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# ABORIGINAL HISTORY

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OBITUARY FOR RONALD MURRAY BERNDT (1916-1990)

Robert and Myrna Tonkinson

Emeritus Professor Ronald M. Berndt died in Perth on 2 May 1990 after a protracted battle with cancer. Together with Catherine Berndt, his wife and fellow anthropologist, he did more anthropological research in a greater number of Aboriginal communities over a longer time span than any other Australianist, as well as pioneering research in the eastern Highlands of New Guinea (1951-53). This partnership has been one of the most abiding and scholastically productive in anthropology, and the Berndts' prodigious output of richly detailed and important works on Aboriginal societies and cultures has brought them international renown.

Ronald Berndt was born in Adelaide on Bastille Day, 1916, the grandson of German immigrants, and grew up there in what he has described as a 'happy liberal environment'. He became interested in ethnology as a teenager, and in 1938 became a member of the Anthropological Society and the Royal Society of South Australia. The following year he was appointed an Honorary Assistant Ethnologist at the South Australian Museum, and it was there that his interest in Aborigines and their culture burgeoned. A field expedition to Ooldea in 1939 convinced him of the need for formal training in what had by then become his chosen field. He enrolled in social anthropology at the University of Sydney in 1940, under Elkin, Hogbin and Capell. There he met fellow student Catherine (née Webb) and they were married soon after. Then followed a decade devoted almost entirely to joint fieldwork: at Ooldea in the Western Desert; among urban people in South Australia and New South Wales; and in the Northern Territory. There they investigated labour conditions on cattle stations, worked on Army settlements and did intensive research in both western and northeastern Arnhem Land. Their desire to broaden their ethnographic horizons then took them to a remote area in the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea. Following this research, the Berndts went to London to write their doctorates under Professor (later Sir) Raymond Firth at London School of Economics and Political Science. Of their impact at LSE, Firth has written: 'What particularly impressed their contemporaries ... was their already extensive first-hand field knowledge, their wide command of the scholarly literature of anthropological theory, and their intense focus upon the discipline of anthropology as a joint activity.'

Their published works were already beginning to have an impact in European anthropological circles, where the dominant image of Aborigines, derived from early documentary sources and made famous by Durkheim and others, was of a people frozen in the past and encapsulated within rule-bound and rigid institutional frameworks. After World War II, Elkin's work reached the Continent, but it was read in the light of his great predecessors and thus failed to register as something new. According to Claude Lévi-
Strauss, it was the writings of the Berndts that jolted European scholars into a new appreciation of Aboriginal culture: 'They were putting us in direct contact with a real, vibrant, present-day Australia' through the 'richness and originality' of their work. We now became convinced that those old studies which had engendered an enormous literature, to the point where we thought their content was exhausted, could be followed up, deepened and renewed.  

Ronald's ethnography, *Excess and restraint*, based on his Melanesian research and published in the United States in 1962, aroused considerable controversy among Melanesianists at the time concerning the nature and degree of violence depicted, but later research in the same region by other anthropologists has tended to confirm his conclusions.

One of Berndt's many major contributions to the social anthropology of Aboriginal Australia has been in the study of religion, particularly myth, ritual and song-poetry. He also wrote insightfully on law and order in both Aboriginal and Melanesian contexts, and gained considerable international recognition for his writings on Aboriginal art. In fact, his interests embraced virtually every aspect of the structure and functioning of Aboriginal societies, and his and Catherine's work, with men and women respectively, was complementary. Their highly successful text, *The world of the first Australians*, is ample testimony to their breath and depth of coverage of Aboriginal Australia, both geographically and topically.

After graduating in 1955, the Berndts returned to Australia, and in 1956 moved to Perth, where Ronald had been appointed as a Senior Lecturer in anthropology, initially with the Psychology Department. He and Catherine pioneered the teaching of anthropology and sociology in Western Australia, and in 1963 Ronald Berndt became Foundation Professor and head of a separate Anthropology Department. He oversaw the steady growth of the Department, including the inception of teaching in Linguistics and Archaeology, and anthropology became one of the larger units in the Arts and Science Faculties. He retired in 1981 and was made Emeritus Professor. He retained an office in the Department, continued his writing and contributed to the Department through lecturing, seminar participation and his active role in the Anthropology Research Museum, which he had established at the university.

In addition to founding the Anthropology Society of Western Australia, and the international journal *Anthropological Forum*, Ronald Berndt worked closely with State authorities charged with the administration of Aboriginal affairs and did much to publicise the valuable contribution made by applied anthropology, which had long been one of his central concerns. The true extent of his influence on public administration in the Aboriginal field will never be fully known, but Ronald Berndt wrote hundreds of reports for both State and Federal bodies on matters of policy and Aboriginal welfare. Both Berndts have been strong supporters of lands rights, and during the Nookenbah crisis Ronald received extensive press coverage, and withstood much criticism, when he attacked the biased and racist campaigns being waged against Aborigines and land rights. On the national level, Ronald Berndt was a member of the first branch of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth to be formed in this country, and he became its first president (1962-64). In 1972, this body was absorbed into the newly formed Australian Anthropological Society. From the very inception of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Ronald Berndt played a major role in its establishment and in the later operation of the Institute's affairs. He remained totally committed to the Institute's goal of fostering high quality field research.

Ronald and Catherine Berndt have produced a huge body of scholarly works on Aboriginal Australia. They have also written a number of books aimed specifically at the

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3 Lévi-Strauss, C. 'The Berndts: an appreciation', in Tonkinson and Howard (above).
RONALD MURRAY BERNDT

non-specialist reader, in keeping with their insistence that Aborigines would be unable to take their rightful place in our society unless and until European Australians knew and understood about the richness and diversity of Aboriginal cultures, and learned the truth of what followed the European invasion. Those of us privileged to have been his students will all remember Ron's insistence on the need to understand both communities and changes, and the edifice of knowledge that he and Catherine have constructed in their massive corpus of writings, both scholarly and popular, reflects both concerns: to bring to the world the richness and genius of Aboriginal intellectual and cultural achievement, and to document and decry much of what has befallen them as a result of colonisation. Ronald Berndt's work was his consuming passion - his entry in Who's Who lists as his only hobby, anthropology; however, this characteristic of his humour masked what were for him other strong interests, especially in the arts and in gardening. His was a joyous devotion, and his enthusiasm certainly rubbed off on his former students. Many of us can recall Ron telling about his latest project with great excitement and pleasure - certainly, during the writing up of his Lower River Murray data a few years ago, almost half a century after he did the fieldwork, his delight at the rediscovery of the overwhelming richness of the material he was resurrecting, was infectious.

The battle with cancer slowed Ron down but did not, until very recently, stop his work; there was always a sense of urgency, about so much yet to do, and so much getting done - his prodigious output has never ceased to amaze all who knew him. Up until weeks ago, when he entered hospital, he was busy writing, attending seminars and providing advice and support to other scholars. Ron Berndt touched many lives as a teacher, mentor, scholar, writer, colleague and friend, but for those privileged to have been his students, what stands out was his unwavering support and encouragement, once he sensed in others something of the commitment and enthusiasm for anthropology that he had.

Ron enjoyed conviviality. He was a generous and most attentive host and liked nothing more than to entertain friends, colleagues or visitors over a meal that featured good red wine, good food and conversation both serious and lighthearted, and of course, for Ron, a puff or two on his beloved pipe at the end. Many will remember his delight in telling stories jointly with Catherine, and checking on, or debating, the details with her. He loved seminars, making comments - sometimes quite outrageous in their premeditated provocativeness - and was always delighted when he drew the animated responses he was seeking.

We mourn Ron's death and in particular the severance of his half-century partnership with Catherine - a close, loving and academically so productive relationship. All who know them are aware they worked and lived as a team, and we still find ourselves uttering their names as one. The loss for Catherine is immeasurable, but she has vowed to carry on their work, adding to the already enormous output of invaluable scholarship that is the hallmark of the work of the Berndts, whose place in the world of anthropology is assured.

Ronald Berndt's legacy is immense and permanent: the huge outpouring of scholarly and popular works; the Berndt Aboriginal Art collection, one of the finest of its kind in the world, generously donated by him and Catherine to the Anthropology Research Museum at the University of Western Australia; the scholarship he fostered and nurtured; his unforgettable zest for life and work; and his deep and heartfelt concern for and appreciation of Aboriginal Australians, so many of whom he was proud to call his friends. He will be remembered long for these virtues just as surely as his and Catherine's life's work will stand as a monument to their tireless dedication.
Historically, the interests of Aboriginal people in Queensland have been subjugated by those of the white majority. This has resulted in a degree of powerlessness which is alien to non-Aboriginal Australians and therefore perhaps, difficult for them to comprehend. The history of the European colonisation of Australia has been mostly recounted in the literature from a non-Aboriginal perspective. With a few exceptions we have heard little of the history of contact in Australia from an Aboriginal point of view, and even less of the effects of missionisation. A notable exception to the latter is the recently published book by Swain and Rose dealing with Aborigines and Christian missions.

This paper will give an account of the history of an Aboriginal community in far north Queensland (Yarrabah) using as primary source material, archival material and oral accounts from old people living today who remember what it was like to grow up on a mission. The use of both historical sources and personal narratives lends credence to both as they tend to feed back into one another. Such an approach helps to guard against bias from one person's account and reduces the chances of distortion.

The period covered is 1892 to 1960, from the year of the founding of the mission to the year when it became a government reserve. During this time the Aboriginal inhabitants of Yarrabah attempted various strategies of resistance to European domination; most were responses to changing missionary and government policies.

The foundation era: humble beginnings

Yarrabah is now (1986) an Aboriginal reserve in coastal far north Queensland. It was established in 1892 by the Reverend John Brown Gribble, an Anglican minister intent upon bringing the word of God to Aborigines. John Gribble had founded missions on the Murrumbidgee in New South Wales, and on the Gascoyne River in Western Australia, but his zeal for justice for the Aborigines in Western Australia had stirred up resentment and hostility among many white settlers in that region, especially when he attempted to expose atrocities perpetrated on Aborigines by Europeans. Opposition to his mission from local whites escalated and Gribble was forced to leave the area for his own safety after two attempts had been made on his life. By order of the Government of Western Australia he was smuggled out of the State at night, under strong police escort; he then turned to parish work in New South Wales.

Baron von Mueller, the Victorian Government botanist, first drew J.B. Gribble's attention to the possibilities of opening an Aboriginal mission near the Bellenden Ker Ranges in North Queensland. Gribble explored the north of Queensland, using money from

Lynne Hume received her Ph.D. degree at the University of Queensland in 1990. Her fieldwork at Yarrabah was undertaken in 1985-1986. She has also carried out fieldwork in Melanesia (Vanuatu), focussing on women, traditional religion and Christianity. Other areas of interest include cross-cultural communication, social change and applied anthropology.

2 Swain and Rose 1988.
his insurance policy to pay for the fare. When he had decided on a possible area, he met with members of the Diocesan Council of North Queensland in 1891 to seek their approval to his plan, stating that he had persuaded the Queensland Government to grant an Aboriginal reserve at Cape Grafton. The Australian Board of Missions (the official missionary organ of the Anglican Church in Australia) advised Gribble that it would recognise the proposed mission as a Church mission, but that he would have to raise the initial funds for its establishment. The Government of Queensland promised support, and, after consideration, the Diocese of North Queensland also approved the project, establishing a fund which would provide £200 per year. Thus began a partnership of three interests: the Australian Board of Missions, the Diocese of North Queensland, and the Government of Queensland. With official permission granted, Gribble landed at False Bay on 17 June 1892, the site of the present community.

Gribble proceeded to clear land, build a mission house, establish vegetable gardens and explore the area for future agricultural and livestock developments, in preparation for his first Aboriginal converts to Christianity. Assisting John Gribble were three helpers: Pearson, Willie Ambrym (a South Sea Islander) and Pompo Katchewan. The Aborigines native to the area were the Gungandji, but during John Gribble's time, none came in to the mission.

Malaria prevented John Gribble from continuing his work and within a few months of his venture's auspicious beginnings he became so ill that he had to leave the mission, and died in Sydney on 3 June 1893, at the age of forty-five years. At John Gribble's request, his son, Ernest, a young man of 24 years, replaced him and remained at Yarrabah until 1908 when he also left due to ill health. When Ernest arrived in October 1892, in response to his father's call for help, he found only a tent and a small shed made of sapling walls and an iron roof, an unfinished two-room cottage. Although John Gribble had spent months of hard labour preparing the mission site, he had been unable to attract any possible converts.

Ernest renamed the Bellenden Ker Mission 'Yarrabah'. Convinced, like his father before him, that Aboriginal people could only benefit by conversion to Christianity, he set about looking for converts.

The first choice open to Aborigines in the Cape Grafton area was to ignore the mission completely. This they did for some time. Because of his lack of immediate success at attracting the local inhabitants to the mission, Ernest, accompanied by Willie Ambrym, took a boat up the Barron River in search of possible recruits from the Aboriginal camps

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3 The Diocese of North Queensland Yearbook 1959.
4 An Aboriginal youth from North Queensland whose exact origin is unknown. Pompo was taken from his people by force when an infant and brought up by the Swallow family of Hambledon until he was about 12 years old. He was given to the Simmonds family and later passed on to the Reverend J.B. Gribble (ABM Archives, Mission Notes, Box 1, Folder 1).
5 Gribble 1930:58.
6 Gribble 1933:44.
7 Gribble 1930:56-57.
8 Gribble (1933:34) writes that the word 'Yarrabah' was taken from the local Aboriginal word Eyerraba, meaning 'meeting place', so called because of the trading canoes calling there for barter and sale of local goods. However there are other interpretations on the origin of the word; one is that it comes from JunJun Yarra, an Aboriginal word for 'fish-hawk', which eventually became Yarra-burra, and then Yarrabah (Walkabout, 1 July 1955).
along the river. He also travelled over the Cape Grafton area, stopping at camps and giving out flour, tea, sugar and tobacco as a gesture of goodwill. It took several months for the first Aborigines to arrive at Yarrabah, but with a few enticements, they did so voluntarily. Soon the local Gungandji people began to come in for the food and tobacco offered, and some of the men informed Ernest that they would bring some children and old women to the mission. On 10 December 1892, eight Aboriginal men and a dozen women and children attended morning prayers. On 18 December 1892, there were forty Aborigines at the church service. By 26 January 1893, a few children began staying at the mission overnight instead of returning to their camps.9

Life at the mission in the early 1890's was not easy. Sicknesses such as malaria and rheumatism prevented those who could be of assistance from being productive, sometimes for long periods, and bad weather with constant heavy rains hampered progress. Some of the introduced domestic animals such as cows and horses were attacked by crocodiles. Trees had to be felled and scrub cleared to establish farming land for the planting of potatoes, melons and other vegetables. Fences were built and timber cut for the construction of houses and furniture. Daily morning and evening prayer services were conducted and the children's school started.

However, this was not enough to satisfy the Diocese of North Queensland who expected more converts. The Diocese of North Queensland had formed a committee in Townsville to support the new mission, but because, according to their expectations, so little had been achieved the committee decided at the end of 1893 that the mission should be closed and that Ernest Gribble would have to be responsible for all future debts incurred. Gribble contacted the Primate in Sydney who asked him if he could carry on with a monthly stipend of £4 for himself and £1 per month for the mission for a period of two years. Gribble agreed. Hence, Yarrabah became an Australian Board of Missions mission, extra-diocesan to the Diocese of Sydney, and remained so until 1908. Thereafter it again became the responsibility of the Diocese of North Queensland. The Government provided a small subsidy after 1896. Gribble was determined not to let financial difficulties force him into abandoning what his father had begun, and he stayed at the mission until 1908.10

Among the first Aboriginal people to voluntarily visit the mission was Menmuny.* 11 When Menmuny first arrived he had three wives (all sisters) and several children. He later gave up two of his wives when he joined the mission and became a communicant. These two women subsequently married other men. By 1895 there were one hundred and twelve people living at the mission.

In its very early days (1892-1908) Yarrabah was regarded as a highly successful mission and a model for others. The Protector of Aborigines for the North of Queensland praised Yarrabah under E. Gribble, saying that the 'blacks' had been converted into 'sober, steady, trustworthy and hardworking men'.12 Dr Roth described Yarrabah people as 'healthy, well-behaved, industrious and progressing in all the common arts of civilised life'.13 In 1898, only six years after its foundation as a mission, Yarrabah was visited by the Home

9 ABM Archives, Gribble's journals, 26 January 1892, Box MS 1515/1, Item 2.
10 Feetham and Rymer 1929:55.
11 Gribble described him as 'king of this division of the Goon-gan-gee tribe' and later bestowed on him the title of 'King John'. (ABM Archives, Gribble's journals, 31 January 1893, Box MS 1515/1, Item 2.)
12 Extract from Missionary Notes, 24 April 1901 (quoted in Gribble 1933:46).
Secretary of Queensland, Colonel Foxton. Foxton had been visiting all the missions in the north and in Torres Straits and was so pleased by what he saw at Yarrabah that he asked Gribble to allow missionaries from the northern areas to study his methods. Foxton assured Gribble that Yarrabah stood above all the other mission stations for results in spite of its being such a young mission station.14

Before 1897, the mission served mainly local Gungandji people and others from nearby surrounding areas. Yarrabah settlement gradually expanded as more living huts, a school, a workshop, gardens and small villages away from the main village, emerged. The satellite villages were managed by the people who lived in them; the main village was managed by a council made up of confirmed Christians elected by the people, and mission staff.

Institutionalised care and control

The neo-Darwinian notion of social evolution, with Europeans being at the apex of the pyramid, permitted the belief that 'half-caste' children must be saved from their uncivilised (black) parent and brought together in an institutional setting. 'Half-caste' children, usually the product of a white male and an Aboriginal female liaison, were plucked from their mothers by mounted police protectors and forcibly sent to reserves and missions. There are old people at Yarrabah today who remember clearly the forcible separation from their mothers. One elderly man15, the son of an Aboriginal woman and a European father, remembers being taken by 'troopers' (mounted police), hand-cuffed to other children and taken to Port Stewart from his home town of Coen. He and others travelled by horse and buggy to the coast, and from there to Cooktown where they stayed in the police watchhouse for a night before being transported by ship to Yarrabah mission:

The police used to come along and grab all the half-castes... the kids in the camp, they used to grab 'em... take us all away from our parents. White people and coloured people couldn't agree with one another them days. They wanna take all the half-caste babies all along the coast.

A complete separation of blacks and whites was thought to be beneficial to both races: for the protection of Aborigines from the physical and moral ills of civilisation and unscrupulous whites, and for the protection of the 'purity' of whites:

The native is very susceptible to all the physical and moral ills of our civilization and it is only by complete separation of the two races that we can save him from hopeless contamination and eventual extinction, as well as safeguard the purity of our own blood. It is estimated that half the Aborigines of this state [Queensland] are half-castes which indicates that they have already suffered an infusion of white blood, and it is indisputable that the European population must, in the process, have also been contaminated to an extent sufficient to warrant serious reflection.16

Under what was ostensibly humanitarian legislation, children were legally abducted from their kin by police officers, transported hundreds of miles away from their birthplaces and put under the control of well-meaning missionaries intent on Christian indoctrination and on bestowing the benefits of civilisation, as they perceived both. No consideration was given to the distraught family from whom they were abruptly separated. There were, however, some Europeans who openly declared their dislike of this practice. Some Cairns

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14 Feetham and Rymer 1929:57.
15 Thomas Allen, of Cairns, now deceased.
residents voiced their disapproval in letters to the editor of the local newspaper\textsuperscript{17} but their protests were in vain.

