboriginal traditional culture and quoted Cook's comments of 1770 which are so often used to sum up 'noble savagery'. And to say — Blainey-like — that 'The Gamaraigal must have thought they were confronted by barbarians' (p.22) may be an arresting use of paradox, but how much does it really tell us about Aboriginal responses? Here readers will need to refer to Henry Reynolds' *The Other Side of the Frontier*, which appeared after Broome went to press and might have added a new dimension to his subtitle *Black Response to White Dominance*. But this is not a criticism: in a field expanding as quickly as Aboriginal history, any author of a general book must expect to be partially out of date by the time his or her work is published, let alone reviewed. Certainly Broome's book is good enough to warrant before too long a revised edition.

Broome treads warily over delicate issues. After summarising views about when the Aborigines first settled Australia, he concludes 'There is no doubt that they were the original inhabitants of a previously silent continent' (p.10). He writes with sensitivity about the plight of dormitory children in missions, 'left halfway between the Aboriginal and European world' (p.106), about Aboriginality and about the internalisation of 'white' views. He makes a determined effort to be fair: paternalism, he writes, became the blot on the humanitarianism of the missionaries — but not all missionaries were paternalistic; and in any case, 'Was it any wonder that Father Seraphim Sanz, Spanish Benedictine missionary at Kalumburu for over 30 years, who had a Father in heaven, a Holy Father in Rome, and a Father Abbot in New Norcia, should say to a group of middle-aged Aborigines at Kalumburu in 1977: "good morning boys and girls" ' (p.105). Some might say Broome is over-generous. He is unequivocal, however, about other perpetrators of racism and exploitation, who are in any case generally quite adept at condemning themselves — like the mining
company official who suggested that ‘every Aboriginal reserve should have a mine next door’ (p.189).

Broome concludes by identifying grounds for optimism about race relations in Australia. The fact that such a book as his could be written and that many people are likely to read it gives some cause for hope that he might be right.

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This volume consists of papers given at the fifth symposium of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia in 1981. Like most such collections, it is rather a mixed bag. The theme is topical, and inevitably some contributions are already somewhat dated. It is however a useful collection of different kinds of approaches to these thorny issues. The editor, in his foreword, sees as ‘one of the most insistent challenges in today’s Australian scene: the need to understand what land means to Aborigines’. If there is a consistent theme, it is this one, of the difference between the Aboriginal view of land, and the European attitude. In general, although not exclusively, the geographical focus is on Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The first paper, by R.M. Berndt, presents an outline of traditional Aboriginal land ownership, stressing the sacred quality of all land, and the inalienable and non-transferable nature of Aboriginal land ownership. He distinguishes between the primarily religious ownership of small tracts of land (Stanner’s ‘estates’) by local descent groups, and the primarily resource-utilising ownership of wider tracts of land (Stanner’s ‘ranges’) by co-operating members of several local descent groups. Berndt indicates the relevance of the latter charter of belonging in areas where much traditional knowledge has been lost.

L.R. Hiatt’s paper on ‘Traditional concepts of Aboriginal land’ develops a similar argument, with a case study from the Blyth River in Arnhem Land. He contrasts the inalienable ritual rights to an estate with the magnanimity of owners with respect to the resources of the estate. He discusses the ‘ethic of generosity’ involved here, adaptive for hunter-gatherers, but in contrast to the bourgeois morality which encourages acquisitiveness and the retention of valuable items.

Priscilla Girrabul, of the Gunbalanya Community, Oenpelli, presents an Aboriginal view of the changes brought by Europeans, contrasting traditional times and culture with the current situation. While admitting that Aborigines have adopted much of European culture, especially material items, she puts before us the problems created by its imposition, and especially the impact of mining companies. Sue Kesteven has appended a biographical note and commentary on Girrabul’s paper, drawing attention to the independent and equal role of women vis-à-vis men in matters of land in traditional Aboriginal society. A further biographical and historical note is added by Catherine Berndt.

In her own contribution, ‘Aboriginal women, resources and family life’, Catherine Berndt also argues that Aboriginal women had an interdependent role with men in respect to land matters, and that their knowledge and understanding of their country in its widest sense was equally detailed and precise, if complementary. She urges Aboriginal women to speak out more on their own behalf, especially in the face of
BOOK REVIEWS

resource development (in the European sense — from an Aboriginal point of view she suggests 'undevelopment' would be more correct), not at the expense of Aboriginal men, but in conjunction with them, as sanctioned by their traditional partnership.