When the Lutheran mission on the Bloomfield River closed in 1901, the superintendent brought all his mission children to Yarrabah. In 1904, the Fraser Island mission was closed and Yarrabah was asked to receive its inhabitants. Gribble went to the island to effect the closing down of the mission and accompany its one hundred and seventeen people to Yarrabah.\textsuperscript{18} One woman\textsuperscript{19} who was transferred from the Fraser Island mission recalls:

\begin{quote}
We come on the big steamer. Gribble used to visit Fraser at different times... Father Gribble. The last time he came we knew he wanted to shift the people. From Fraser... to take us to Yarrabah. But some of the people wouldn't come. They ran away... The grown-ups. They took their children too. I was about five [years old] when I came to Yarrabah. Father Gribble come to get us... all the Fraser Island people.

We used to see whales. We seen the whales spouting up ya know. When somebody see that they come back and take us all up at the stern and show us the whales spouting up. I don't know how long it [the voyage] took. She anchor way out fronta Green Island there. And the launches from Yarrabah came to take the people. Like us. We children all go to dormitory... Mama Gribble used to look after us.

When we got used to Yarrabah it was all right. Because we had Mumma Gribble to go and see all the time. Like we was happy when we had her. She used to look after us when we was sick.

Father Gribble's sister, Sister Ethel was the teacher. And the dormitory lady was Sister Helen. When Father Gribble left, they never make a big party or anything like that. They just went away quietly. Mrs O'Reilly went first. She went to Sydney, take her children. Then Father Gribble went later.

Fraser Island people were not at all happy at Yarrabah. Several attempts were made by various Fraser Islanders to escape, but they were always returned. With the addition of the Fraser Island people, the Aboriginal population of Yarrabah rose to 317; more than half were children.

The segregated dormitory system was in existence from 1895. The boys' dormitory was a rectangular building with a concrete floor where the boys slept on a raised platform with blankets. The girls' dormitory was a wooden building, with a wooden floor, on which the girls slept with their blankets.\textsuperscript{20} Very young children who arrived at the mission, knowing no-one, were put straight into the dormitory. A Yarrabah woman remembered this time:

\begin{quote}
I went to the dormitory when I was about 7 years of age. We taken away from our mother... they used to take us away from our mother see... Our matron was very strict to us... we used to go every morning and evening to church...
\end{quote}

Many children were sent to Yarrabah alone with no adult parent or relative to look after their interests:

\begin{quote}
You got no parents. You got no parents to fight for ya. You just got to live. You got no mother... father... or relatives to stand by you. Not like today.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} The Cairns Post, 6 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{18} Rowland 1960:94.
\textsuperscript{19} Mrs May Smith, of Cairns.
\textsuperscript{20} Wandandian (Richard Dyott) 1912:135.
\textsuperscript{21} Thomas Allen, of Cairns.
Dormitories always held more girls than boys. In 1934 dormitory girls numbered at least 100 but there were only 34 boys. Girls remained in the dormitory until they were married, while boys left at age sixteen, at which time they built their own wooden-framed, grass-thatched huts, to be ready for the time when they married. Girls who had mothers at Yarrabah, usually stayed with them until they were about eleven or twelve years of age before being put into the dormitory. The matron accompanied the girls to church each morning and evening and carefully supervised their every move. There was very little mingling of the sexes, even outside the dormitories.

The mission dormitory system was common in many parts of Australia. Trigger\(^{22}\) writes that it existed at Doomadgee in north Queensland; Brady and Palmer\(^{23}\) also mention the separation of 'half-caste' children from 'full-blooded' Aborigines and the existence of a dormitory system at Ooldea (South Australia); and the Roper River mission in the Northern Territory, established in 1908, housed children in dormitories.\(^{24}\)

When girls arrived at the mission their hair was cut in the short style required by the staff. The clothes that the children wore in early mission times were uniform: sulus\(^{25}\) and shirts for the boys, and dresses for the girls:

We used to have a dress in the dormitory, three button at the back, it's a yoke. Yoke dress. Blue dress for school, another blue dress for church. Three dresses, we had. A white one for Sunday, two blue ones - one for church and one for school. The dresses had three buttons at the back. No one was allowed to wear shoes. Mustn't have a shoe on ya feet, or hat. No hat, no shoes.

When a new lot come in from outside they dress with shoes and hat. Well they gotta strip off and go up to the mission house and get sulu and shirt. Father Gribble tell 'em go up to the mission house. That's where he keep the clothes. The mission house wasn't far from the dormitory. Our dormitory was there and the mission house was over here. They never have shoes till Mr McCullough came in to the mission.\(^{26}\)

Children were expected to carry out various chores:

We used to go down to the sawmill and get sawdust to put on for the toilet. Cleaning the toilet. Me and my partner had to go down to the mill to get the sawdust in a bag and put that in a different bucket in the toilet. We used to go down and get wood there too, for the dormitory stove. You all have to go down and carry wood up in your arms for the dormitory.\(^{27}\)

Although the children were put directly into dormitories, adults who came from specific regions tended to congregate together:

Ya see, when they took there... they keep to their tribe. Like, if there's a dance, the Fourmile will have their own dance. They don't mix with any tribe. Our lot, Kubbi, they'll have their own dance too. A lovely dance. I used to think it's wonderful. Our tribe, you know there's a tribe in every coloured peoples... you know. Well, our tribe was Bundaberg. On the Burnett River.

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22 Trigger 1988:222.
23 Brady and Palmer 1988:238.
24 Harris 1988:415.
25 A wrap-around strip of cloth tucked around the waist.
26 Mrs May Smith.
27 Mrs Tottie Joinbee, of Cairns.
That name is from us. The language was Kubbikubbi, I think. I used to understand the language when they talk, but I never speak it.28

Some of the adults stayed in tents until they moved to the different settlements for married couples and families. One woman describes the mission in those early days:

We had all the streets and everything when we was there. It was set out like a mission station. All the couples had their houses. Tin roof and timber wall. Cupboards. We saw all that round. Father Gribble had them all set out good. A big school, and a big church. And the big hospital up the hill. The dormitory was upstairs and downstairs. A big place. Father Gribble's house was a big place - upstairs and downstairs. And Mumma Gribble [Ernest Gribble's mother] had her cottage further down the street.

The school that I went to wasn't far from the beach. We boys and girls used to have schooling together first, in the small baby classes, then when we were grown up, boys had school in the morning and girls in the afternoon. The boys, when they were about 16 or 17 years old would leave the dormitory and go out in the village to work in different settlements. The boys would live in the big dormitory, then they have their own home which they built themselves before they got married.

I used to like Father Gribble. We used to take his morning tea down to... pick cotton... he picked cotton... he had fields of it. And we have to go down and take his tea. He'd give us half of his bread. We used to like that! He'd drink his tea and say, you girls can have the bread. We shared it... two girls. Me and another girl.

He used to come out Sunday morning and he'd talk to the children. He said, all the children, come over to me. And there was a coconut tree... We line up in two's and we have to say something. You know what we got to say? 'I must not steal, I must not tell lies. I must not say bad word this day'. You gotta say that every Sunday morning, all the children. Then he'd say: 'go on home'.

Father Gribble used to give the Black Tom. That's a stick what he keep in his study. It's a Black Tom. It give you cuts in the hand. Everybody used to talk about it... like tease one another, say, you go to office, you get the Black Tom. Father Gribble was good to the children. Very good. He used to give the cane, but he was a very good man.29

Ernest Gribble's disciplinary tactics verged on military style punishments for small misdemeanours and were at times extremely harsh. He sometimes horsewhipped offenders, as he did with Pompo in 1893, because Pompo had given bread away to a 'camp black' against Gribble's express orders. Boys found eating earth were given castor oil; if found wearing Sunday clothing during the week, children were given pack drill. Girls were locked up for rudeness until penitent. Anyone found running away, or even heard making plans to escape was given the 'strap'. Some absconders were returned and chained up, only to attempt another escape:

Willie Williams absconded early this morning, he was chained up as usual but effected his escape by breaking or picking the lock.30

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28 Mrs May Smith.
29 Ibid.
30 ABM Archives, Gribble's journals, 20 August 1904, Box MS1515/2, Item 9.
Anyone showing disrespect to either the missionary staff or the 'King' (the Aborigine, Menmuny) was severely punished. The Court, presided over by Menmuny, kept records and published a weekly black-list. Wife-beating was common among the non-mission Aborigines living in the Cape Grafton area. Gribble wrote of Aboriginal men beating their wives, which sometimes resulted in serious bodily harm to the women. One woman had had her arm crushed by a stone which her husband had flung at her; another had had her leg broken.31 Some men living on the mission continued to beat their wives but when discovered by Gribble the husbands would be either verbally chastised or given court sentences.

In spite of the segregation of the sexes during childhood and strict rules about their meeting, males and females did manage illicit time together. In order to get to know one another they had to resort to sending secret messages. A boy would send a letter to his girlfriend through either a village married woman or a girl on her way to do chores, or:

> The boys would sneak into the girls' dormitory, through a window or something. A lot of them used to talk around the fence you know, in the night. But if they seen anybody like a missionary, or the men, they off.
>
> You got to be very careful. You gotta sneak you know. You gotta sneak and talk or you get a hiding. If matron see they get a caning. We bin had those strict rule ya know. Discipline, eh. And this was old days.32

Once a couple wanted to get married and were of an acceptable age according to missionary standards, the boy approached the superintendent to request permission to marry. Once married, they left the dormitory and set up house in the married quarters, in a house built by the husband. A couple was married in the church and the wedding was celebrated in the dormitory, where the couple and their guests were given a supper by the missionary staff:

> Dormitory had a spread. They go back there and have a good old feed, ya know. Invite people. They have a spread and when you finish, you go now.33

> Couples who were discovered sneaking time together were sometimes sent away to Palm Island, or if a girl became pregnant the couple had to undergo an experience of such intense shame that even today those directly involved do not like to speak about it. This was the 'ragtime wedding', when a couple were forced to marry immediately, with no-one present, have their heads shaved 'bawlie' (bald) and wear 'rags' (old clothes). There were no celebrations to mark their change of status from single to married persons:

> Some of my mates they got married ragtime wedding. Their girlfriend fall into trouble, ya know. That's real common today. You can meet the girls any time you want to now... But them times, everyone get married from the dormitory. When you get married you leave dormitory. Everything all in strict order. I got married clear, ya know. Another couple my mates, they got ragtime wedding. No tea. Dormitory [non-ragtime] had a spread. They go back there and have a good old feed, ya know. Invite people... Not ragtime wedding. One of my poor old mates got married ragtime wedding.

> They cut your hair you know... we used to get bawlie head too in the boys' dormitory... as punishment. Very seldom ya know, one time fifty years ago... very seldom you see a woman... ya know... pregnant like, in the

31 Ibid., 20 February 1893.
32 Mrs Tottie Joinbee, Cairns.
33 Mr Thomas Allen.
dormitory. Soon as they... they get married straight away. Very seldom that
bin happen in my time.  

Adults had to obtain permission to marry, permission to work, and had no control over
their own economy. Although some individuals entered the mission of their own accord,
most had no choice. Those who rebelled against the rigidity and lack of freedom by trying
to escape, were forcibly returned by police or other authorities.

Escape, expulsion and exemption

During the era 1892 to 1960 many people attempted to escape. One young boy ran
away after he got a 'hiding with the Black Tom' (lawyer cane):

When we look across to the field over there where they keep the horses, Mr
Iven was hiding a boy with lawyer cane. And he was screaming his head off.
And we could stand at the fence there. We was singin' out, but they couldn't
hear us because we was over this way: 'don't hit that little boy!'. He flogged
that little boy called Blue John, from Mossman. He run away. He stayed a few
days till he feel all right, you know, from the hiding, then he ran away.

Mr Iven, he cruel. When we seen him come to Yarrabah... we could see
his face... the look of him you know. He had a little short wife and a dog
called Jack Ivens. He used to lie on a couch on the verandah. With a cushion.
Yeh. Jack Iven that dog.

Mrs Iven was a little short woman. You know them witches ya see? She
was like a witch. I'm not telling ya a lie. That's what we used to call her. All
the girls when we go over. She used to be that rough with us too. She was
them kind of person look. You know, you see some lovely people eh, but you
can see when a person is like what she was.

Escape became an avenue for those who sought to control their own lives. The Cairns
Post reported regular escapes from Yarrabah during the early part of the century. There were
also reports of Aborigines who had run away from the mission because they were not
getting enough to eat. 'Too much prayer and not enough tucker' was one man's comment.
Aboriginal residents of Yarrabah were appropriately referred to as 'inmates' by the Protector
of Aborigines delineating the restrictive institutional regime they were under. Escapes
were usually unsuccessful; escapees were inevitably returned to the mission by police no
matter how recalcitrant.

When police forcibly brought eight new arrivals to the mission in 1907, four of them
absconded immediately in an attempt to rejoin the wives they had left behind. Some of the
Aborigines who tried repeatedly to escape from the mission were sent to Kobahra, a
settlement on nearby Fitzroy Island. In 1909 Fitzroy Island was still part of Yarrabah

34 Ibid.
36 Mrs May Smith.
37 Ibid.
38 Mrs Tottie Joinbee.
39 The Cairns Post, 29 November 1910.
40 Queensland Parliamentary Papers, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals
   for the year ended 31 December 1919.
mission land and had its own village with a coral and limestone church built by Willie Ambrym.41

In September 1910, an Aboriginal couple walked the distance from Yarrabah to Cairns and asked to be employed in Cairns. They started work at the house of a Cairns resident but police took them in charge and handed them back to the Yarrabah authorities. In spite of their employer's plea to allow them to stay, they were returned against their will: 'the female aboriginal made pitiable appeals to be saved from her captors, but she and her husband were hauled back'.42

Some 'inmates' made vocal their protests about unsatisfactory conditions on the mission to any visitor who came. A constant complaint was the scarcity of food. When J.G. Appel, the Home Secretary, visited Yarrabah in June 1911, several people asked him for permission to leave. Every child that accompanied him and his party on their walk around the mission made the same request, that they be allowed to leave with them. Elderly residents at Yarrabah today (1985), who were very small children in the decade from 1910-1920, remember 'them days' as 'starvation times':

- We used to starve in that place. Green banana for dinner boiled. They boiled a green banana. We had three on our plate. We had corn porridge for breakfast. Nothing else. Saturday - two girl have one coconut. She peel it and it's cut in half. She have half, I have half. That's a dinner, Saturday. And once a week meat. Leg. And they boil it in a big boiler. And they put so much rice in. That's all. You have that only once a week.43

- You couldn't get tucker like you get today. We used to live on treacle, home-made bread, and rice. They used to grow corn and the bread was made out of cornmeal.44

Sometimes they had to find what they could in the bush during the day and were fed a meagre meal at night. The staple food was boiled bananas, cornbread, cassava, rice or sweet potatoes and black tea. One old woman who now lives in Cairns remembers her arrival at Yarrabah in 1911:

- She said to me, you wanta cuppa tea? Yes, please. You want something to eat? I said, whatya got? Treacle and bread. Oh, no thank you, I don't eat rubbish like that. You don't talk smart, tomorrow you'll be hungry, you'll eat anything. It a hungry place. Next day I was hungry all right. I had to eat anything after that.

- I tell you. Used to be hungry. We girls used to get bones... rub it on the rock, just to get something out of it. You look some girl sitting on a rock hitting the bone, trying to get the marrow out... just to have something in your stomach.45

Some ingenious methods were used as a means of escape. Two young Aboriginal women tried to escape on a raft they had built themselves from a few logs lashed together with vines. Passengers aboard the Kuranda saw the partly submerged raft in the Fitzroy

41 Gribble 1930:96.
42 The Cairns Post, 6 October 1910.
43 Mrs Tottie Joinbee.
44 Mr Thomas Allen. However, four of these years were during World War I, when the rest of Australia was also subjected to severe food restrictions.
45 Mrs Tottie Joinbee.
Passage, between Fitzroy Island and the mainland and reported their sighting. The women were brought to Cairns and then sent straight back to the mission. 46

Expulsion and exemption proved to be other avenues of departure from Yarrabah, brought about by two diametrically opposite types of behaviour. Those who maintained strict adherence to mission rules could apply for exemption certificates. Upon being granted exemption certificates they could legally leave the mission to live in the outside world. Those who rebelled against mission rules and were found to be incorrigible, were eventually issued with removal orders; some were transferred to notorious Palm Island.47 Expulsion meant being sent to another reserve far from kin and friends - an effective means of disposing of rebellious elements likely to cause dissension and undermine mission rule.

In April 1915, six Aboriginal women, some with babies and small children, absconded from the Mission to Cairns but were detained by the police and summoned. The Police Magistrate declared them liable, under the Act, to three months' imprisonment. They were sentenced to seven days' solitary confinement in the Cairns jail and the children were taken back to Yarrabah by the Mission Superintendent. That same month, another twenty-five people tried to run away from the mission.48 After this particular incident there were several letters to the editor of The Cairns Post protesting against the treatment of the 'blacks' and the mismanagement of the mission by the Church, some even proclaiming that the Act needed to be revised.

Accusations of mismanagement

Accusations regarding funding and mismanagement of the mission were constantly made between the three parties involved in its administration. The Government accused the Church of mismanagement, and the Church counter-accused the Government of not providing enough financial support and of using the mission as a penal settlement for incorrigible Aborigines. The 'inmates' unhappily were the pawns in the game, with no choice in policies made on their behalf.

Until 1908, the mission was almost wholly the personal project of Ernest Gribble, who during his years at Yarrabah, gained help from the Australian Board of Missions, the Queensland Government and the Diocese of North Queensland. In 1908 the Church of England in Australia contributed £610 towards the support of the mission and the Government subsidy amounted to £571; the Aborigines on the mission managed to raise £567 towards their own support, £202 of which was raised by the Yarrabah Brass Band while on tour in North Queensland.49

In October 1910, R.B. Howard, Chief Protector of Aborigines, reported 'woeful mismanagement' of the mission during its entire existence; that no real effort has been made to produce even medicine and food required to feed the inmates. The want of efficient supervision is apparent in every direction.50

Commenting on Howard's statement, the Archbishop of Brisbane declared that the mission existed:

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46 The Cairns Post, 26 October 1911.
47 Rosser 1977.
48 The Cairns Post, 19 April 1915.
49 Gribble 1930.
50 The Cairns Post, 27 October 1910.
for the purpose of raising the blacks to a higher moral and spiritual level, and what might seem mismanagement from a purely industrial standpoint might be entirely right and proper management if the higher view was taken.\textsuperscript{51}

The Archbishop accused the Government of not providing a large enough grant to cover even the cost of feeding the mission residents. He insisted that the Government, and not the mission, should pay for the feeding and clothing of the Aborigines.

In 1911, a Yarrabah Management Committee was set up in Brisbane, appointed by Dr Donaldson, the Archbishop. At this period, the Queensland Government supplied £770 per annum, and the Australian Board of Missions £850 per annum. With the continuing disagreement between Government and Church authorities as to who was ultimately responsible for the welfare of the mission Aborigines, another possibility was considered: that Yarrabah might be converted by the State into an industrial settlement, possibly based on the \textit{bèche-de-mer} industry. This suggestion was indignantly received by the Bishop of North Queensland, who thought it inconceivable that a Christian government would turn a Christian mission into an industrial settlement, or force the Anglican Church to voluntarily vacate Yarrabah.\textsuperscript{52}

However, the Bishop held a meeting which was attended by about one hundred and thirty Yarrabah Aborigines, to discover what the Aboriginal people felt about the idea of Yarrabah becoming an industrial settlement. He couched his address in terms which left his audience in no doubt that the Bishop's view of industrialisation was negative. At the end of his address, James Noble, the Aboriginal clergyman and a convincing orator, spoke against industrialisation, moving that the settlement should remain as it was: under Church authority.

The people of Yarrabah were then asked to express their opinions about the possible change. In light of the statements made by the Bishop, and by James Noble, one hundred and ten Aborigines present at the meeting said that they wanted no change; only twelve people wanted change. The minority who voted for change were all men from Fraser Island, some of whom subsequently requested to be transferred to the Government settlement of Barambah (later Cherbourg). Their request was granted. The choice was not to stay or leave the reserve system, but only to stay or move to another reserve.

Aborigines who remained at Yarrabah, by choice or by force, could follow the rules; perform small acts of rebellion; learn subversive techniques to acquire a certain degree of personal autonomy; try to enlist help from outside agencies; or sink into apathy. Few other choices remained. Morris\textsuperscript{53} writes that the Dhan-Gadi's (Macleay Valley) attempts to resist the inculcation of white values during the era 1936-68 resulted in a 'culture of resistance', and emerged as a conjunction of earlier cultural practices and opposition to European control. This resistance was expressed by denial, distancing and evasion of European authority. Because overt strategies of opposition, such as violent acts of rebellion, resulted in people's being physically removed from the station, the form of resistance became more subtle. Non-violent forms of resistance were used; these included the control of information, illegal drinking and gambling, and the establishment of fringe camps free from institutionalised control.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 11 May 1911.
\textsuperscript{53} Morris 1988:33-63.
Yarrabah closely approximated the 'total institution'.\textsuperscript{54} The functions of various institutions such as accommodation, education, and health - dispersed in the wider society - were centralised within the mission station. The priest/supervisor made all the decisions regarding both the spiritual and the secular management of the lives of residents. Deference to his authority was expected, indeed insisted upon. Institutionised Aborigines could be searched at any time, had their property confiscated, their mail read, their children confined to dormitories and their traditional practices prohibited. The following conversation between two elderly ex-residents\textsuperscript{55} of Yarrabah, who are now in their eighties, recalls these restrictions:

\begin{quote}
T: I asked her [M] to write me, I want get some tucker from my people [white foster parents off the reserve]. And I said, M, here's a envelope, and there's writing pad will you write to my people? So I write to my Mum, I said, 'I want milk, I want sugar' - we used to get everything in tins, tin milk - 'I want sugar, I want porridge'. I said 'I'm hungry... I want something...'

M: I put 'em all down.

T: This one [M] put 'em all down. I said 'how I'm gonna post it. I can't give it to Mr L. [the supervisor] he goin' to read it. I gonna give it to the skipper.

M: One of the boat boys.

T: I don't know how. You can give it to somebody. And they send that letter. They posted it for me. I had a big sack of food come for me. The next week. That fella post it.

I take it out. You know that big tin they call London Mixture. That was full of all kinda lollies. I gave everyone a little taste of everything I had in that bag. A couple of months after that, they [foster parents] wrote and I had a letter edged in black. I said, 'oh, my mum's died'. She died in Cairns hospital with cancer. Told me in the letter. And in that letter that come to me: 'I'm sending you...' might be say, money, but that all cut out. Superintendent cut that out. They keep that money. They use it for themselves.

There is no doubt that life under a mission regime was strict and disciplined. Letters were censored, and communication between residents and those outside was carefully controlled. Aborigines could be ordered to work on mission tasks up to thirty-two hours a week without remuneration. People who were Aboriginal or 'half-caste' or (for some provisions) those with any degree of Aboriginal descent, were placed under the protection of 'the Act'.\textsuperscript{56} Queensland reserves became repositories for Aboriginal criminal offenders or any Aborigines considered a threat to the white community.\textsuperscript{57} Released Aboriginal prisoners began to be sent to Yarrabah, along with 'incorrigibles' from other stations in the north.

Some women came voluntarily, for the schooling and protection offered by the mission, but most were there involuntarily, perhaps because of aborted liaisons with non-Aborigines - women who had been sexually used by men on bêche-de-mer boats and dumped

\begin{itemize}
  \item Goffman 1961.
  \item Mrs Tottie Joinbee and Mrs May Smith, residents of Cairns.
  \item The Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (Queensland) 1897.
  \item Reynolds 1978:165.
\end{itemize}

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ashore at different places along the Queensland coast when the men grew tired of them; or women who were pregnant to married men and therefore an embarrassment. One 'half-caste' woman from Port Douglas wanted to join the mission but Gribble refused her because she said she was a Roman Catholic and could not attend the Anglican Church.

The Protestant work ethic prevailed amongst early missionaries and other Europeans of the times. The aim of the missionaries was civilisation, being defined as the value systems and work patterns of Europe at that time, and Christianity in Western terms. The 'natives' were seen as indolent and until they could learn what hard work was, they could never become Christians. Work seemed to be the one avenue which would 'save' the Aborigines. Reverend W.I. Ivens, superintendent of Yarrabah in 1910, in his discourse at St Andrews Church in Sydney before leaving for the mission, stated:

In these reservations people must be made to work, and in work lay the ultimate hope of the preservation of the Aborigines. There was no reason why they should not be preserved. It was necessary that they should come under discipline. Success had already attended the efforts in this direction.

Success in the mission lay in the separation of the people from their surroundings. If any of these people were brought into towns or cities they were bound to go down. They had not behind them, as was the case with their white neighbours, centuries of civilization. So the people must be taken away from the towns and put into reservations.\(^{58}\)

With the notion that work and Christianity went hand in hand, it can be understood why the 'natives' might misinterpret a hymn taught to them in pidgin English by Gribble: 'Shall we gather at the river?' In the second verse, instead of singing 'We will walk and worship forever', it became 'We will work and wash up for ever'.\(^{59}\) Perhaps they had learnt their lesson well.

In 1939 when the 1897 Act was repealed and replaced by the Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act, and the Torres Strait Islanders Act, no real legislative changes occurred. The rubric 'Chief Protector' became 'Director of Native Affairs', but a change in title did not mean a change in the system. The new Act was as oppressive as the 1897 Act. District Protectors and Reserve Superintendents remained. The Director could still remove Aborigines to and from reserves (Section 22), and no Aborigine could leave a reserve, settlement or mission, even for a short time, without the permission of the Protector, Superintendent, or other authorised officer (Section 23). Permission had to be obtained from the District Protector for marriages between Aborigines. Superintendents could prohibit card games, dancing and 'native' customs, order residents to do thirty-two hours of work without payment, and control their bank accounts. They could also inflict corporal punishment. With the approval of the Director, a Protector or Superintendent could order any letters or mail addressed to or written by Aborigines to be opened and perused by him or some other officer deputed by him (Section 32). The new Act spelt out in even greater detail than the 1897 Act provisions for running reserves, while at the same time retaining the former provisions designed to protect Aborigines against exploitation by employers.

Under the 1939 Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act Aborigines believed to be sufficiently Europeanised could be exempted from the conditions of the Act.\(^{60}\) To obtain an exemption certificate a person had to be 'half-caste and civilised' and have no intercourse with Aborigines, and then only on satisfying the Department of Native Affairs of his

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\(^{58}\) *The Cairns Post*, 4 August 1910.

\(^{59}\) Gribble 1930:99.

\(^{60}\) Fitzgerald 1983:509.
ability to manage his own affairs. Once a person was exempt from the Act he was not allowed to live on a mission or settlement. So in order to be granted an exemption certificate, the exemptee had to cut himself off from further contact with all those members of his family who were not exempt, or who were still living on a mission or reserve.

An ability to manage their own affairs and acceptance of the rule of no contact with other Aborigines, still did not ensure that an exemption certificate would be granted to those who applied. In 1932, forty-two applications for exemption were received in Queensland but only fifteen were granted after careful investigation of the claims as regards the character, education, intelligence and ‘breed’.61

In 1933, Bishop Dixon, Assistant Bishop of Brisbane, spoke out on the poverty of material conditions at Yarrabah, and suggested that the mission be handed over to the Government. In August that year the Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions accepted the resignation of the Yarrabah Committee at Brisbane and agreed to the transfer of the management of Yarrabah mission to the Diocese of North Queensland. Members of the Australian Board of Missions were strongly of the opinion that the management of the mission should be vested in a Committee at Townsville rather than solely in the Bishop of North Queensland, and that such a Committee should be nominated by the Province of Queensland. However, Yarrabah did not come under the control of the Bishop of North Queensland at this time. There was a lot of ill-feeling between the Bishop and the Superintendent at Yarrabah (in 1933 this was McCullough); the latter was continually left uncertain about his future at the mission.62

A lot of correspondence passed between McCullough and Canon John Stafford Needham, Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions in Sydney. McCullough pointed out that as a lay superintendent he had always been particularly careful never to interfere in the religious side of the mission. The Bishop of North Queensland nevertheless insisted that a member of the clergy should be superintendent and in March 1935, Needham wrote to McCullough advising him that he would no longer be superintendent. There had been a board meeting and a new management committee had been set up. Its members were the Archbishop of Brisbane, the Bishop of North Queensland and the Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions ex officio. The Bishop had won his case.

That same month (March 1935) the Queensland Government sent a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the care and treatment of Aborigines in various settlements and missions. By May 1935, Palm Island was closed to fresh admissions except diseased Aborigines and Yarrabah was taking its place as a penal settlement. Because of the large Government subsidy given to Yarrabah it could not refuse entry to persons sent by the Government. McCullough was extremely concerned about the image of the mission to the general public; he suggested to Needham that it was now time for the Government to assume full responsibility for Yarrabah. To Aborigines in outback Queensland, the name 'Yarrabah' was equated with 'prison'. Despite this image, the Brisbane Committee instructed McCullough to keep no one at Yarrabah against his will. McCullough said that he had always told anyone who desired to leave that he could go if he liked, but that practically no one had left during his years as superintendent.

Any superintendent of Yarrabah was in the unenviable position of having the Committee Treasurer tell him to 'keep costs down as funds were low' while the 'inmates',

62 ABM Archives, Letters 1930-1935, between Superintendent McCullough and Needham, Chairman of ABM from 1922-1942, Box 1, Series 1, Folder 2.
public, and various government officials accused him of starving the people. The cost of running the mission was always more than the funds available. The existence of the mission was continually endangered because of insufficient finance and lack of qualified personnel, even though everything possible was done by the staff to keep things going (sugar mills were canvassed to donate free sugar, attempts were made to grow cotton and agricultural products, and sand was analysed for minerals). Between 1937 and 1947 the cost per annum of running the mission increased from £4,700 to £19,935\(^{63}\) and the mission was continually in debt.

1940-1950: the War and its aftermath

It was not until the 1940's, during the second World War, that events in the wider world began to influence the Aborigines in Queensland to any significant extent. Aboriginal labour was necessary to replace the European Australians who were fighting overseas. These years gave Aborigines an insight into European society as well as greater confidence in their own abilities. The War years are regarded by some of the Yarrabah people as a time when things came together for Aboriginal people:

> When the second World War started, everything came better for us see. They were short of labour in the cane field so they had to pull us outa there [Yarrabah]. Outa the mission ya know. They couldn't get any other people. All the Italian farmers, most of them was unnaturalised. They had to take 'em away to get intern ya know. I remember I was cuttin' cane in Mossman there. 1941, when the war started here. We come out for the week and go back every weekend. Go back to Yarrabah.\(^{64}\)

Yarrabah Aborigines were working on the Atherton Tablelands harvesting peanuts, cowpeas and maize. The majority of Aborigines employed throughout the state worked in the pastoral industry. Although the gangs were supervised by European overseers of the Department of Native Affairs, this was an opportunity for Aborigines to prove their capabilities in the white man's arena. During the five years of the War, exemptions averaged one hundred per year throughout Queensland. In 1946 the number of exemptions was one hundred and thirteen, and 3,500 Aborigines were employed in jobs that Europeans normally occupied.\(^{65}\) Wherever there was a shortage of white labour, Aborigines were called upon. A great improvement in conditions for Aborigines was that they were paid award wages. The labour supplied by Aborigines recruited from church missions and government settlements saved the pastoral industry in Queensland during the war years, a fact admitted by the Department of Native Affairs.\(^{66}\) In 1948, there were two hundred Aborigines cutting cane in the Ingham area and further north. Exemptions in 1948 numbered one hundred and eleven throughout the state.

The 1950s: problems and tensions over management

By December 1950 the population of Yarrabah numbered six hundred and ninety-five. Despite an increasing population, funding for the running of the mission remained inadequate. In the decade 1950-1960, when public criticism of the management of the mission was high, a Government handover was often discussed. The Cairns Post reported

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\(^{63}\) ABM Archives, Southcott 1984:5.  
\(^{64}\) Thomas Allen.  
\(^{65}\) Queensland Parliamentary Papers, Annual report of the Director of Native Affairs, 1944.  
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 1946.
constant problems and tensions at Yarrabah, and controversies over the management of the mission. In the latter half of the 1950's Yarrabah required a staff of 15 or 16 people, and cost approximately £1,000 a week to maintain.67 There was a high turnover of priests and staff; sometimes the position of superintendent was held by a resident priest, at other times the superintendent was not a member of the clergy. Between 1954 and 1960 Yarrabah was even without a priest for two and a half years. This decade was a time of rapid change and one in which Aborigines began to take more positive action towards change.

The 1950's saw many individuals from mission stations throughout Queensland moving off the reserves for schooling. At Yarrabah, more children were attaining higher levels of schooling and more exposure to living in an off-mission environment by attending outside schools. Few children in the early part of this decade attained an educational level beyond grade three, in spite of the fact that grades four to six nominally existed. But by 1956, many children were reaching grades five and six before fourteen years of age. Boys who attended school after age fourteen were given one shilling per week, the same as trainee boys, in an effort to encourage them to remain at school and continue their education. By 1958, many children were reaching grade seven.

Recreation and entertainment improved during the 1950's. Full cinema programs were shown each week from 1956 and playground equipment was donated. Living standards improved with new timber frame houses and WC's, weatherboard houses with galvanized roofing replaced sub-standard houses. Free milk was delivered to schoolchildren. A weir and irrigation pipes to farms were constructed; a jail block and compound were completed.

Despite the apparent improvements in education and living standards - improvements in a Western sense - the Yarrabah people still did not control their own lives, nor have any real input into decision-making. Permission still had to be obtained for even the fundamental rights of obtaining employment, leaving the Reserve, and getting married.

Off-Reserve employment during the War years had enhanced the self-image of Aboriginal workers and had given them more insight into the possibility of being able to survive independently in the wider world. By this decade, many had already left the mission while others were working outside. Mission authorities were complaining that they did not have enough 'able-bodied men' to perform the heavy labour necessary to keep the mission going. Men employed outside usually lived in bachelor barracks on the work site. Their wives and children stayed behind at the mission. If a man decided to leave his job for any reason he had to notify the superintendent; if he left and could not be found, the superintendent would get the police to search for him and return him to the mission.

People working in seasonal occupations returned to the mission during the wet season. These workers looked upon their between-season stays as a holiday - an attitude which did not please mission staff. However, it is not surprising that the seasonal workers maintained this attitude on their return as, upon resuming mission work, they were repaid only by rations for the first thirty-two hours' work, and a few shillings cash for a subsequent eight hours' labour. Men were employed as carpenters, farm hands, policemen, storeworkers, and in fencing and general maintenance. Some people were employed on wages but only if the superintendent considered their service adequate. He could, at his discretion, take workers off wages should their work prove unsatisfactory, and give them rations only.

In 1953, farm workers at Dijinghi Settlement, an outstation of Yarrabah, requested either an increase in wages or an increase in rations. Upon consideration of this request the Yarrabah Committee decided only to make a redistribution of rations to suit the workers. In 1955, the Yarrabah Committee felt that Aborigines on rations should in accordance with

government regulations, continue to work thirty-two hours a week for rations and those being paid should work forty hours a week.68

By the mid-1950's residents were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the way they were being treated at the mission. Behaviour that Gribble would have regarded as serious misconduct to be severely punished, was now not serious enough to warrant a Removal Order. Repeated 'misdemeanors' (such as adultery and petty theft) prompted requests by the Yarrabah Committee to the Director of Native Affairs (DNA) for Removal Orders, but the DNA refused to issue Removal Orders on these grounds.

In 1956, a group of Yarrabah men decided to take positive steps to alter their position. These men were working in the cane fields outside and had been discussing their situation with members of the Trade and Labour Council in Cairns. It was decided that a visit should be arranged for the Council members to visit the mission in order to inspect the working conditions there.

In 1957 Union delegates were given permission to visit Yarrabah without the superintendent's knowledge of their association with the Trade and Labour Council. Following this visit allegations were made in the local newspaper about the poor conditions at Yarrabah. An article in *The Cairns Post* 69 reported that:

- conditions at Yarrabah were appalling; the sanitation was not good, a lighting plant was in operation but lights were only installed in staff quarters and street lights were only in administration areas; Aboriginal homes were extremely depressing and dilapidated with neither furniture nor cooking facilities. Men had to work 32 hours a week for the right to rations, and had to work an extra eight hours above the 32 hours in order to earn nine shillings and sixpence a week. Discipline was contrary to all concepts of British justice.

In spite of this report, the Yarrabah Committee felt that these allegations could be ignored because they were neither directed at, nor detrimental to, the Church. However, as a result of this incident the mission staff decided that the general public would not be admitted to the mission except during the general tourist season.

While only two exemption certificates were granted to Yarrabah people in 1955, and nine (three families) in 1956, between 1957 and 1959 there was a large exodus of residents from Yarrabah. Exemptions had been possible under legislation since the 1939 Act, but not many had been granted. Permission for exemption still had to be obtained from the Director of Native Affairs with the approval of the superintendent. However, in the 1950's with allegations of mismanagement, increasing financial difficulties faced by the Church, and Aborigines themselves pressing for change, more applications for exemption were being received and the Church's policy became 'schooling people for exemption'.70 People were sent out for short-term employment then returned to the mission. When they appeared capable of self-support and self-control a job was found for them. If the man were married, the job would be one which would provide for himself and his family, at which time an exemption certificate was granted for the man, his wife and their children.71 By 1958 exemptions were given to as many people as possible with the goal of eventual...

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68 ABM Archives, Minutes of the Yarrabah Committee Meeting, 14 February 1955, Box 2, Folder 5.
69 18 October 1957.
70 ABM Archives, Superintendent Wilcox's report to ABM, December 1958, Box 1, Folder 4.
71 ABM Archives, Minutes of the Yarrabah Committee Meeting, 4 December 1958, Box 1, Folder 6.
assimilation of the whole population. The 1939 Act remained in force until 1965 when the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islands Affairs Act was passed.