Wesley Lanhupuy stresses how the very concepts in notions such as 'lands and resources' are alien to Aboriginal people; he argues strongly for self-determination, with a slowing-down of development to allow Aboriginal people to establish this. He also touches on the 'mixed blessing' of Aboriginal involvement with academics, but finishes on a positive note with a quotation from Stanner.

Bolton provides an admittedly superficial overview of white historians' approaches to Aboriginal history with some mention of the constitutional historical basis for the legal status of land rights.

For me, the most interesting paper was John von Sturmer's 'Aborigines in the uranium industry: towards self-management in the Alligator River region?' This is a forthright and fascinating attempt to get behind the rhetoric and the dry academic debate to the real impact of mining in the Alligator River region, in social, economic and political terms. He asks, what is self-management? How is it to be achieved? What are the real effects of the injection of mining moneys into these communities: should mining companies become welfare enablers? He also considers the effect of the importation of sheer numbers of largely ignorant non-academic Europeans into the area. He discusses the negative effects of what are assumed to be compensation moneys and less tangible bestowals on Aboriginal communities and individuals, and the relationship between decision-making and its implementation in terms of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships. Von Sturmer argues that real analysis is needed following on an honest description of the situation, rather than the usual glossy optimism. This paper, despite its 'hard words', is a constructive step in that direction.

Basil Sansom's contribution argues that there is a continent-wide 'Aboriginal commonality', rooted in Aboriginal ways of 'doing business'. This is an important argument, since, as he points out (especially in connection with Lauriston Sharp), there has been a tendency to distinguish traditionally-oriented Aboriginal groups from those less traditionally oriented, with the latter being seen as somehow not 'real' Aborigines. Sansom sees this commonality expressed in social and economic modes which may have a modern content but which derive from traditional forms. Certainly we can discern the Stanner 'range' in the 'lines', 'runs', and 'beats' of the various hinterland communities described. Sansom also makes the relevant point that this commonality generates no wider political structure because it is, of its very nature, socially small-scale.

Peter Baume's 'Government perspective' is rather like a commercial for an obsolete car model (or even car dealer — 'honest brokers', no less). I found this paper of interest, however, because it discusses the so-called 'Comalco model', and in totally approbatory terms. The Comalco model is an arrangement whereby mining companies liaise (more or less) directly with Aboriginal communities about sites of significance to them. Rather than specify sites and their exact locations, general areas of sensitivity are indicated which are then avoided by the developers. There are however drawbacks to this approach. Firstly, the Aborigines are utterly dependent on the good will and integrity (and efficiency, including control over sub-contractors) of the developers. If sites are subsequently damaged, the lack of prior specific identification precludes any kind of redress or comeback. It also means that any subsequent exploration in the same area means the process has to be repeated, as no data base accrues; it certainly mitigates against extensive forward planning policies.
While other approaches also have serious attendant problems, it seems rather naive and ostrich-like to see the Comalco model as a preferred solution.

Charles Perkins argues that Aboriginal people should achieve 'independence and self-sufficiency through self-management of a greater share of Australia's wealth and resources'. He describes several current initiatives towards this end, particularly the Aboriginal Development Commission and concludes that leadership in all areas must come from the Aboriginal people themselves.

H.M. Morgan, President of the Mining Industry of Australia, gives us what is largely another commercial, and his defences of the industry are probably largely true. He argues however from a basic capitalist premise which is not necessarily accepted by all concerned; 'the NT Land Rights Act . . . represents an unreasonable impediment to exploration in the Northern Territory'.

Colin Tatz in 'The recovery and discovery of rights: an overview of Aborigines, politics and the law' sees the issues under consideration as basically political, yet little real political analysis of the Aboriginal situation has been carried out. Like von Sturmer, he points out that 'consultation' is not the same as genuine participation in the decision-making process. In formal terms, Aborigines have had until recently little real power, but new politico-legal institutions, particularly incorporated associations, and recourse to civil legal processes, may be improving the situation.

H.C. Coombs, 'On the question of government', discusses briefly the principle of Commonwealth responsibility in Aboriginal land matters, but recognises the necessity for regional and local management and responsibility, which is connected with Aboriginal initiatives for self-determination.