A letter from Wilcox, the Yarrabah Superintendent in 1958, to Father Coaldrake, Australian Board of Missions, Sydney, dated 20 November 1958, indicates he was overwhelmingly in favour of the Church's handing the mission over to the Government. His main reason was that, in spite of their unsparing efforts to secure staff when needed, the Church was not able to supply enough staff, or staff with the right qualifications, who were willing to stay at the mission for any length of time. The major problem for the Church was that it had to administer both law and grace. To enforce law meant that the Church became unpopular, defeating its aims of making any progress in the spiritual domain. In a letter dated 6 December 1958,72 Bishop Ian Shevill (North Queensland Diocese) wrote to Coaldrake at Australian Board of Missions, Sydney, to the effect:

I think that after fifty years battling with insufficient money and insufficient men, the policy of this Diocese and the Yarrabah Committee would be to give the Mission back to the Government with grateful hearts if they would accept it.

At the end of 1959 it was agreed that the Government should take over the temporal control of the mission, but that the spiritual needs of the people should be the sole responsibility of the Anglican Church, the Chaplain to be appointed by the Bishop of the North Queensland Diocese, and paid by the State through Church channels. After being run in turn by the Gribbles, the Australian Board of Missions and the Diocese of North Queensland to this point, the Government was to take control for the next twenty-five to twenty-six years. It was believed that after this period, following a policy of assimilation, there would no longer be the need for a mission at all.

In 1960, the Queensland Government initiated legislation which ultimately removed all missions in the state from the Churches and into its control. Thus, as of 1 July 1960, the Government managed and funded Yarrabah and became responsible for the material and social welfare (health and education) of its residents. The Diocese had exclusive spiritual rights, and the Australian Board of Missions, freed of any further financial responsibilities, was to retain the right to suggest suitable personnel.

Summary

This paper has given an historical account of Yarrabah mission from 1892 to 1960. It has shown the various choices open to Aboriginal people living on the mission, the constraints they were forced to suffer while living within a white-dominated social system, and the actions they took in response to these constraints. During this epoch there was a change in the strategies used by Aborigines, as well as a change in the views of the white majority towards Aborigines. The early Government policy of isolating Aborigines from the rest of the population, legislated by the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897 (later repealed and superseded by the Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act of 1939) enabled the missionaries to gather together recruits. Both Church and Government policy reinforced each other in their notions of protection for Aborigines. A paternalistic policy of protecting Aborigines from their own and others' vices, as well as protecting the purity of the white race, ensured ease of gathering recruits for the mission. It was thought that Aborigines, particularly 'half-castes', would be better off on isolated mission stations and reserves. Inmates who attempted to change or evade the system by rebellion or escape, were constrained by being removed or forcibly returned.

72 ABM Archives, Letter of 6 December 1958 from Shevill to Coaldrake, Box 1, Folder 4.
Thus, within a protective framework, action on the part of the Aborigines was systematically suppressed.

Visitors to the mission at various times discovered that conditions for the residents were far from idyllic in spite of the fact that Yarrabah was purported to be a model mission. Newspaper accounts made the general public more aware of the plight of Aborigines and, over the years, Aborigines themselves were able to publicise their position. Mission management altered over time, and mission personnel continually changed after Gribble left. Ill feelings between secular management and sacred authority did not promote a smooth-run administration for the mission; as well, financial problems in managing the mission exacerbated personnel clashes. A growing population of Aborigines, rather than a disappearing race, was making the notion of smoothing the dying pillow more and more remote.

Outside employment made Aborigines more conscious of what life off the mission was like, and undoubtedly made them more aware of the differences between their own situation and that of non-Aborigines. In the War years of the 1940's, when Aboriginal men were desperately needed to fill jobs normally undertaken by European males, it became obvious that they could in fact take their place as workers alongside Europeans.

Growing discontent with the mismanagement of the mission in the 1950's, and more public sympathy toward their plight, made it easier for Aborigines in this decade to take action to effect radical change. By this time, escape, expulsion and exemption had all been tried, not without results, but in the decade 1950 to 1960, residents were able to more effectively express their discontent with the system and bring about a desired change. In this decade also, there was more outspokenness on the part of Aborigines in other areas of Australia, better education, and a Government policy of assimilation. Internal dissension occurred simultaneously with a growing concern by mission management with the ineffectiveness of the entire Yarrabah system.

Change was inevitable, but there were a number of factors, rather than any isolated incident, which resulted in the collapse of Church authority and the Government takeover. Internal changes, in the form of Aboriginal action, occurred at the same time as the breakdown of the mission structure. Both events contributed to the changes of the late 1950's.

In spite of some of the gruesome stories that are recounted by the old people today, some reflect about life in the early days on the mission as 'the good old days'. Seen in the light of today's seemingly anarchic disorder,73 present-day elderly residents look back on the past as a time of order, control and non-violence. Selective memory often eliminates unpleasant incidents and evokes times past as halcyon days. When the 'ole gels' [older women] get together today they express a sense of camaraderie and solidarity as they reminisce about shared past experiences. On reminiscing, some remember those days as being 'wonderful'; others look back and recognise the physical restrictions and sometimes cruelty imposed on them.

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‖. Margaret Southcott, 'A guide to the Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions' correspondence relating to Aborigines 1891-1976.' Unpublished MS, 1984.


*The Cairns Post*, 4 August 1910; 6 October 1910; 27 October 1910; 29 November 1910; 11 May 1911; 26 October 1911; 19 April 1915; 18 October 1957.


‖. *A despised race*. Sydney, 1933.


‖. *Annual report of the Director of Native Affairs*. 1944, 1946.


Rosser, B. *This is Palm Island*. Canberra, 1977.


*Walkabout*, 1 July 1955.

In a recent article on the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship in which he reminisces about a journey from Sydney to Tingha, Jack Horner wrote, 'Just why a single-minded concern for Aborigines should have seized so many middle-class white people in Australia in the 1950s is a mystery. You might call it a miracle'.

Whether the interest shown in the city of Armidale was a mystery is doubtful. It was almost too inevitable to be called a miracle. The development of the University of New England had attracted people not only from the capital cities, with little experience of Aborigines, but also people from other countries with no experience of them at all. These Australian and overseas newcomers were shocked by the living conditions of the Aborigines located as they were on the fringes of the town rubbish dump in 'houses' made of hessian bags, sheets of corrugated iron and cardboard boxes. The normal facilities of town life - water, sewerage and electricity - were non-existent. Few white people visited these 'houses' but no-one could be ignorant that they were there. Nor could they be unaware of Aborigines visiting the town, or of Aboriginal children attending the schools. The effect was to make these white newcomers feel that something simply had to be done, but no-one knew quite where to begin.

It was at this time that an organisation was formed of women academics and wives of academics, known as the University Women's Association. Several of its members were women who had already looked at the possibility of doing something for the local Aborigines. They suggested that this could be a worthwhile project for the Women's Association to take up. There was some very strong opposition from within the organisation, however, from members who wished it to be solely a social group. Not only did they express opposition to becoming involved in what they saw as welfare work, but some also felt uncomfortable that long-term residents of the New England area might be offended at the implied criticism of their treatment of the Aborigines. The meeting was persuaded to reject the idea.

A visit not long after from the writer Kylie Tennant provided a catalyst. Hearing of her visit, several University women arranged to meet her and discuss the matter, telling of their interest in the Aborigines and their feelings of impotence about the problem. Her response was immediate; she suggested they visit the 'Dump' with her.

What they saw that day filled them with a sense of horror and a feeling that here was a matter calling for their urgent attention. During that visit they met and spoke to several Aboriginal women.

Soon after this, on 27 October 1956, a group of 28 people met at the home of Professor and Mrs Jackson to discuss the problem. They formed themselves into an

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1 Horner 1987:33.
2 This dump was on Crown land just outside the town boundaries and within the boundaries of Dumaresq Shire.
organisation which they called the Armidale Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines, to be known as the AAA. The usual officers were elected, a Management Committee formed, and several people were given specific tasks such as approaching the local Member to enquire about the availability of Housing Commission homes, finding out about Far West holidays for Aboriginal children and collecting toys for the coming Christmas. The membership subscription fee was set at five shillings. Formation of the Association was reported in the local newspaper, where the aims of the group were said to include 'cooperation with other interested bodies to investigate the housing needs of the local aboriginal families and ameliorate them where possible, and the giving of assistance by personal contact where needed'.

The use of the term 'Assimilation', which was later to come into disrepute, was a perfectly acceptable one at the time. The idea had originally been adopted in 1937 at the first of the conferences called by the Federal Government between Federal and State Aboriginal Departments. The Second World War intervened and it was not until the 1950s that the idea was officially adopted. In October 1951, Mr (later Sir) Paul Hasluck reported to the House of Representatives that the Native Welfare Conference held in the previous month had agreed that assimilation is the objective of native welfare measures. Assimilation means in practical terms, that, in the course of time, it is expected that all persons of aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do. The acceptance of this policy governs all other aspects of native affairs administration.

Assimilation thus became official government policy and this unambiguous aim was confirmed a decade later at the Native Affairs Conference of 1961.

...Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs as other Australians.

Assimilation thus assumed the complete absorption of the Aborigines into the wider Australian community, both socially and economically. What it also assumed, while not spelling it out, was that Aborigines would willingly abandon their own culture and possibly their own people for the 'superior' European way of living. The Armidale group do not appear to have questioned this. Their Constitution stated that, 

The ultimate aim of the Association shall be the acceptance of all Aboriginal people into the Australian community on the basis of complete equality with the other members of that community.

There is evidence that the AAA was able to put this theory into practice from the earliest days of its existence. While no Aborigines attended the foundation meeting, a month later

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3 The word 'Assimilation' was dropped in 1965, but the initials remained the same.
4 Armidale Express, 2 November 1956.
5 Rowley 1971:25.
6 Extract from speech delivered to House of Representatives, 18 October 1951, quoted in Stone 1974.
an Aboriginal woman undertook to make enquiries about a possible meeting room at the Police Boys' Club.  

There was little opposition to the concept of assimilation because it was believed that most of the Aborigines' problems would be overcome once they were assimilated into European society. As citizens they would qualify for the benefits and rights of citizenship. That was a most desirable aim as far as the Armidale group was concerned. It was only later that people began to question the concept on the grounds that it would negate traditional Aboriginal culture. The AAA was also to find that there were elements within the local white population of Armidale who would not approve of assimilation if it meant that Aborigines were to become their close neighbours.

The Management Committee met for the first time on 31 October 1956 when a sub-committee was formed to investigate the possibility of establishing a handicraft industry for the Aborigines of the district. Another meeting on 20 November 1956 looked at the report of this sub-committee and discussed its recommendations including the buying or hiring of a knitting machine and looms, and instructing Aboriginal women and girls in the use of these. The resulting products would be sold by the Association. A meeting a few days later agreed that the Association should purchase a knitting machine.

There was emphasis at the November meeting on the urgent need for decent housing. It was also decided to approach Dean Jones, the Anglican Dean of Armidale, to suggest that two Aboriginal boys could be billeted in St John's, the hostel run by the Church of England for country boys attending Armidale High School.

Within a month of its formation the Association had 40 members, both Aborigines and whites, by far the largest groups being University academics and their spouses. There were 36 present at the first General Meeting of 27 November 1956. Several matters were discussed including the availability of a room for hire in the town suitable for handicrafts, at a rental of fifteen shillings per week. Eighteen people, two of them Aborigines, undertook to donate a shilling a week towards this rental. There was some discussion on the Constitution of the Association.

Among the names of possible Patrons put forward was that of the anthropologist, Professor A.P. Elkin. It was also suggested that Dr Stanner should be invited to Armidale to address a study group on local Aboriginal issues.

One of the earliest projects was the setting up of a Relief Fund and a sub-committee to administer it. Its main aims were:
1. to establish and administer a fund for the relief of Aborigines in necessitous circumstances
2. to assist with medical, dental and other expenses for the restoration of health and well-being of Aborigines who could not otherwise afford necessary treatment.

Very early in the piece the Association divided its priorities into three categories - housing, education and employment. Various people were delegated to make enquiries about housing from the Housing Commission, Davis Hughes the local Member of Parliament, and the Aboriginal Welfare Board. When a local Aborigine applied to the Association for help with a £150 deposit on a £500 house, their response was to delegate two people to

8 Minutes of the AAA, 27 November 1956.
9 Minutes of Management Committee Meeting, 20 November 1956.
10 The first boy was accepted into the Hostel two months later. Minutes of Management Committee Meeting, 25 January 1957.
11 Minutes of the AAA, 27 November 1956.
12 No Patrons appear to have been appointed.
examine the house and report back to the Association. In due course they reported that the
house was over-valued and would prove a severe liability to any purchaser, the plumbing,
fencing and sewerage all requiring urgent and expensive attention.13 While this project was
therefore abandoned, it was decided that the main office bearers of the AAA should sign
letters of support to accompany the man's application for a Housing Commission home.
The Association would hold itself responsible for the initial payment and legal expenses.14

In May 1957 the Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines held its first Annual
General Meeting where they were able to report that in the first six months of the
Association's life they had found employment for several Aborigines; had helped establish a
boy at St John's hostel assisting with his school uniform and other expenses; established a
club room where whites and Aborigines met and had given practical help with several health
problems.15

There was some opposition in Armidale to all this activity because it was believed that
more Aborigines would be attracted to the city in the hope of benefiting from the work of
the Association. These predictions seemed to have come true when the Armidale City
Council debated the problem of the shifting population of Aborigines at the 'Dump'.
Alderman E.M.Wilson, a local doctor, said she was deeply concerned about the unhealthy
conditions in which they were living, including lack of water. 'It is pitiable to see the state
of the youngsters' she said, and she suggested that they should be asked to return to the
places they came from. There was considerable discussion on the matter and one alderman,
R.B.Madgwick, (who was also the Vice-Chancellor of the University) said: 'We may solve
our problems by sending the squatters from one place to another, but we don't solve
theirs.'16

The result of this discussion was the setting up of a conference between the Armidale
City Council, a representative from the Aborigines Welfare Board, the Armidale police and
the AAA. This conference took place on 20 November 1957, and one outcome was that the
Association issued a policy statement in January 1958 in which they said, among other
things, that assimilation had to be started with those Aborigines who had already shown by
their own initiative that they were ready for it.

That means that in Armidale, for instance, any house built for aborigines
should go, not to the destitute people of the Dump, but to one of the eight or
nine families who are in relatively steady employment and are capable
therefore of properly using such a house. With adequate employment and good
housing which they then pay for, the future is theirs to make for themselves
without further assistance.17

This was very much a part of the assimilation idea - Aborigines who had already embraced
some European values were the most likely candidates to accept them all, to be drawn fully
into white society, to become part of that society, and to be accepted by it.

The AAA's policy statement argued against separating the Aborigines from white
society, and putting them out of sight in camps. Apart from the fact that the Aborigines
themselves did not want this, the AAA argued that it was counter-productive:

13 Minutes of the AAA, 12 December 1956.
14 Ibid., 10 January 1957.
15 Ibid., 7 May 1957.
16 Armidale Express, 18 September 1957.
17 Ibid., 29 January 1958.
ASSIMILATION IN A COUNTRY TOWN

The whole programme of assimilation is one of helping the aboriginal to the point where he can move in the general community without further assistance. ... the aborigine can only learn the ways of white society when he is in that society. Assimilation cannot even be commenced in segregation.18

Not surprisingly, one of the priorities of the AAA was the provision of houses and in 1958 the Association's major project was the building of a house for rental to an Aboriginal family. The Association had already assisted with the furnishing of a house which had been built by volunteer labour using donated materials. This had been done under the supervision of Father Francis Kelly and a group of concerned laity with the backing of Bishop Doody, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Armidale.19 At the official opening of the house, Father Kelly said he was 'most grateful for the goodwill and encouragement' of the AAA.20 The President of the AAA, Edna McIntosh, also spoke at the function and praised Father Kelly's 'excellent example'.

A couple of months later the committee of the AAA, having raised enough money to buy a block of land, launched an appeal to build a house for an Aboriginal family. The Armidale Express of 22 March 1957 carried a large headline 'Proposal for Second House for Aborigines'. It reported that the AAA had received several tentative offers of raw materials and labour. Various fund raising activities were organised, one of the first of which was a concert in the Armidale Town Hall given by the Aboriginal tenor Harold Blair. The Armidale branch of the Apex Club was associated with the AAA in this appeal. The local Parliamentary member, Davis Hughes MLA drew a promise that 'If it is possible to do so' the State government would provide a £ for £ subsidy.21

Not everybody approved of the idea, however, for just as the foundations were about to be laid, a petition opposing the house began circulating in East Armidale, where the house was to be situated. The current President of the AAA, Ken Long, assured the petitioners that the Association intended to build a house 'which will compare more than favourably with the general standards of housing in Armidale', it would not be a 'shack or shanty'.22 Following the publication of this statement, a correspondent using the alias 'Protest', explained that the objection was not to houses being built for Aborigines, but to the visitors such houses would attract with their 'foul language, drunken brawls, filthy habits and audacity'.23

An argument over this issue raged in the local newspaper for some days. One correspondent suggested that the AAA should have held a referendum throughout Armidale to seek approval for building a house for an Aboriginal family, instead of 'upsetting the peace of the community'. The writer claimed that a move should be made to provide comfort for them outside the municipality in a settlement by themselves where they could be happiest, and provided this was done in the proper manner and place, quite a lot of assistance could be expected from sympathisers. From my experience of the aborigine nature,
they have no more desire to assimilate with the white race than we have to mix with them.24

The Publicity Officer of the AAA pointed out that it would be appalling if citizens could not move within their own town without a referendum of the whole town, and added that the family selected to rent the house had been 'known and respected in Armidale for many years'.25 This episode had made it clear that the idea of assimilation was far from universally acceptable.

In spite of this opposition to housing Aborigines within the town boundaries, there was plenty of volunteer labour to complete the building of the house. This ranged from students who cleaned second-hand bricks, to a local solicitor who gave his time voluntarily to attend to all the legal aspects of the project. Building materials, plumbing supplies, windows, electrical fittings etc. were donated by firms and individuals. Someone even donated a load of firewood.26

The house in Chapel Street was officially opened by the Chief Secretary (C.A.Kelly) on 29 November 1958. A few days later he told the Legislative Assembly that the committee of the Armidale AAA was the greatest he had encountered in his ministerial work: 'No words of mine could express my admiration for that committee'.27

Jack Horner, who happened to be in Armidale on the day the house was handed over to an Aboriginal family, described the ceremony almost thirty years later and wrote:

The idea of donating a new home for a good family was well-meaning and popular, full of whitefella notions that by changing the environment you change the human being.28

Perhaps, 30 years on, many of the original members of the AAA might agree with this interpretation of their actions. The words 'assimilation' and 'absorption' had become interchangeable by the 1950s, and absorption was only possible if Aborigines conformed to the 'norms' of Australian life. What better way than by providing them with a house? As Rowley has suggested, the policy of assimilation took on the status of 'some kind of divine plan',29 a plan which the AAA was working to fulfil.

Whatever their motives, however, it was obvious to the members of the AAA that there was still a very long way to go in housing the Aboriginal families of Armidale. Approaches were made to the Aborigines Welfare Board and although hopes were raised in 1959 they came to nothing because of a shortage of funds.

Matters were brought to a head by a tragedy. In February 1960 two Aborigines from the 'Dump' died and there was an outbreak of severe gastric illness among children living there. At the Coronial inquest descriptions were given of the appalling sanitary conditions, conditions which had been reported by the City Health Surveyor soon after the deaths had occurred.30 Then in the following October it was reported that four children had died and a further eleven were in hospital as a result of those dreadful living conditions.31

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26 Ibid., 28 November 1958.
27 Ibid., 3 December 1958. This house was eventually sold to the Aborigines Welfare Board, AAA, AGM, 1966:3.
30 Armidale Express, 2 March 1960.
31 Ibid., 14 October 1960.
Hughes, the local Member, addressed the Legislative Assembly on the matter, appealing for government help. The local newspaper published editorials on the case in two consecutive editions. The first editorial seemed to hold the AAA and other volunteer workers partly to blame for the tragedy:

The proper housing of Aborigines is not an Armidale task, and must never be accepted as such. It is because the people of this district have endeavoured to do something for these unfortunates that the present tragedy has arisen.\(^{32}\)

The implication, though not clearly stated, seems to have been that if volunteers had kept out of the way, governments would have stepped in sooner.

The response of the AAA to the deaths of the children was to put a petition before the people of Armidale, calling on the Government of NSW to provide decent housing not only for the Aborigines of the Armidale district, but for all other Aborigines who lived in similar circumstance on the outskirts of country towns. On the first Saturday morning 1345 signatures were collected in the main street as people shopped, and a further 648 in various churches on the following day.\(^{33}\) The final figure was a little over 2680.\(^{34}\)

While this petition was still doing the rounds of Armidale it was announced that the State Government was making £25,000 available to clean up the 'Dump', (which was now being called the 'Reserve'), put in sewerage and build several cottages for the Aborigines currently living there. This was an increase of £18000 on the sum of £7000 previously allocated for the building of four houses. The AAA announced that it would continue to collect signatures on behalf of Aborigines of other country towns - 'the problem is not solved simply by cleaning up the Armidale Dump.'\(^{35}\)

On the same day that this announcement was made, it was reported that the Armidale City Council and the Dumaresq Shire Council had begun the installation of sanitary units and that by the end of the day each Aboriginal family at the 'Dump' would have a toilet unit.\(^{36}\) The Armidale City Council had been requested by the Shire Council to supply these services, as the Shire did not have the facilities.

Discussions on the future of the 'Dump' or 'Reserve' took on a new urgency because with the planned extension of the City boundaries on 1 January 1961, its management would become the business of Armidale City Council. While debating this some members of Council came to the conclusion that a Welfare Officer should be appointed to supervise the settlement. Although Alderman Wilson seconded the motion calling for a Welfare Officer, she did not go along with the congratulatory message to the State Government for providing the money for extra Aboriginal housing. Far from helping the Armidale Aborigines, she argued that the lure of houses would draw Aborigines from all over the place. 'You will have masses of people coming', she said which in the long run would do little good for the local people.

Speaking in reply to the debate, Alderman K. Long, (a former President of the AAA and a member of the University administration) who had proposed the motion, acknowledged that the Government's willingness to spend money on the Reserve would bring its own problems for the Council:

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 17 October 1960.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 26 October 1960.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., 19 October 1960.
\(^{36}\) Ibid.
I think we are going to get very, very grave problems, and we are going to have to insist on quite different standards from what Dumaresq Shire insisted on.\(^{37}\)

Six months later, the announcement that a Welfare Officer had been appointed was made at the same time that the letting of a contract for the building of the fourteen houses was announced\(^{38}\). The AAA took an interest in both the design for these houses and the material to be used, and a deputation from the Association visited the Chief Secretary to discuss these matters. As a result of their representations, it was decided that the new houses should be insulated, and that a bedroom doorway planned to open into the middle of the living room should be placed elsewhere\(^{39}\).

The Association also swung into action immediately to assist Aboriginal families who were to move into the houses. Two kinds of help were sought - aid with furniture and equipment, and longer term help with 'acclimatisation' once they moved into the homes. This was expected to take the form of help and advice about cleaning and general care of the houses\(^{40}\).

Fourteen Aboriginal families moved into their new three-bedroomed houses on the Reserve in November 1961. As a couple of families had already moved into Housing Commission homes in the town, the original shanties were now vacant. They were bulldozed, and Mr D.G.Yates, the Aboriginal Welfare Officer announced that the Aboriginal Welfare Board planned to beautify the Reserve with a garden area and a children's park\(^{41}\). It was from this time that the Aboriginal inhabitants referred to their new homes as 'Silver City', a name still used by some.

The Housing sub-committee of the Association was finally disbanded in December 1967, its surplus funds being divided between the General Fund ($218.56) and the Relief Fund\(^{42}\).

Housing was, of course, just one aspect of the AAA's assimilation programmes and several other projects were proceeding concurrently.

The very first project to be set up by the AAA was a social club. This was run weekly in the Literary Institute under the leadership of voluntary hostesses. The club was provided with sewing machines on which Aboriginal women were given sewing and dress-making lessons. It was reported at the end of the first year that many Aboriginal women attended the club regularly and declared that they wouldn't miss it for anything\(^{43}\). At one stage this club ceased to function because of a shortage of people to run it but more volunteers were quickly found and the club continued to flourish\(^{44}\).

From the earliest days of the AAA, Aboriginal health was on the agenda and one of the first programmes to be established was a baby clinic, where special attention was given to the diet of both babies and older children\(^{45}\). In the AAA's Fourth Annual Report it was mentioned that the sister in charge of the clinic reported a steady increase in the number of

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 26 October 1960.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 10 April 1961.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 3 May 1961.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 10 May 1961.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 6 November 1961.
\(^{42}\) Minutes of the AAA, 11 December 1967.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 4 September 1957.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 6 December 1957.
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The 'Dump' as it was.

The new houses.
Aboriginal mothers attending the clinic and an obvious understanding by them of what the clinic was trying to do. Proof of the clinic's success came when it was transferred to the official Baby Health Clinic attended by white families and the Aboriginal mothers continued to attend regularly, although at the suggestion of the organiser, Florence Le Gay Brereton, a separate day was set aside to encourage their attendance.

Another project concerning young babies was the holding of an Aboriginal Baby Show in which sixteen babies were entered. Pictures of the winners and their mothers appeared in the local paper.

The Catholic Church in Armidale also organised social events designed to assimilate Aborigines into white society. Among these were regular dances and an annual Debutantes' Ball at which the Bishop or a visiting dignitary received the Debutantes. The local paper always carried reports of these functions with photographs. Eventually the Church discontinued the management of these events, as it was felt this smacked of white paternalism. Instead, they handed over a religious-cultural centre where the Aborigines could conduct their own social events.

Members of the AAA showed an early concern for education ranging from kindergarten to high school. The Association ran a kindergarten initially once a week, with occasional pauses when teachers left and had to be replaced. In May 1962 the AAA announced that one of its major aims was to get a permanent kindergarten established on the Reserve, and this came to fruition in September 1963 with the aid of the Save the Children Fund. The kindergarten is still running in 1991, with an Aboriginal teacher.

One of the chief means of helping high school children was to raise the necessary funds to enable them to live at the Church hostels and to help with school uniforms and books. One girl was coached to help her to sit for nursing entrance exams. The Association declared education to be a high priority with them in order to 'break the pattern' of poor employment, housing and esteem. One project was the conducting of a homework centre which students from the University supervised. In later years an individual tutoring system was set up with 160 tutors listed as available.

In 1969 the Association wrote to the Education Department deploring the lack of an Aboriginal culture component in the school syllabus, and recommending the setting up of a committee, which should include Aborigines, to formulate suitable syllabuses.

Perhaps the AAA's most consistent effort to assimilate the Aborigines of the Armidale district was to help them to find employment. At one of their earliest meetings they discussed practical ways of finding suitable jobs. The University Registrar was

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48 Information from Florence Le Gay Brereton.
49 *Armidale Express*, 25 November 1957.
50 Flood 1979:124.
52 Ibid., 4 September 1957.
55 AAA Minutes of meeting, 9 September 1970.
56 Ibid., 29 April 1969.
57 Ibid., 27 November 1956.
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approached, so was the Armidale City Council.\textsuperscript{58} The Association was successful in getting some youths placed in apprenticeships.\textsuperscript{59} An Employment Committee was established and was often able to report success.\textsuperscript{60}

Establishing Aborigines in decent houses, helping them to see their children through secondary school, getting them jobs, teaching them skills and introducing them to European-style social activities, were all part of 'assimilation'. There is little doubt that the Europeans thus engaged achieved considerable success, and formed many real friendships with the Aborigines of Armidale. But the time came when those Europeans realised that the Aborigines were ready and able to take over all these functions for themselves.

The time also came when the policy of assimilation itself began to be questioned. The Association's original ideas had been confirmed by a visiting anthropologist who told an Armidale gathering - 'The only way to assimilate the aborigines is to get them living among white people'.\textsuperscript{61} Aborigines themselves seemed to go along with this idea when several of them told a forum at the University of New England that they wanted to live in houses in the town 'like white people'.\textsuperscript{62}

A different view was heard at a conference at the University in 1960, the eminent anthropologist Professor A.P. Elkin raised doubts about the efficacy of assimilation. He said it was not acceptable to large numbers of Aborigines, particularly the mixed bloods. They took it to imply loss of their distinct grouping in the community, and sought more for integration of groups where they could retain their Aboriginal identity. With New Australians achieving integration in small groups rather than as individuals, the idea of integration was gaining credence.\textsuperscript{63}

The matter of assimilation versus integration was discussed at the Annual General Meeting in 1964 when the President, Ralph Berman, raised doubts about integration. But in the following year's Report he spoke about the emergence of a committee formed among the Aborigines 'upon their own initiative' in which they discussed their own affairs and sought their own advancement, under the guidance of the Aborigines Welfare Board Officer and with a 'stiffening' of Europeans.\textsuperscript{64}

The whole of the 1965 Report was very optimistic in nature, but the President made one interesting prediction. He suggested that as the ability of Aborigines to stand on their own feet became evident, it could happen that the fear of competition could engender feelings of racism.\textsuperscript{65}

A special meeting was held on 4 May 1965 to consider a change of name for the organisation. A motion to rename the Armidale Association for the Advancement of Aborigines was amended to the Armidale Association for Aborigines, and the amendment was carried. The Secretary later explained:

the new name does not imply any change of aims or policies, it was merely felt to be clearer and less pretentious.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 20 February 1957 and 11 March 1957.
\textsuperscript{59} Letter to AAA from Aboriginal Welfare Board, April 1963.
\textsuperscript{60} Armidale Express, 6 May 1959.
\textsuperscript{61} J.R. Beckett, reported in the Armidale Express, 30 April 1958.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 25 May 1959.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 30 May 1960.
\textsuperscript{64} AAA Annual Report 1965:1.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.:3.
\textsuperscript{66} Letter from Joan Boyd, 14 July 1965, AAA Correspondence.
The Association continued to do much the same work and was very active during the 1967 Referendum campaign. Yet the name change did, in fact, acknowledge that the organisation had accepted a change of emphasis in its activities. Assimilation was no longer the sought after goal; integration had become the preferred option.

In later years many members of the organisation preferred to see their role as a political pressure group, although they still involved themselves with local issues. In December 1970 a notice was circulated inviting members to a 'Christmas' meeting, which would take the form of a discussion group to consider the proposed take-over of the Association by Aborigines. About 30 people attended this meeting, but as it was being treated as an informal gathering, no Minutes were taken, and no motions accepted.

For some time things had been moving towards a structural change in the organisation. Aborigines had been talking of taking the AAA over themselves, just as they were taking over similar progress associations throughout Australia at this time, and they were being encouraged by some white members who felt the purpose of the Association as far as Europeans were concerned, had run its course. This informal meeting was an outcome. In the months that followed, Aborigines began to run the AAA for themselves.

The Armidale Association had been a pioneer in the field of white-Aboriginal relationships. In the years following its foundation in 1956 it was approached by groups in many other country towns like Moree, Kempsey, Coffs Harbour and Bathurst seeking advice on setting up similar organisations. The Methodist Church of Australia sought information to put before its 1959 Queensland Conference. Perhaps some of this had to do with Armidale's status as a University city. While Armidale residents joined the AAA, it remained predominantly an organisation of University people. As well as dealing with day to day problems, they ran several conferences in association with the University's Adult Education Department. After one such conference which had been chaired by Professor Elkin, the Armidale Express published a letter with the bold headline, 'Thank You, Educated Armidale'.

Measuring the 'success' or otherwise of the AAA is difficult. They were certainly successful in the field of housing and employment and to a lesser extent in the area of education. When the ideal of assimilation lost favour in the general community to be replaced by integration, most of the Aborigines of the Armidale area were certainly ready to take that in their stride. They had been assuming an increasing role in the running of their affairs over the years; they had also been showing increasing confidence in dealing with the European world.

Those fourteen fibro cottages have recently been replaced by brick houses under the auspices of the Land Council, and the settlement in now called 'Narwan' by the local Aborigines.

A recent volume gives the view of one Aboriginal woman who as a young mother attended the club run by the AAA and learned to make clothes for her children on the Club's sewing machine:

After the reserve was built and the cottages were built and we all moved in, it was a beautiful time then because everybody took pride in their homes and everybody had a beautiful garden. Some people say a lot against th'assimilation but I just wonder if those people went through what we went through. You wouldn't knock anyone that was tryin' to help yer. I know they

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67 Letter from A.B.Lloyd, President, 3 December 1970, AAA Correspondence.
68 AAA Minutes, 24 September 1959.
69 Letter from Mrs M. E. Plater of Maclean, Armidale Express, 3 June 1959.
done a lot, the people of Armidale, th'assimilation people, it was all voluntary, they gave a lot of their time. Who gives up their time now without wantin' money to help blacksellers, eh?70

Discussing the whole episode recently with people who took part in the setting up and running of the Armidale Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines, I asked the question: 'Were they being hopelessly paternalistic?' There were several replies, one participant wondered if they were being unrealistic, even naive in trying to impart their white middle class ideas onto the Aborigines' life style. Florence Le Gay Brereton's was probably the most reassuring answer for those white middle classes: 'We did what seemed right at the time. To ignore the situation, to close our eyes to the way those people were living, - that would have been wrong.'

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ABORIGINAL WOMEN AS PROVIDERS: THE 1830s
ON THE SWAN

Sylvia J. Hallam

In *The passing of the Aborigines* Daisy Bates says of Fanny Balbuk, whom she considered to be 'the last [Aboriginal] Perth woman':

to the end of her life [in 1907] she raged and stormed at the usurping of her beloved home ground. One of her favourite annoyances was to stand at the gates of Government House, reviling all who dwelt within, because the stone gates guarded by a sentry enclosed her grandmother's burial ground... Balbuk had been born on Heirisson Island... and from there a straight track led to the place where once she had gathered *jilgies* and vegetable food with the women, in the swamp where Perth railway station now stands. Through fences and over them, Balbuk took the straight track to the end. When a house was built in the way, she broke its fence-palings with her digging stick and charged up the steps and through the rooms.

Balbuk's irresistible progress against arbitrary European barriers took her from the fishing grounds in the river shallows on the south side of the east-west Perth ridge to the

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1 Thus her claims to this locality were traced through the female line.
2 Heirisson Island separates the Swan River into two strands immediately east of the ridge on which Perth city centre was laid out. This west-east ridge commanded 'the flats', the shallows either side of Heirisson Island, the lowest crossing point on the river (except for the hazardous rocky bar at the mouth of the estuary in Fremantle) and was thus an important node in the Aboriginal communication and settlement systems. The ridge also commanded along its northern flank the subsistence resources of the line of lakes and swamps running east from Lake Monger through the low land north of the present railway to drain into the Swan along Claise Brook; and along its southern flank lay the rich fishing grounds in the shallows fringing Perth Water. Thus the Perth ridge was crucial to the Aboriginal group, 'Yalagonga's Tribe', whose holdings centred there. The ridge remained important in the British settlement pattern, and along its crest Sir James Stirling's surveyors laid out the four parallel streets which became the main arteries of the city of Perth - St Georges Terrace, Murray Street, Hay Street and Wellington Street. These link eastward to form 'The Causeway', which crosses the Swan via Heirisson Island, at what used to be 'the flats'. Not only was this crossing important in the Aboriginal communications system, it has remained so in the European system, right up to the present, when it carries the Great Eastern Highway with traffic to the airport and to the eastern states.

For the continuing importance of Heirisson Island to Aboriginal people see Baines 1988: 233-242.

3 *Jilgies* are small freshwater crayfish.
5 See footnote 2.
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lakes and swamps along the northern flank of the ridge, linking the major resource areas at
the core of her group's terrain. The indomitable old lady, insisting on gathering
predominantly plant foods from the resource patches where she and her mother and her
mother's mother had held rights since time immemorial, can stand for all the generations of
Aboriginal women who, before and after the coming of Europeans, had provided their
families with the basic carbohydrate staples which comprised the bulk of their diet, and with
the small protein supplements (jilgies, frogs, turtles, lizards), which together gave their
families adequate nutrition, whether or not the men ever justified their fireside boast of
hunting prowess. Fish were another important element in the diet of the Swan Aborigines,
and here both men and women combined to gather an abundant harvest.6

Fanny Balbuk was probably born about 1840.7 The pattern of individual localised
rights to the produce of particular swamps, the produce of particular patches of ground,
which Bates records for Balbuk, must be seen as the norm, which had survived intact
through and beyond the first decade of European intrusion. The claim persisted into the
present century, despite the colonists' efforts to eliminate such inconvenience, even here at
the heart of the Swan River Settlement.

The Europeans assumed that the land of the Swan River Settlement was 'terra nullius',
literally 'land of nobody',8 that is, in the words of a Privy Council decision of 18899 a tract
of territory practically unoccupied, without settled inhabitants or law.10 The legal concept
implied that folk in such a territory were not 'settled', in the sense of holding rights and
responsibilities in specific localities, but rather wandered at random, picking up what they
could where they could. This was very far from the truth for the Swan River Settlement. On
the contrary, despite the immense omissions and misunderstandings which bedevil the
contemporary documents from the pen of the Europeans, we can build up a picture,
fragmentary and disjointed though it may be, of the complex system of rights and
responsibilities which tied Aboriginal families to the land of their mothers and their
mothers' mothers, their wives and their wives' mothers, and gave them access also to the
land of their mother's husband, their husbands' mother or their fathers' mother and even to
the land of a brother's wife. This closely regulated yet flexible system constituted a body of
Aboriginal law, linked to a corresponding body of lore, the birthright of generations of
Aboriginal women and their menfolk and the body of knowledge and skills involved in
maintaining and managing, improving and harvesting, both ritually and ecologically, the
resources of an area.

Occasionally rights in land might be granted to outsiders, to the mutual advantage of
both groups, particularly if a kin relationship could be traced. Sometimes Aboriginal groups
attempted to negotiate such arrangements with European settlers,11 although the settlers

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7 Hallam and Tilbrook 1990:112-3.
8 Or 'res nullius', 'the legal equivalent of a desert island' (Hookey 1984:1-2). The whole
paper provides a brief discussion of the legal assumptions behind the claim that Britain
acquired sovereignty over all Australia by settling, in 1788, land previously not settled,
where no tenure of any sort existed. See also discussion of the meaning of 'terra nullius'
'land belonging to no-one', in Reynolds 1987:12-14.
9 Reynolds 1988:17-18. This brief paper discusses, with full legal references, the
extraordinary disregard and dismissal of Aboriginal rights in land by European historians
and lawyers. See also Reynolds 1987, cited in footnote 8 above.
10 My emphasis, S.J.H.
11 Hallam 1983.
rarely appreciated the formal and binding nature of such 'treaty' negotiations. Often the Aborigines claimed the Europeans as their dead ancestors returned, as did Sir George Grey's Aboriginal 'mother', and this assumption explains why they initially allowed, or did not actively oppose, white intrusion on their land holdings. As Grey explains, the original 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 they must have formed an attachment to this land in some other state of existence; and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations.