The editor also provides a concluding chapter entitled 'Mining ventures: alliances and oppositions'. After some general introductory comments on the kinds of alliances Aborigines may form with various kinds of Europeans (anthropologists surprisingly come out best), Berndt discusses the situation which obtained in Western Australia in 1981. He discusses, using specific examples, the kinds of problems, both practical and ethical in nature, which confront individual consultants, Aboriginal communities, and more structured organisations. No doubt Berndt himself would be pleased to recognise that much of this discussion is now out of date, following a change of State Government, a change of Federal Government, and a current State Government inquiry exploring how best to institute a land-rights programme in Western Australia, a course to which the new government has firmly committed itself.

SANDRA BOWDLER UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Tasmanians. By Sandra Bowdler; People of the Murray River. By Anne Bickford; People of the Lakes. By Marjorie Sullivan; People of the Sydney Coast. By F.D. McCarthy. Methuen (Our People Series) North Ryde, Sydney, 1982. p.b. $2.95 each.

These books are intended for use in schools by young children. They consist of specific studies of Aboriginal groups in various parts of Australia, concentrating on aspects of traditional life.

Each book covers a number of themes, but these vary in emphasis and detail. The themes include details on material culture, hunting, art and beliefs. Some volumes deal with the Aboriginal past, the impact of Europeans and the conditions of Aborigines today.
BOOK REVIEWS

The section on Aboriginal relations with the land was good in all four books, especially in the *People of the Lakes* volume where the condition of the land today is compared to how it existed long ago when the climate was different. Details on clothes and forms of shelter are included in all the books, apart from that on the Lakes people, which has a section on families which the other volumes lack. Sections on hunting and food are included in each but vary in length and detail. They tell of how food was obtained and cooked as well of the different kinds of foods exploited. These themes are well represented in all the books, but are especially interesting in the *Murray River* and *Sydney Coast* books. The *Murray River* book has an interesting discussion of traps, nets and dams. The arts discussed are music, stories, and rock engravings and paintings. The *Murray River* book includes a short story. I thought that this was a good idea; the other books could have contained similar stories. *The Tasmanians* has very little on art and some commentary on Tasmanian rock engravings would have been of interest. The sections on discovering the past are well done and are very useful because they present details on how information is gathered and what evidence is used to produce the accounts of past Aboriginal societies.

The sections on Aboriginal people today are rather brief in all four books, apart from that on the *Murray River*. *The Tasmanians* could have included more details in its section on the impact of the Europeans. I would have liked more said about Truganini who is mentioned in the time chart, but her significance is not explained anywhere in the text.

The information is set out in small, simple paragraphs under the heading of each theme, with informative pictures and diagrams illustrating the topic. Included at the back of the book are questions in a ‘things to do’ section, while the text leaves room for class discussion. The activities sections are very interesting, easy to follow and should be of use in class lessons as the materials they suggest are widely available.

KATHERINE URRY

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

A REJOINER AND A REPLY TO OUR REVIEW OF WARD McNALLY'S *ABORIGINES ARTEFACTS AND ANGUISH*.

Our editorial policy is not to publish correspondence relating to reviews, nor do we encourage debate on them. The following letter is included here following Editorial Board consideration of the author's request. A reply from the reviewer is also published.

I seek space to reply to Professor Ronald M. Berndt's review of my book *Aborigines Artefacts and Anguish*, published in the latest issue of your journal.

Professor Berndt accuses me of self-righteousness because of an appendage I wrote to a letter to me from the late Professor T.G.H. Strehlow, the subject of my book.

I reject this charge and contend the appendage was valid.

Professor Berndt also appears to think that my dedication should have had some relationship with my subject, but I see no reason for that belief. I dedicated the book to the memory of a man who helped me at a vital time of my life. When I desperately needed hope, direction.

That seems appropriate to me!

Professor Berndt alleges I left out matters vital to the character study offered and I reject that also. What I did within the wordage available to me was to show the late Professor Strehlow torn between loyalties and, in some instances, deceit. Professor Berndt seems upset because I pointed up aspects of the late Professor Strehlow's private life that showed him as extremely difficult to
get along with as well as hurtful to certain people who had every right to expect better from him.

That simply measured the man's character, showing the good against the bad and that, in my view, is essential in any honest biography.

Professor Berndt refers to the questions I submitted to him, but makes no mention of the letters, some stretching to eight typed foolscap pages he wrote to me. Nor does he mention that he offered me some serious criticisms of aspects of my subject's life but asked me not to quote him in my book, or that I respected his confidentiality.