Aborigines soon realised that their respect for the body of lore and law relating to land use was not shared by the intruders, and found themselves excluded from localities in which they held, under Aboriginal law, rights vital to the integrated patterns of Aboriginal subsistence and society.

Our knowledge of the crucial role of women as holders and managers of land and its resources, and the importance of plant staples in the Aboriginal economy, has to be pieced together largely from British accounts, with some support from patterns of archaeological distributions relative to plant distributions. But these records are often defective. They are frequently most concerned with the clashes which occurred as a result of the settlers' ignorance of Aboriginal law, and they assume the absolute validity of their own very different system of land holding. Consequently we get a warped view, in which men and their doings are seen as all-important, and women largely ignored. Land holding is interpreted in the patrilineal terms of the British legal system. However an examination of the composition of groups recorded in various areas shows that the groupings cannot be explained on patrilineal assumptions, and the links and continuity lie through the women rather than the men. The importance of plants in Aboriginal subsistence patterns, and of women as plant-managers and harvesters, also becomes very clear in the writings of botanically knowledgable observers.

The West Australian evidence should come as no surprise, for the continent of Australia was peopled from the tropics, and tropical subsistence systems, whether we label them agricultural, horticultural, or hunter-gatherer, are on a world scale predominantly plant-based, and have been so as far back as the archaeological evidence can be traced. Archaeologists and ethnographers have become increasingly aware over the last few years of the importance of plant staples to subsistence patterns and consequently to settlement patterns, for plants occur in fixed patches which bring people back to the same locality year after year, often for long periods.

I shall examine a number of examples, mainly from the first decade of European occupation of the core of the Swan River Settlement, which became the city centre of Perth itself and its immediate environs, showing the importance of fixed plant resources to

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Aboriginal subsistence, the role of women as providers, and the effects of European disruption.17

People on the lower Swan

Coming up the Swan estuary from the sea in the 1830s, we would first encounter north of the river the foraging group made up of the elderly and much respected Yellowgonga, his wives Yangan and Windan, and his daughters and their husbands. These individuals appear again and again in various incidents along the north side of the Swan estuary from Freshwater Bay to the ford at the present Causeway just east of the city centre of Perth, and from the banks of the river by Kings Park to the lakes now called Herdsmans and Mongers Lakes.18

Fanny Balbuk’s ties to land lay in this area. Bates gives Yalgonga (Yellowgonga), as Fanny Balbuk’s grandfather. The grandmother buried in the grounds of Government House was probably one of his wives. Bates tells us that Yalgonga’s favourite kala or hearth lay ‘by the spring on the Mounts Bay side of Kings Park’, that is somewhere along the line of springs which stretched from the old Swan Brewery to the Emu Brewery, Spring Street and beyond, at the foot of the slope, from the Perth city ridge to the river.19 Before European intrusion this group had commanded the ridge which is now the city block, between the shallows of Perth Water with their abundance of fish, to the south, and the lakes and swamps from Lake Monger across to Claise Brook, to the north. Robert Menli Lyon20 in 1833 translated the name Byerbrup as:

the highland stretching from Mount Eliza, through the centre of the town of Perth. The camp of Yellowgonga bearing this name originally stood beside the spring at the West end of the town as you descend from Mount Eliza, and on this spot did the 63rd [regiment] pitch their tents when they came to take possession...

This implies a camp at the top of St George’s Terrace, embracing the area from the Barracks right in front of Parliament House, down the slope below to the springs of Spring Street and the Bishop’s house. Well may Lyon add:

the headquarters of the king of Mooro are now become the headquarters of the territories of the British king in Western Australia. Sic transit gloria mundi

However, the focal area must have extended not only down the southern slope towards the river, but eastward along the Perth ridge towards the river crossing at ‘the flats’ (the Causeway), for Lyon adds:

17 This is a slightly amended version of a paper first delivered to the Centre for Western Australian History Conference held at the University of Western Australia at Nedlands, in April 1991. The evidence was readily available to me because of the joint work I had undertaken over a number of years with Lois Tilbrook on one of the Aboriginal volumes in the Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990). I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Lois for turning my interests from purely archaeological to ethnohistorical matters, in the direction of Aboriginal lives as well as livelihood.

18 Hallam and Tilbrook 1990:348-354. References to sources will be found in this volume.

19 Ibid.:112-3.

20 Lyon 1833.

21 Ibid.
The position was very important to Yellowgonga. It was not only convenient for hunting and fishing, but it gave him the command of the flats ... the river being hardly fordable anywhere else.22

Elsewhere Lyon described the wider district over which members of Yellowgonga's group held rights of usufruct as:

bounded by the sea on the west; by Melville Water and the Swan on the south; by Ellen's Brook on the east; and by Gyngoorda [the Moore River] on the north

and Armstrong in 1836 said that Yalagonga and his sons, Nandaree and Elal:

claim all land between Mount Eliza and Fremantle and from the river towards Mr Trigg's lime kiln [Trigg Island?].23

Both these claims must represent the furthest range of group members, rather than the core of their estates. And both state ownership in European, patrilineal, terms, rather than emphasising the matrilineal groupings24 as we shall see, which provided the continuity in group membership and land holding.

Grey in 1838 lists Yellowgonga himself as a 'Didaroke' a member of a group centred on the hills east of the coastal plain.25 His rights to the land immediately north of the Swan were presumably held through one or both of his wives, Yangan and Windan. Windan was shown as belonging to the Ballaroke classificatory group in the list of Swan River Aborigines drawn up by George Grey in 1838.26 Other members of the Ballaroke descent group, which would include her offspring, and also her mother and her mother's offspring, would have similar rights.27 Possibly Yellowgonga may also have held claims through his other wife, Yangan, about whom less information survives. All Yellowgonga's children whose grouping is recorded belong to the Ballarokes, the same matrilineal descent group as Windan, so presumably her co-wife was also a Ballaroke, and perhaps Windan's sister. It was not infrequent for a man to marry two sisters, for instance two of Yellowgonga's daughters married the same man.

The family were frequent visitors to the Native Institution at the foot of Mount Eliza, near the heart of their estate. They also frequented the surrounds of Mongers Lake. Lyon stated in 1833:

To this place Yellowgonga removed his headquarters, after the formation of the settlement.

European dominance had quickly forced Aboriginal groups away from their economically and socially strategic position on the city ridge overlooking the lowest ford on the Swan. Instead they frequented their marginal camps around that ridge - at the foot of Kings Park,

22 Ibid.
23 Lyon 1833 and Armstrong, 1836.
24 Compare Birdsall 1988:139, 143.
25 Grey 1838.
26 Ibid.
27 For the matrilineal nature of 'family' names ('totemic clans') in southwest Australia see Berndt 1979:82-3. See also the genealogies on the endpapers of the Bicentennial dictionary of Aborigines of the southwest region. These are based on information in the genealogies in Grey 1841:II:391-4; supplemented by Grey 1838, and Armstrong 1837 and other censuses (Hallam and Tilbrook 1990).
28 We do not know whether Gargup and Daleer had the same mother as well as the same father. Armstrong's 1837 census lists wives with their husband, followed by all his offspring, without stating which offspring belonged to which wife.
42
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at Heirisson Island, in East Perth near the Claise Brook, and by the chain of lakes westward to Hyde Park Lake and Lake Monger, completing the circle through the Shenton Park Lake and Crawley/Pelican Point areas, the present site of the University of Western Australia. Either archaeological or ethnographic evidence or both is known from each of these localities.

Yellowgonga almost certainly had access to his Lake Monger retreat through his wife, Yangan, and shared those access rights with other offspring of Yangan's mother, and their spouses and offspring. Thus Yangan's brother, Boogaberry, was listed by Francis Armstrong in 1836 as a co-owner of the chain of lakes east from Mongers Lake and north of Perth city, including Fanny Balbuk's *jilgie* and reed rhizome harvesting swamp where Perth Railway Station now lies.29

In 1836 William Leeder's son became embroiled in a dispute with Boogaberry because Aborigines had been digging potatoes on the land by Lake Monger which Leeder then held under a British grant. Boogaberry's sister (presumably maternal), Yangan, was described as 'a notorious thief, no doubt because she insisted on exercising her family's rights to harvest the reed rhizomes and other tubers of this area, grinding them to provide a starchy flour for 'dampers'. Her brother defended those rights. Later Yangan was also accused of taking potatoes from Mr Shenton's land, possibly that on which the University now stands, again the exercise of the rights of her matrilineal group.30

The pattern of men holding rights through women was repeated in the next generation. Yellowgonga and his wives had at least four sons and three daughters. Our British informants, thinking in patrilineal terms, do not tell us which wife was mother to which of the offspring, but all those whose matrilineal kin classification is listed are *Ballarokes* like Windan. Two of the daughters, Gargup and Daleer, both married Ningana, whose father is stated to be from the Murray, the next river southward from the Swan. The two sisters frequented the ration depot set up at the foot of Mount Eliza, with their husband, his two brothers and a brother's wife; and with their other sisters, one or other of their own brothers, and their father, their mother, and her co-wife. The husband, Ningana, was certainly not hunting and foraging on the land of his father and his father's kin, but on that of his wives and their mother, and mother's brother.

On one occasion in February 1835 the activities of the family group at the Native Institution at the foot of the King's Park cliff were recorded in some detail. Gargup and her infant, and her sister Daleer, were accompanied by their brother Nander, their (joint) husband, Ningana, plus Ningana's brothers Dommera and Edar, and some others about whose kinship we know nothing. They were said to be hunting wallabies, fishing, and 'burying zamia nuts'.31 The last implies processing to detoxify the zamia fruit (as for their close relatives, the cycads), and simultaneously storing the product for future use, perhaps to provide sustenance for a ceremonial gathering.32

Much the same group had been together on the shores of Freshwater Bay in February 1834, when as many as 160 men, women and children were gathered around Perth and the lower Swan. John Butler complained that the group molested his goats. Probably the seasonal aggregation brought considerable pressures on resources which would have been sufficient had they not been disrupted by white presence.33

30 Ibid.:343.
31 CSR 37/231.
32 See below.
33 Hallam and Tilbrook 1990:55-6.
It is interesting that the three brothers joined the wife of one of them in exploiting the resources of the women's land. Marriage relationships must be seen as giving many individuals the option of access to the domains of their in-laws, and obviously only a few of those options could ever be taken up for long periods. Potential rights became actual rights only if they were maintained by use.

Subsistence on the lower Swan

On the lower reaches of the Swan plant resources were probably less important than further up the river, but even here the women could muster sufficient storable carbohydrate staples to help support relatively large groups for at least a short period. *Zamia* nuts are a particularly interesting resource, implying considerable knowledge and skill to enable them to be utilised. The nuts contain a toxin which must be leached out before they can be safely eaten, as various European visitors have found to their cost. In June 1801 an exploring party from the French vessel *Naturaliste*, penetrating twelve miles inland along the Swan, had found two Aboriginal huts, spears, fish, and a cache of *zamia* nuts, which they roasted and ate, becoming severely ill as a result.34 Vlamingh's men had the same experience over a hundred years earlier.35 The important technology of detoxification, by leaching in water or simply caching in a pit for a sufficient period to allow breakdown of the toxins, was probably brought to the continent by its first settlers. Certainly it is already attested in the southwest of Australia in the archaeological record for the late Pleistocene, some 13000 years ago.36 The women could prepare ahead for ceremonial gatherings by soaking the *zamia* fruits for several days in water, and caching them in pits to complete the detoxification. The pulp could then be eaten raw or roasted, when it tasted like chestnuts.37

'Hunting wallabies' near the Native Institution might be seen as a totally male activity, but even in this the women had their role. Daisy Bates gives an account of a kangaroo drive, still occurring early this century, in a valley leading down to a steep drop over the Kings Park cliff. This must have taken place in the hollow where the Pioneer women's fountain is now placed, leading down to a sheer drop to the old Swan Brewery on the site of the 1830s Native Institution below:

What is now King's Park, Perth, was once a favourite place for a battue, the slopes of the park towards Crawley and Subiaco furnishing good herbage at certain seasons. The natives engaged in the hunt assembled at a certain point and from there each man took up his position at some spot ... At a given signal some bushes in the vicinity were fired, one outlet only being left for the kangaroo, that outlet being an almost perpendicular descent in the vicinity of Mounts Bay. The maddened animals, helped by shrieks, yells, smoke and flames, rushed headlong towards the foot of the Mount. There, at various points several natives were stationed with their heavy hunting spears in readiness, and the tumbling and floundering animals were quickly and easily despatched.

Women and children may take part in these battues, provided sufficient cover is available.

34 Marchant 1982:169; cf. Milius in Bonnemains and Haugel 1987; Peron 1809:146.
36 Smith 1982.
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Much feasting and gorging took place after a successful drive. The women made cloaks and bags of the female kangaroo skins. Such drives would only be possible, or necessary, when there were large gatherings of people for ceremonial occasions, and this account does suggest that aggregations such as that in February 1834 might have been based on the Kennedy Fountain /Swan Brewery area once the water sources and camping spots nearer the city centre ceased to be available. Indeed it was at the foot of this cliff that zamia caches, suitable for supporting large aggregations, were recorded not only in the 1830s, but also thirty years earlier, and possibly two hundred years before that.

Aborigines, however, continued to frequent the river fringe of the city right through the nineteenth century, and into the early years of this century, fishing in the shallow waters at the foot of the Perth ridge. Jesse Hammond, born in 1856, reported that in the 1860s natives used to spear cobblers in the shallow waters between the Barrack Street and the William Street jetties, and in the shallows at the ford by Heirisson Islands; while James Kennedy, born in 1848, recalled from his boyhood 'natives in dozens' spearing cobbles in the shallow waters below St George's Terrace and the Esplanade.

Shoals of small fish were most plentiful in the shallows of the Swan towards autumn, when zamia nuts also became available, so in that season large groups of people were able to assemble for firing the countryside and for ceremonial and social gatherings. Moore's Vocabulary gives:

*Burnur or Burnuro* - The autumn of Western Australia, including the months of February and March. This is the *By-yu or Zamia*-fruit season; and mullet, salmon and tailor-fish abound.

The surveyor, Phillip Snell Chauncy, in the 1840s watched Aborigines at Swan River: drive a shoal of large schnappers into water too shallow for them to swim in, and spear and catch a great number of fish weighing from ten to fifteen pounds each.

The women would help in driving the fish into the shallows, as in Chauncy's report of catching fish at King George Sound, where:

Two or three women watch the shoal from the beach, keeping opposite to it, while twenty or thirty men and women take boughs and form a semi-circle out in the shallow bay ... then closing gradually in, they hedge the fish up in a small space close to the shore, while a few others go in and throw them out with their hands.

By such methods he had seen large quantities of fish caught, as in the Swan River example.

Women also participated in driving shoals of small fish into the corners of tidal weirs as the tide filtered out, where again they could be scooped up by hand. Prodigious quantities of fish could be taken at fish weirs, either riverine structures like the stone weir

38 I am intrigued to know why the skins had to be female!
39 Bates 1985:244-5.
40 See notes 31, 34, 35.
41 Hammond 1933:19; Hammond 1936:185.
42 Kennedy 1927:7-10.
43 Moore 1884: *Vocabulary*:16.
45 Bunbury and Morrell 1930:87.
on the Kalgan River, or the elaborate brushwood barrier which survived on the Serpentine-
Murray estuary well into this century; or tidal weirs like those whose remains survive in
Oyster Harbour at King George Sound and reportedly until recently on the south side of
the Swan estuary. At such weirs,
fish have been found left in heaps by the natives after they had used what they
needed. Fish might be cooked simply by broiling on the fire or with more finesse:
A piece of thick and tender paper bark is selected, and torn into an oblong
form; the fish is laid in this, and the bark wrapped round it, as paper is folded
round a cutlet; strings formed of grass are then wound tightly about the bark
and fish, which is then slowly baked in heated sand, covered with hot ashes;
when it is completed the bark is opened, and serves as a dish: it is of course
full of juice and gravy, not a drop of which has escaped.

Lakes and swamps - small game and plantstaples
As well as their role in fishing, game-drives, and zamia processing women on the lower
Swan would be able to harvest small game and lake and swamp products, as Balbuk prized
her jilgies and vegetable foods. Lizards were most abundant in December and January.
Freshwater tortoises were most easily captured when lakes like those north of Perth had
shrunk to their minimum. George Grey tells us how they were cooked:
These fresh water turtle are cooked by being baked, shell and all, in the hot
ashes; when they are done, a single pull removes the bottom shell, and the
whole animal remains in the upper one, which serves as a dish. They are
generally very fat, and are really delicate and delicious eating.
Even more abundant in lakes and swamps were frogs and freshwater crustaceans. Grey
tells us:
The season of the year in which the natives catch the greatest quantity of
frogs, and freshwater shellfish is when the swamps are nearly dried up;
these animals then bury themselves in holes in the mud, and the native
women with their long sticks, and their long thin arms, which they plunge up
to the shoulder in the slime, manage to drag them out; at all seasons however
they catch some of these animals, but in summer a whole troop of native
women may be seen paddling about in a swamp, slapping themselves to kill
the mosquitoes and sandflies, and every now and then plunging their arms
down into the mud and dragging forth their prey. I have often seen them with
ten or twelve pounds weight of frogs in their bag.
Frogs are cooked on a slow fire of wood ashes, they are then held in one
hand by the hind legs, and a dexterous pinch with the finger and thumb of the
other, at once removes the lower portion of the intestines, the remainder of the
animal is then taken at a mouthful and fairly eaten from the head to the

47 Irwin 1835:23.
49 Ibid.:280.
50 Grey intends crustaceans, not molluscs.
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These delicacies were still available at the very end of the dry season, in April before the first rains. When Sir George Grey, weak with hunger after a trek down the coast from his shipwrecked vessel at the mouth of the Murchison, reached Lake Joondalup it was the women who provided for him from the abundance which they could harvest from the coastal swamps and lakes at the time of year which seems most difficult to Europeans:

The women were soon called up, bark baskets of frogs opened for us, *by-yu* nuts roasted, and as a special delicacy I obtained a small fresh-water tortoise.52

Later his Aboriginal friend, Imbat, upbraided Grey - 'where is your fat?' and then:

forgetting his anger, burst into a roar of laughter, and saying 'and I know how to make you fat,' - began stuffing me with frogs, *barde* [grubs] and *by-yu* [zamia] nuts.53

Where the Europeans had starved the Aboriginal women could provide abundant and reliable fare.

All these resources would be available in the swamps and lakes around the earliest British settlement on the Swan - those on the northern side of the Perth ridge, and others like Lake Monger, Herdsmans Lake, Shenton Park Lake or Butlers Swamp (Lake Claremont). The most important and reliable resources these wetlands had to offer, however, were plant foods, and carbohydrate staples, particularly reed rhizomes. James Backhouse, visiting Perth in 1836 wrote of

some lagoons at the back of the town ... The lagoons are much filled with Cats-tail Reed, *Typha latifolia*, the root of which is eaten by the natives.54

Grey has a detailed account of the use of reed rhizomes (though there are some difficulties about precise species identification):

*yun-jid* ... is the root of a species of flag, and consists of a case enclosing a multitude of tender filaments, with nodules of farinaceous matter adhering to them. These are collected into a mass by pounding the root and the cake formed from the mass is very nice.

Aboriginal women were thus the first Australians to make damper! Interestingly Grey added:

The natives must be admitted to bestow a sort of cultivation upon this root, as they frequently burn the leaves of the plant in the dry seasons, in order to improve it.55

George Fletcher Moore gives a similar account of the use of reeds as a source of dietary starch, transcribing the Aboriginal word as:

*Yanjidi* - An edible root of a species of flag (*Typha angustifolia*) growing along freshwater streams and the banks of pools. It consists of many tender filaments with layers of a farinaceous substance between. The natives dig the roots up, clean them, roast them, and pound them into a mass, which when kneaded and made into a cake, tastes like flour not separated from the bran.56

The botanist James Drummond also made clear the importance of plant carbohydrate and particularly swamp products in the Aboriginal diet. He was guided across the hills to the Avon valley, at the point where what is now the Toodyay Brook joins the river. This place

52 Ibid.:91-2.
53 Ibid.:93.
54 Backhouse 1843:531.
56 Moore 1884: *Vocabulary*: 81.
took its name from the plant resources which enabled families to focus on the area for months at a time:

I learnt from Babbing this place is called Duidgee and that it is a favourite haunt of the natives ... The reedmace ... grows in abundance in the bed of the stream. This plant is one of great importance to the natives, as furnishing a great part of the food of their women and children for several months of the year ... the roots ... are thick and succulent, contain a large portion of starch and mucilage ... generally abounds near water.\(^{57}\)

Staples and stability

Where more than one staple, with different harvesting periods, occurred in the same area, women were able to support their families for much of the year in the same general locality, forming a stable focal area about which the men, particularly the young men, could range far afield for hunting, social and ritual purposes. Examples of such multi-staple localities include - Duidgee itself, with yam tubers as well as reeds; the Perth ridge, with swamp products and fish; Walyunga, with zamias and swamp products; and the upper Swan area with sidechannel swamps alongside the river, and yams on the alluvium of the river terraces.

I shall not discuss here those numerous other plant resources which form useful minor supplements to the diet rather than major staples like reedswamps in the sandplain or yam-patches on the alluvium. Most of the lesser sources of plant carbohydrates (such as orchids and several species of Haemodorum\(^{58}\)) occur in a more scattered fashion and not in patches sufficiently concentrated to attract foci of settlement.

Yams, however, were very important to Aboriginal subsistence and settlement patterns because they occurred in concentrated localised patches, mainly on rich alluvial soils. Indeed the European settlers used them as an indicator of good arable land, with devastating consequences for their Aboriginal owners. Where European settlers took over fertile yam-growing soils there is a chance for the survival of evidence about fluctuations in the numbers of Aborigines frequenting those areas, and the seasonality, periodicity and lengths of time involved. Obviously, however, the pre-European situation will almost immediately be altered by the effects of European cultivation and stock, and the assertion of European property rights. For the alluvial soils in the area around the new town of Perth itself the evidence is unclear, but further upstream grants of land on either side of the river where it runs southward down the coastal plain, were taken up by individual settlers, including men of education and intellect, who proved more discriminating and sympathetic recorders. Among them was George Fletcher Moore, Advocate-General, farmer, geologist, botanist, zoologist, anthropologist, linguist, lexicographer and diarist, recording everything which excited his universal interest.\(^{59}\)

At upper Swan the Swan/Avon River emerges from the scarp westward onto the coastal plain, depositing the rich alluvium which spelt fertility to Stirling and his men, as it had to thousands of generations of Aboriginal plant-harvesters before them. The area offered as staples not only the starchy reed rhizomes from the side channels of the river (supplemented

\(^{57}\) Drummond 1836.

\(^{58}\) Grey 1841:II:291-4; Meagher 1974; Meagher and Ride 1979.

\(^{59}\) See Tom Stannage's introduction to the 1978 University of Western Australia Press facsimile edition of George Fletcher Moore's *Diary* for the years 1830 to 1840, first published in book form in 1884, along with a reprint of his 1842 *Vocabulary* (Moore 1884).
by frogs, crayfish, turtles, fish, birdlife, and game attracted by the water; but also extensive patches of the yam, *Dioscorea hastifolia*, so well-defined and fixed that they are marked on the earliest European maps of the area. George Fletcher Moore held a grant at 'Millendon', less than a kilometre south of the westward-flowing stretch of the Swan where it emerges from the Darling Scarp, and east of the southward course it then takes. Phillip Snell Chauncy's maps of 1843 show 'warran' holes (yam-digging pits) in a 'dogwood thicket' over two patches of ground along the northern boundary of the east-west strip granted to Moore's northern neighbour, William Shaw, extending onto the property of Peter Broun immediately south of the Swan (now Bond's 'Brigadoon' property); and another patch west of the river, on Lieutenant Irwin's property opposite Moore's. Stirling's botanist, Charles Fraser, in 1827 had observed the river bank hereabouts 'perforated by immense numbers of deep pits'.

On these high alluvial terraces, maintained by Aboriginal burning as the parklike 'open level country thinly wooded with red gums', shown on Chauncy's maps, these 'thickets' with their yam-vines stand out as areas deliberately *protected* from fire. James Backhouse, the Quaker evangelist, visiting Moore in 1836:

> went with him to see a little of the country... A considerable number of blacks were assembled on one farm ... We examined some holes where the Natives had been digging for the roots of a *Dioscorea*, or yam, for food. This plant climbs among bushes [the 'dogwood thicket'] in a strongish soil, and the natives have a tradition, respecting its roots having been conferred upon them, in which there are traces of the deluge.61

Moore himself is explicit about the important role of yams in the Aboriginal diet: *Warran* - one of the *Dioscoreae*. A species of yam, the root of which grows generally to about the thickness of a man's thumb; and to the depth of sometimes four to six feet in loamy soils. It is sought chiefly at the commencement of the rains [that is April or May], when it is most easily dug; and it forms the principle article of food of the natives at that season.62

The surveyor Chauncy estimated the size of *warran* tubers, and the labour of digging them, as even greater:

> I have seen both men and women sinking in loose sandy soil for an edible root called *warran*, which generally grows about the thickness of a man's thumb, and to the depth of four to six or eight feet. It has a sweet and delicate flavour when roasted in the hot ashes and is much sought after. It is dangerous to ride on horseback through the country where it grows, on account of the frequency and depth of the holes, which are not more than about eighteen or twenty inches in diameter.

The depth given is consistent with *warran* holes which have silted up, but are still three to five feet deep, which I have seen in the Gingin area. Lieutenant Breton fell shoulder-deep into one of a group of holes which he took to be pit-traps in riding up the Canning in 1829, and Fraser in 1827 probably mistook *warran* holes for pit-traps.

Grey's more modest estimate of the size of most yams agrees more closely with my own limited experiments, but he is even more explicit about the labour involved:

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61 Backhouse 1843:538-540.
62 Moore 1884: *Vocabulary*: 74.
63 Chauncy 1878:245-6.
It is generally considered the province of the women to dig roots, and for this purpose they carry a long pointed stick, which is held in the right hand, and driven firmly into the ground, where it is shaken, so as to loosen the earth, which is scooped up and thrown out with the fingers of the left hand, and in this manner they dig with great rapidity. But the labour in proportion to the amount obtained is great. To get a yam about half an inch in circumference [he must mean diameter] and a foot in length [about the size of those I have dug] they have to dig a hole about a foot square and two feet in depth; a considerable portion of the time of the women and children is therefore passed in this employment.

Obviously a yam ground is a fixed resource patch which ties the women and their families to a particular neighbourhood at certain seasons, though the young and mature men were much more mobile about these focal areas.

If the men are absent upon any expedition, the females are left in charge of one who is old or sick; and in traversing the bush you often stumble on a large party of them, scattered about in the forest, digging roots and collecting the different species of fungus.64 Moore's Diary shows that, despite European presence, Aboriginal families tried to maintain their pattern of continuing use of the upper Swan valley over much of the year. In June 1833 Moore was approached by Beelycoomera (Bilumera), son of Weeip (one of the many sons of Helia, a revered patriarch of the local group), and a group of ten Aborigines, including 'two well-looking young women with children at their backs'. He let Moore know by signs that the group wished to dig tubers, which they did despite Moore's disquiet because his sheep were pastured in the area. The problem would be soon solved for Moore, for the sheep would inevitably eat out the above-ground vines of the yams. Among Moore's visitors was Doodyeep or Toodyeep, a pretty coquettish girl, 'celebrated as the fairest of the fair', whose marriage to the youthful and vigorous Coondebung had just been celebrated in a great corrobory,65 no doubt made possible by the combinations of reeds, yams and zamias in the vicinity.

In February 1834 Moore reported 'numbers of natives here today'. In March Moore described himself as 'beset by natives' with 'a lot of native boys and girls' splashing merrily in the river. A fortnight later their elders steeped redgum blossoms in water to make festive drinks, perhaps somewhat fermented:

This day I have had a number of natives here. Some of them were busy sucking the honey water which they extracted from the flowers of the red gum tree; others baking their flour into cakes.

At this time of year the flour could be either from reeds or from yams, both available nearby.66 In May the group were:

busy digging the root of a broad sort of flag which grows in a swamp near this and a few days later he got from the natives a piece of bread made of the root of a flag which they call yandyett. It tastes like a cake of oatmeal.

Large groups remained ensconced in the neighbourhood through June and into July; around twenty men visited Moore, implying fifty or more people camped nearby. By October

64 Grey 1841:II:292-3.
65 Moore 1884: Diary:198.
66 Ibid.:212-5.
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(when a new crop of yams could be obtained before the ground hardened) 'great numbers' were around again, including strangers from other areas. 67

Moore summoned military assistance on the 23rd, and two days later reported that:

The natives have all dispersed today ... they did not like the appearance of the police and soldiers visiting them.

His friend Tomchin said they would be gone for four months - that is they would return for the next reed and yam harvests in the late summer to early autumn. But it seems that the core of the local group remained on the coastal plain alluvium, for ten days later Moore reported that native 'women had been stealing Mr Shaw's potatoes.' (that is, digging tubers in the area where they were accustomed to dig tubers). At the rumour that the soldiers were in pursuit (this was only a day or two after the massacre at Pinjarra) the Aborigines 'ran from their fires, thinking the soldiers were in pursuit of them' and later called on Moore for advice on what was to be done. 68

This episode sums up within itself all the paradoxes of the situation. The women who hold rights in this land are prevented from harvesting major staples because their land is in the hands of white grantees, and they are harrassed by soldiers and police. When the women do harvest tubers on the land where they have entitlement, they are seen as thieves under British law, as though they and not the newcomers were intruding. And Moore, as representative of British law, though he remains on good terms with the Aborigines, showed no inkling that the rights granted by the British crown clashed with rights held in this locality by thousands of generations of Aborigines. On the same twenty metre terrace on the opposite side of the river is the upper Swan archaeological site, where Aboriginal artefacts lie in alluvial deposits around 40,000 years old. 69

Doodyeep and Coondebung initially maintained friendly relations with Moore. Indeed, in May 1836 they escorted him northward and introduced him to people in the Chittering valley, rich in swamp resources and wildfowl. On the ridge between the scarp and the valley Coondebung's whole demeanour changed, he walked tall and with a springy step, because:

they were now passing through his own country, over his native soil.

Moore describes his agility, hunting prowess, and zest for life. That evening he ate -

a bandicoot, an opossum, two kangaroo-rats, a young swan and a musk duck plus a damper; while Moore describes Doodyeep's share as 'not a Benjamin's portion.' But by the next summer Aboriginal access to upper Swan resources had been so restricted that they turned to Europeans as the remaining resource. Coondebung took wheat from Moore's property and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He took refuge in the bush (perhaps Walyunga or the Chittering valley) and in July 1839 he was reported to be sending his wife and child

into the settlements ... He desired her to say that he could not feed her, as he was afraid to hunt whilst the white people were unfriendly. They now feel the want of bread as a privation. 70

The story does not have a happy ending. Coondebung was captured and sentenced in April 1840 to seven years transportation to Rottnest Island, where he died of malnutrition in October. 71

69 Pearce and Barbetti 1981.
70 Moore 1884: Diary:387.
71 Hallam and Tilbrook 1990:48-51, 83-5.
Moore does not seem to have realised that the need for flour and bread resulted less from declining opportunities for men to hunt than from a decade in which European fences, sheep crops, and guns had deprived Aboriginal women of access to the land to which they held rights and the carbohydrate staples they used to harvest there. The women were still expected to be the providers, but within a decade the Europeans had become the resource from which they had to harvest.

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53
ADELAIDE AS AN ABORIGINAL LANDSCAPE

Philip A. Clarke

Introduction
The relationships pre-European Aboriginal people had with their landscape were complex. Nevertheless, the reconstructive ethnographic literature for southern South Australia has tended to regard Aboriginal geographic knowledge as having been the product of 'tribal' relations with a more or less constant area of terrestrial landscape.\(^1\) The erroneous belief in cultural homogeneity within the 'tribe', has led various researchers to look for 'true' expressions of a culture, such as portrayed by myth. Nevertheless, evidence provided by the early ethnographies indicates that there were wide ranging geographic views within cultural groups. Furthermore, the recorded mythology of many Aboriginal cultures illustrates perceived connections with distant landscapes. In this paper, I account for the diverse range of links to the landscape that Adelaide Aboriginal people possessed. This is a study in cultural geography, considering both material and nonmaterial aspects of Aboriginal cultural construction of the landscape.

The historical background
The primary focus of this paper is Aboriginal land relationships prior to and during the early phases of European occupation. Much of the early Adelaide ethnographic material was derived from the observations of Europeans involved in the colonial welfare of Aboriginal people. From 1840 to 1846, German missionaries, Schürmann, Teichelmann, and Meyer, provided detailed accounts of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the newly settled districts about Port Lincoln, Adelaide and Encounter Bay.\(^2\) Their deep academic interest in Aboriginal culture included an investigation of the existence of an Aboriginal 'Supreme Being' to facilitate Christianising processes. Most other early studies are based on data collected by these missionaries, with other sources, such as Williams, Gell, Cawthorne, Wilhelmi, and Taplin relying heavily on their data.\(^3\) Further accounts used in this paper, for instance Wyatt, Stephens and Finlayson, were recorded much later as reminiscences.\(^4\)

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2 The published works of the German missionaries of this early period include Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840, Teichelmann 1841, Meyer 1843, and Schürmann 1844, 1879. However, the religious importance of their work is most evident in the Schürmann Diaries (see entry for 19 June 1839).

3 Williams 1839; Gell 1988; Cawthorne 1926; Wilhelmi 1860; Taplin 1979, 1879.

4 Wyatt 1879; Stephens 1889; Finlayson 1903.
century, 'Adelaide' ethnographic material was collected by the South Australian Museum ethnologist, Tindale, from an Aboriginal informant known as Ivaritji, who had lived in the Adelaide region during the early years of colonisation. A small vocabulary was also obtained from this person by Black.

Early ethnographic sources describe the Aboriginal people living in the vicinity of Adelaide simply as 'the Adelaide people' or 'the Adelaide tribe', in spite of their use of Aboriginal language names to classify the Parnkalla and Nauo of Eyre Peninsula (see Figure 1). For the Adelaide area, this reluctance probably reflected the existence of a descent group complex with varying affinities, not easily placed under one term derived from Aboriginal sources. In spite of the apparent failure by early sources to define the Adelaide people under one term, scholars in the early 1900s adopted the term 'Kaurna' to represent this group, although it is not present in the Teichelmann and Schürmann data. Since then, the reconstructive ethnographic work by Tindale has been a major influence on the confirmation of 'Kaurna' to mean the pre-European Adelaide people. According to him, the 'tribal' territory of the 'Kaurna' extended along the shores of Saint Vincent Gulf from the tip of Cape Jervis, northwards to about Port Wakefield and inland to Crystal Brook, and then down the scarp of the Mount Lofty Ranges. However, it is my contention, taken up in a later section of this paper, that Tindale's 'Kaurna' population does not closely match the Adelaide population described by earlier ethnographers.

Exactly what happened to the original Adelaide population after the 1840s, when the chief ethnographic studies were completed, still remains to be determined. These people increasingly found themselves peripheral to the Adelaide landscape as it was being conceived, and then developed by European invaders. The present pattern of where Aboriginal people live reflects this, with Adelaide descendants found among Aboriginal communities chiefly based on former mission settlements at Point Pearce on Yorke Peninsula, and Point McLeay near the Murray Mouth. A few families of Adelaide descent still retain the knowledge of their genealogical links to the Adelaide region. However, this present day Adelaide identity is to a large degree built upon the broader southern Aboriginal culture developed in response to colonisation. Since the mid 1970s, the desire of the wider Australian community to identify the original inhabitants, particularly for areas suffering intense European settlement, has facilitated the adoption of terms, such as 'Kaurna', for the

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5 Tindale 1974 uses data from Ivaritji. Other names for Ivaritji include Amelia Savage and Amelia Taylor. Gara 1990 provides a life history of this person.
6 Black 1920.
7 The term 'Kaurna' possibly has a Lower Murray origin. For instance, 'Kaurna' was the 'tribe' of Encounter Bay Bob (Wyatt 1879:180). 'Corna' was a recorded Lower Murray term meaning Aboriginal people (Cuique in South Australian Magazine, Sept. 1842, vol.1, no.12:467-72). Similarly, 'Kornarrinyeri', from which 'Narrinyeri' was derived, reportedly meant 'men, belonging to' (Taplin 1979:1; 1879:34). Howitt 1904 maps 'Kaurna' as the Adelaide people. In 1926, the Anthropology Society of South Australia concluded that the 'Adelaide tribe' were the 'Kaurna' (Minutes published in The Advertiser, 26 August 1926). Tindale used this definition in his surveys of Aboriginal 'tribe' distribution (1940:179; 1974:213).
8 Brock and Kartinyeri 1989 give a history of the Aboriginal settlement at Poonindie, near Port Lincoln, which was the precursor to Point Pearce. Kartinyeri 1983, 1985, 1989a, 1989b, 1990 provides family histories of some of the main southern South Australian Aboriginal families.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1991 15:1

Ivaritji in a Museum possum skin cloak.

Painting by Angas of an Adelaide Kuri ('circle') dance.
identity of pre-European Aboriginal groups inhabiting particular landscapes. Although modern definitions of what 'Kauma' represents are important developments in contemporary Aboriginal expressions of their links to the past and to the Adelaide landscape, its treatment is beyond the scope of this paper. Amongst the early ethnographic accounts, there are a variety of spelling systems used, with particular Aboriginal words spelled several ways. In general, I have used the term that appears to have been provided by the most linguistically reliable source.

Aborigines as active occupants of the landscape

In pre-European times, the vegetation along the coast of the Fleurieu Peninsula ranged from coastal dune and swamp vegetation near Adelaide, through to predominately cliff and open woodland vegetation in the south, with mangrove and salt flats in the north. The inland regions were dominated by mallee vegetation interspersed with grassy plains. The relatively high rainfall areas about the Mount Lofty Ranges suited wet sclerophyll forests. People living in the vicinity of what was to become Adelaide, utilised several ecological zones for food sources, and the raw materials required in making tools, weapons, clothing and shelter. The Adelaide people had detailed ecological knowledge of their region, as shown by their use of different terms for various types of vegetation. Today, for instance, the mouth of the Sturt River entering Saint Vincent Gulf west of Adelaide, is still called the Patawalonga (see Figure 2). This was a place name used by Aboriginal people, reportedly meaning 'brushwood place'. Aboriginal place names in common use by Australians today, are essentially transformed Aboriginal cultural relics.