He also says there was more to the Philipp Scherer map episode than I revealed, but I point out that I had the advantage of seeing the unfinished map and of talking with Scherer. Short of involving my publisher, Scherer and myself in possible libel suits I reported the facts as honestly as possible.

Professor Berndt makes no mention of the bitter criticisms I heard and he knows about of the late Professor Strehlow from Aborigines. Nor does he refer to the Foreword to my book, written by Professor D. Stranks, Vice Chancellor of the Adelaide University, and a man who had years of close association with my subject.

Professor Stranks paid tribute in the Foreword to the balanced view I offered readers of my subject. Further and finally, I could point Professor Berndt to academics, some as deeply involved in Aboriginal affairs as he is, who have gone on record with praise for my book.

WARD McNALLY

My comments in this respect are brief. I have re-read my original review, and glanced through Ward McNally's book again. I see no need to change or modify any of my remarks.

It is true that the late Professor Strehlow was occasionally a difficult man; but often, too, he had good reason for feeling disgruntled about the trend of events which touched him directly. However, the picture McNally has drawn of Strehlow is, in my view, not a sufficiently well balanced one: a number of the scenes are either incomplete or overdrawn, or not considered in perspective.

I mentioned in my review that McNally had been in correspondence with me. I supplied him with some information on the points he raised. My reason for doing so was to 'set the record straight' and to clarify some specific situations to the best of my knowledge. I may perhaps have been naive in doing this. However, I did insist on confidentiality, and I should have mentioned in my review that McNally respected that injunction. (My remarks at that time, incidentally, were not typed on foolscap but on A4.) To say that I 'offered ... some serious criticisms of aspects of [Strehlow's] life' provides an impression which differed from my intention. The fact of the matter is that I did comment, in some detail, on a range of critical issues which McNally raised with me in correspondence. I attempted to give a fair assessment of these. As I said in my review, 'Inevitably, there were differences of opinion between us...' (that is, between Strehlow and myself). There is no doubt that I could have been more critical of certain actions on the part of Strehlow. However, in my view, within the scope of McNally's book, it would have been inappropriate to have been so.

McNally notes that I did not deal in my review with 'the bitter criticisms' made by Aborigines in regard to Strehlow during the latter part of his life. I would certainly not have done so in a review of that kind. It would have required much more space than was available to me. Moreover, it would have raised a number of points not directly relevant to the biography, and would have served no useful purpose in that context.

Suffice it to say that Strehlow was deeply concerned, right up to his death, with and about traditional Aranda life. He saw it being eroded. To him this was a tragedy which couldn't be resolved. In my view, Strehlow was mistaken in this respect and did not appreciate sufficiently the great changes which had and have taken place in Aranda society, as well as in Aboriginal attitudes generally. I think there is a great deal that could be said about this matter.

McNally is quite unrealistic in expecting me to regard his book favourably. I honestly consider that what he has written is only a part of the Strehlow story. I do not consider that it does Strehlow justice – in respect of the 'good' as well as the 'bad' aspects of his long and significant career as a scholar and a student of Aranda traditional society and culture. How other academics
may regard McNally's book is their own affair. I think a different sort of book is needed to do justice to Ted Strehlow as a person, and to the work to which he devoted so much of his time and energy. But perhaps only a multi-faceted volume could do that — one compiled by a number of different people writing or speaking from different perspectives. It would not be an easy book to read, or to assemble; but it could bring together viewpoints and materials, and substantively based assessments, which will not be available in the same way to prospective Strehlow-biographers in a hundred or even fifty years' time.

RONALD M. BERNDT
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BOOK NOTES

(Inclusion here does not preclude review in future issues.)


The first of a series of transcripts of original documents edited by Gerry Langevad for the Archaeology Branch. This volume on Aboriginal history for the Kilcoy area is to be followed by two collecting material on the early missionaries and the pastoralists.

In the series Queensland Ethnohistory Sources, also edited by Gerry Langevad, volume 1 (2), September 1983, is devoted to The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser 1803-1810. Copies of these publications may be obtained from the Archaeology Branch, Department of Aboriginal and Islanders' Advancement, GPO Box 2210, Brisbane, Qld 4001.


A collection of papers on Aboriginal history in Gippsland, and the series of conflicts (massacres) during the contact period in eastern Victoria.


The first publication resulting from a major Aboriginal history project - recording the genealogies of families from Point McLeay, SA. This volume includes photographs, documents and reminiscences of individuals named in the genealogical tables covering over a thousand descendants (to the sixth and seventh generations) of Isabella Mutyuli, who was born on the Coorong about 1856. This and future volumes will be available from the Aboriginal Research Centre, University of Adelaide, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA 5001.

The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 3 (1) 1983, Pp.242. Special Issue: The Metis since 1870. Edited by Antoine S. Lussier. (Subscriptions, 2 issues a year, Can. $16 individuals, $25 libraries, Department of Native Studies, Brandon University, 1229 Lorne Ave., Brandon, Manitoba, Canada R7A OV3).

Articles outlining the history of official policy and recognition of land rights of the 'hybrid' Indian-European population known as Metis have considerable relevance
for Australian researchers. Each issue of this journal provides up to date coverage of
current policy, legislation and political developments in Indian affairs, and a section
devoted to research and teaching in Native Studies programmes at many Canadian
universities.

* An Australian creole in the Northern Territory: A description of Ngukurr-Bamyili
dialects. By J. Sandefur, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Branch,

This is a description of the Aboriginal creole English spoken in the Northern
Territory and neighbouring areas. It is a non-technical account especially designed for
European workers in the area. The volume covers sounds, orthography, noun phrases,
verb phrases and prepositional phrases and their parts, and simple sentences. Available
from Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Aboriginal Branch, PO, Berrimah,
NT 5788.

* Junggubuyu myths and ethnographic texts. By J. Heath. Australian Institute of

This is the first of a number of volumes that the author expects to be publishing on
one of the Aboriginal languages spoken in eastern Arnhem Land.

* Papers in Australian linguistics No.13: contributions to Australian linguistics. Edited

This volume contains articles on aspects of Eastern Ngumbin Languages
(McConvell), Flinders’ Island languages (Sutton), Njiyamba, a language of Central
Western New South Wales (Donaldson), Bagandji (Hercus), languages of North Central
New South Wales (Austin, Williams and Wurm), Norman Pama (Black), Northern Cape
York languages (Crowley), Kaititj (Koch), Pungupungu and Wadyiginy (Tryon),
Anthropology and Botany (Chase and Von Sturmer), Ethnobotany (Sutton).

* Ngadjumaja: an Aboriginal language of south-east Western Australia. By C.G. von
Brandenstein. Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Gesellschaft zur Plege der Geisteswissen-
schaften, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck. 1980.
Pp.vi, 165.

This volume contains a sketch grammar with texts and wordlists of a little known
Australian language from Western Australia.

(Work Papers of SIL-AAB, Series B, No.5) Pp.74. plus six cassettes.

This is a non-technical beginning language learning course for those wishing to learn
Kriol, the Aboriginal creole English of the Northern Territory and neighbouring areas.
There are 35 lessons in the course with easy to follow exercises. The lessons and
exercises are recorded on six cassettes.

* A learner’s guide to Yukunytjatjara. By C. Goddard. Institute for Aboriginal

A booklet designed to help workers in the north-west border areas of South
Australia to learn this Western Desert language. Because of its size it only introduces
the main grammatical facts and most common vocabulary. No exercises are included.
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Submit two copies and keep a carbon. Footnotes should be as brief as possible, typed on a separate sheet and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. A short form of citation should be used for references to literature (for examples see current issue). The bibliography, on a separate page, should show the author's name and full publication details as given on the title page of the work, listed alphabetically by author and chronologically for each author. Tables and maps should be submitted in final form (except for size), on separate sheets, numbered on the back, and accompanied by a list of captions and photographic credits.

Authors should follow the usage of Style manual for authors and printers of Australian government publications except for numbers: use numerals for all requiring more than two words (e.g. 105, five thousand). Express percentages as: 45 per cent.

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

Bibliography entries:
Author's first name or initials must appear as on title page; do not abbreviate to initials.
Tasmanian State Archives, Colonial Secretary's Office. (TSA CSO 8/157/1166; TSA CSO 24/93/3033.

ALL THAT DIRT: ABORIGINES 1938
Edited by Bill Gammage and Andrew Markus

This 1938 Monograph is published by History Project Incorporated as part of work-in-progress for AUSTRALIA 1788-1988: A BICENTENNIAL HISTORY.

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