The subsistence strategy of Aboriginal groups in southern South Australia was a seasonal movement of people between the inland and coastal regions. Large numbers of Adelaide Aboriginal people gathered along the coast in the summer months, taking advantage of marine and sand dune-belt food resources, such as coastal berries, shellfish, crustacea, fish, turtles, nesting sea birds and occasional stranded whales. In autumn there was a general movement of people towards the foothills to make more substantial winter shelters there. This region would have had more firewood available, was close to inland forests where mammals were hunted, and yet was still near to aquatic food sources, such as bulrush roots and freshwater crayfish from the swamps and creeks of the Adelaide Plains. Although this coast/summer - inland/winter pattern was a quasi-sedentary life style, it would not have greatly restricted the utilisation of different ecological zones, due to the close proximity of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the sea. For example, foods such as red gum seed, leaf lerp, Acacia gum and plant nectar, were inland sources chiefly available in the warmer months when the bulk of the population was situated along the coast. The

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10 Black 1920:84.


collecting of these foods would have occurred during regular trips from the coast to the inland regions. Changes of season were generally marked by the flowering of particular plants or the appearance of certain constellations in the heavens. For instance, the arrival of the star, Parna, signified autumn (parnatti). Similarly, spring (wiltuti) was said to be governed by a constellation called Wilto, recorded as meaning an eagle; the summer season (woltatti) was governed by Wolta, the wild turkey constellation. As with other Aboriginal groups in Australia, the Adelaide Aboriginal people positioned themselves in the landscape according to flexible seasonal patterns.

Aboriginal people have often been portrayed by scholars as being passive occupants of the pre-European environment. For example, Williams, in *The making of the South Australian landscape*, barely mentions the Aboriginal inhabitants. The environmental determinist approach has been a dominant paradigm in the studies of Aboriginal land relationships until relatively recent times. In contradiction to this view, a close inspection of ethnographic data from southern Australia suggests that Aboriginal inhabitants had a profound effect on the development of the biota of this region. For instance, early historical records from explorers and colonists describe the periodic burning of the Adelaide area by Aboriginal people, not only to drive out game, but as a resource management tool creating favoured vegetation types. The production of nutrient rich ashes and the destruction of the canopy stimulated new and succulent plant growth edible to humans, such as yam daisies, cresses and thistles, as well as increasing herbage species eaten by hunted animal species. This practice in other parts of Australia has been described by researchers as 'firestick farming'. In addition to the direct economic benefit of vegetation firing, there was value in opening up the landscape to allow for an easier passage. The wide open grasslands of the Fleurieu Peninsula, as painted by George French Angas in 1844, was the product of frequent firing by Aboriginal people. It is ironic that the open landscape that Aboriginal action created, was undoubtedly a major attraction of the Adelaide Plains for European colonisers.

Additional evidence for the pre-European existence of regular movement patterns is provided by an early statement that Aboriginal foraging groups in the Adelaide area, consisting of a man, his wives, children, and perhaps a few other kin-folk, generally moved their camps to places used the previous year. Furthermore, in some areas, the first settlers found well worn paths or tracks already in existence when they arrived. One major track ran from the Adelaide Plains southeast towards the Bremer River, continuing to the Murray.

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14 Teichelmann 1857; Gell 1988.
15 Teichelmann 1857.
17 Williams 1974.
18 Elkin 1964 provides a typical environmentally deterministic account of the Aboriginal land use.
20 Flinders 1814; Finlayson 1903:40-41; *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Record*, 9 March 1839.
21 Jones 1969.
22 Angas 1847.
23 Teichelmann 1841:7.
was observed in frequent use by Aboriginal people in the early days of the colony. 24

Another track, made by Encounter Bay people, ran from Hindmarsh Valley to Willunga. 25

Since this path was originally only two feet wide, its use by Europeans was initially confined to foot and horse traffic. Eventually, however, it was widened for coach use. In the pre-European period, the Aboriginal people would have travelled to other regions for economic purposes, such as trade, and for ceremonial occasions. Many of these well defined Aboriginal tracks were used by early settlers, the course of many of them almost certainly preserved today as bitumen roads. Across Australia, the absorption of Aboriginal pathways by Europeans is now widely recognised in the literature. 26 Furthermore, the existence of tracks, and the seasonal shift of people, are strong indications that Aboriginal movements across the landscape had purpose. This evidence, together with the evidence for environmental management practices through burning, leads us to consider that Aboriginal people were active occupants of their landscape.

Aboriginal social structure and the landscape

In Aboriginal tradition, the Adelaide people originally came from country to the northeast. 27 Whether this assertion refers to the movement of people or cultural practices or both is difficult to ascertain. At the time of European settlement, the Adelaide people were the southern most Aboriginal group practising circumcision ceremonies on their young men, considering their neighbours not practising this rite to be paruru, a derisive term for 'uncircumcised' or 'animal'. 28 The tattooing ceremonies were said to have been introduced by the spirit, Tarnda, a fact reflected in some of the pre-European place names, such as Tandanya for the city area of Adelaide. 29 Tarnda later transformed himself into a red species of kangaroo. The nearest eastern neighbours to the Adelaide people were termed the Peramangk, who, although circumcising people like themselves, were feared as sorcerers. With cultural groups further east, such as from the Lower Murray Lakes and Murray River, the differences in religious beliefs with Adelaide were marked. It is therefore to be expected that Adelaide people were considered dangerous strangers to the southeastern Aboriginal groups. 30

To add to the differences in the religious sphere, the people to the east and southeast of the Adelaide Plains spoke very different languages. In the Murray River region, the speech has been termed Ngaiawung or Meru. 31 In the Lower Murray Lakes district, a region bounded by Encounter Bay, the Coorong and Wellington, the Ngarrindjeri group of dialects were spoken. 32 Linguists believe that these two language groups had more affinity with Western Victorian languages than that of Adelaide; the latter more in common with languages to the north in the Lower Flinders Ranges and west to Eyre Peninsula and Yorke

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25 Sweetman 1928.
26 Reynolds 1990 provides a general summary of European use of Aboriginal pathways.
27 Stephens 1889:483 says that the Adelaide people believed they came from the northeast. Tindale 1974:73 supports this claim by stating that the Adelaide people had a tradition that they came from the north.
29 Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840:2:75; Wyatt 1879:179.
30 Tindale 1974:60,61,73,217.
32 Meyer 1843; Taplin 1979, 1879.
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Peninsula. Some suggest that the languages of the Narranga of Yorke Peninsula and the Ngadjuri of the Mid-North of South Australia, were simply dialects of the same language spoken by Adelaide people. This suggests a strong cultural relationship within the region bounded by Eyre Peninsula, the Mid-North, Mount Lofty Ranges, and the northern edge of Cape Jervis. Furthermore, similarities in mythology and ceremonial life within this area indicate that the views of the landscape of these groups would show some degree of affinity. Through strong links to related Aboriginal cultures, the Adelaide people would have had some knowledge of the landscape beyond the Fleurieu Peninsula region, particularly to the north. I therefore consider that my careful use of cultural information from groups within this larger region, to help interpret the Adelaide material, to be justified. In contrast, the Lower Murray/Victorian cultures to the southeast were formerly part of a very different cultural bloc than that of the Adelaide people. We must therefore assume that the cultural connections between the Adelaide and Lower Murray people, with the possible exception of Encounter Bay groups, were restricted in pre-European times.

Aboriginal relationships to land existed on many levels. In the Adelaide area, each person had a strong kinship connection, traced mainly through the male line, to a particular piece of land, the *pangkarra*, defined as the territory of a locally based descent group. Teichelmann and Schürmann state that 'As each pankarra [= pangkarra] has its peculiar name, many of the owners take that as their proper name, with the addition of the term burka; for instance ... Karkuyaburka, Tindoburka, etc'. Another example is Mullawirraburka, known by Europeans as King John, whose Aboriginal name literally translates as 'dry-forest-old man', referring to an area of mallee vegetation found inland from Aldinga. The *pangkarra* was a prominent marker of a particular descent group territory, and was associated with totemic species, such as possum or emu. However, an individual's *pangkarra* would not have restricted foraging movements. Each person would, with multiple kinship links to the *pangkarra* of others, some possibly through female lines, be able to range through a much larger district, this being the area of most economic exploitation.

An individual's interpretation of mythology, and its associated landscape, would have been affected by descent group affiliations. This aspect has been demonstrated for other Aboriginal groups, for instance among the Murngin, where 'clans', or descent groups, had their own local interpretation of particular ceremonies. In the Adelaide area, particular descent groups would have possessed detailed knowledge of mythical events having taken place in their own territory, but probably less information concerning events that took place further afield, and may not have had rights to speak of it. This cultural restriction in myth knowledge would lead to alternative explanations of some events, although probably the main outline of the whole myth would have varied less. It is therefore necessary to recognise that *pangkarra* descent groups would have provided their own modified view of the landscape.

Gender provides another selective view of the landscape. This is implicit in the descriptions by early ethnographers of the differing roles of Aboriginal men and women. The daily activities of an Adelaide Aboriginal person, as with many other Australian

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33 Oates and Oates 1970.
34 Tindale 1936:55; Berndt 1940a:456.
36 Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840:2:36. Gell 1988 also describes the *pangkarra*.
37 Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840:2:4,75.
38 Warner 1964:16.
groups, were to a large degree dictated by gender status. One account available of the division of labour in the Adelaide area is given by Teichelmann who says:

... the Aborigines, almost every day, in the bush, move their encampments, except [when] the male part are hunting, then the women and children stay for several days on the same place. When they leave for another encampment, which sometimes may be twenty miles distant, after they have breakfasted, and the men repaired their weapons, the women gathered the luggage and taken the children upon their backs; the men start first, carrying nothing but a small net bag and hunting implements, - the women burdened like camels, follow, gather and prepare on the road vegetable food for the night, whilst the men are looking out for meat; as it is the duty of the man to supply the family with animal food. The women and children generally arrive first at the place intended for an encampment ... here they fetch branches, fuel and water, and build a hut. When the men arrive, a fire is lighted, and the women deliver the vegetable food to the husband. 

It is clear from this account, that women and men had different economic roles, and would therefore have interacted differently with the environment. A woman's mental map of the landscape would have stressed places for gathering roots, collecting shellfish, giving birth and other such sites. In contrast, men would have considered places where plant food species of kangaroos and emus grew to be of greater concern. In other parts of Australia, Aboriginal women have had a different interpretation than men of much of the landscape mythology. In the Adelaide region, Aboriginal women and men would probably have possessed conceptually different, although related, visions of the landscape.

Land as body

The Adelaide people, like other southern South Australian Aboriginal groups, perceived human-like qualities of their landscape, the reasons for which often stated in 'Dreaming' stories. In some accounts, the Adelaide people considered the surface of the earth to have been formerly without water courses. Such features were created by the spirit ancestor, Nganno, so that he could live upon freshwater crayfish and fish found in rivers. When Nganno's son, Gurltatakko, was killed, he travelled far and wide looking for the murderers. During Nganno's wanderings, he gave names to many of places about Adelaide. After finding and killing the slayers of Gurltatakko, his own kin fled into the sea. Nganno told them how not to respond, but they didn't heed him, saying such things as 'I am a shark', 'I am a whale'. These people were in this way transformed into sea creatures. Nganno eventually turned himself into a sea monster. The language used to tell this story was reportedly different from that normally spoken, being Munana Meyu - the language of the forefathers. The Narranga people of Yorke Peninsula had a myth, with similar elements, concerning a giant called Ngarma who created parts of their landscape. From available accounts, it is likely that Ngarma and Nganno are different regional interpretations of the same mythical being.

40 Jacobs 1989.
41 For body elements of the Yorke Peninsula landscape, see Tindale 1936. Clarke 1991 outlines the body relationships to the Lower Murray landscape.
42 Schürmann, Personal diaries, 21 August 1839; Teichelmann and Schurmann 1840:5, 31; Teichelmann 1841:9. Variations in the recording of Nganno include Nadno and Nanno.
43 Tindale 1936.
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The spine of the Mount Lofty Ranges was regarded by Adelaide people as the body of a giant ancestral man, who attacked the Adelaide people from the east and was killed there.44 The body of the fallen giant, whose name was not recorded, dominates the Fleurieu Peninsula from Nuriootpa in the north to Marino in the south, a distance of about 80 kilometres. Some Adelaide place names apparently refer to body parts of this being. For instance, the name of Adelaide Hills town, Uraidla, refers to the twin peaks of Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython being the ears of the giant, as yureilla reportedly means 'ear-two'.45 Mythology, often expressed in literature as the 'Dreaming', provided the framework for Aboriginal concepts of their relationship to their physical and social environments.

The heavens

No analysis of the cultural landscape would be complete without considering the way in which the heavens are spatially organised. Elsewhere I argue that the terrestrial spatial behaviour of the Adelaide people was influenced by perceived relationships between them and the sky world.46 I have treated the sky world as a psychic landscape, defined as being that part of the total landscape without physical and tangible dimensions in a Western European sense. In Australia, there were widespread beliefs that 'clever men' could visit the sky world, and there acquire special knowledge such as healing.47 Novices were ritually taken to this celestial region as part of their initiation. In the Adelaide region, the relationships between cosmic bodies were mirrored in roles of initiation ceremony participants.48 The importance of the linkages between the sky world and the terrestrial world is further illustrated by Teichelmann who stated that Adelaide Aboriginal people: consider the firmament [heavens] with its bodies as a land similar to what they are living upon ... It is their opinion that all the celestial bodies were formerly living upon earth, partly as animals, partly as men, and that they left this lower region to exchange for the higher one. Therefore all the names which apply to the beings on earth they apply to the celestial bodies, and believe themselves to be obnoxious to their influence, and ascribe to them malformation of the body, and other accidents.49

The amount of knowledge possessed of the heavens by the Adelaide people was said to be considerable.50 It is possible that the sky world was perceived as being entered from the east. Stephens51 says: 'At death they believed that the thinking and talking principle passed away to the east, whence came the sun and moon; that there they would all meet at last.'

There were several layers to the body of knowledge concerning the sky world. Teichelmann claims that Aboriginal beliefs about the world were limitedly known by Europeans, as they were carefully concealed, their own males only initiated with knowledge

46 Clarke 1990.
47 Elkin 1977; Berndt and Berndt 1981.
49 Teichelmann 1841:8. Teichelmann was quoted, without acknowledgment, by Cawthorne 1926.
50 Teichelmann 1841:9.
51 Stephens 1889:482.
of them at a certain age. Indeed, Schürmann's informants guarded their secrets so much that he was only told about the cosmos under the conditions that he would not tell another Aboriginal person. The stratification of knowledge among Adelaide people would have been reflected in varying landscapes' views held by differing age/gender groups. Rather than there being one valid cultural landscape per cultural group, there were many forms with a certain level of unity. The particular landscape view used in a given context would have depended on the cultural status of both the speaker and the listener. I argue that an analysis aiming towards an understanding of Aboriginal geography should not be limited to European landscape views emphasising physical or terrestrial characteristics. Cultural landscapes do not have an existence independent from the ideologies of their occupants.

The land to the west and the underworld

In addition to the sky world, ethnographic sources mention a psychic landscape variously described as the 'land to the far west', 'land of the dead', or 'the underworld'. It is here that the Adelaide people believed that a person's soul dwelt both before and after death. Unborn souls were considered to come from here to hover among grasstrees whilst awaiting the hour of conception. In describing these beliefs, the concept *pinde* needs explaining. The dual use of this term is shown by Teichelmann who states:

One opinion of theirs is, that the soul or the spirit is living in Pin-de, that is either in a western country, or in the grave; (for this term is applied both to the Europeans and to every hole digged [sic.] in the ground, therefore grave.

*Pinde* was therefore a landscape term applied to both the 'land to the west' and to 'the underworld'.

The earliest Aboriginal responses to contact with Europeans illustrate the significance of 'land to the west'. Teichelmann and Schürmann say that when the Adelaide people 'first saw the whites they took them to be the souls of their own forefathers, who ... had come back to see once more their native country'. Due to the configuration of Saint Vincent Gulf, Europeans were likely to have been first observed by Adelaide people as coming from predominately westerly directions. Kangaroo Island, to the southwest of Adelaide, was the base of European whalers and sealers as early as 1819, 17 years before the official formation of South Australia. These men periodically raided the mainland for Aboriginal women to act as wives and labourers. The experiences that southern South Australian Aboriginal people had with these Islanders in the precolonial period, would have shaped their perceptions of the official settlers arriving in 1836. By the Adelaide people assuming that the first Europeans came from the 'large den' in the west, they were simply making sense of the arrival of newcomers within the confines of their own cultural views of the landscape.

The relationship between 'pit' or 'den' with the western 'land' requires treatment. The Adelaide people considered the earth to be male, having under it three layers of water.

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52 Teichelmann 1841:8.
54 Gell 1988.
55 *The South Australian Colonist*, 7 July 1840:277.
56 Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840:2:5.
58 Clarke 1990.
59 Teichelmann 1841:9.
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Beneath this were two monsters considered to be the wives of the earth. Under these were three monsters continually uttering a deep roaring noise. Although the latter were not children of the former, they were nursed by them, presumably in the underworld. If the underworld was considered to be entered via the west, while, as suggested above, the sky world could be reached from the east, then it is logical that the underworld be equated with the 'land to the west'. It is likely that notions about the sun and the creation/death of the day are incorporated into the perceived existence of these psychic landscapes. It is to the west that the sun seemingly enters the earth, travelling through the underground landscape during the night to emerge in the east, the next day, to enter the celestial landscape.

Where do souls go?

To the early ethnographers, one of the confusing aspects of Adelaide Aboriginal religion was the large number of places the souls of the dead were perceived to go. Wyatt, for instance, recorded from Adelaide, that dead people go to islands or the land across the sea, dead dogs to Cadle Peendinga or the dog-country, and that kangaroos and other large animals go to Nanto country, nanto meaning all large animals.60 As stated above, some people and animals in spirit form travelled from the terrestrial landscape to the sky world. Another account is that, upon death, the spirit is firstly contained in the ground, this spot being the Wingkonnga, reportedly meaning 'breath-place'.61 The earth here was made into a heap by the dead man's female relatives, while the body was carried away on a bier. This small mound was considered to draw up wingko or breath of the deceased to release it. Presumably another part of the soul accompanied the body until the inquest and mourning rituals were over. Birds appear to have an important perceived role in assisting souls in their journeys. In the Port Lincoln area of southern Eyre Peninsula, souls of dead people were believed to be accompanied to the 'land of the dead' by a kind of sea-bird with a red-bill, well known for its loud shrill call at night.62 In the Adelaide region, the call of a hawk, karkanya, had the power to charm away souls, particularly those of children.63 At least some birds, through their flight ability, were perceived as being capable of travelling freely across boundaries of various psychic and terrestrial landscapes. This helps explain why so many birds play major roles in Aboriginal 'Dreaming' stories. From the descriptions of the Adelaide landscapes contained in this paper, there appears to be at least two locations where an individual spirit resides after death, the sky world and the underworld.

In order to explain the apparent confusion over the destination of the dead person's spirit, we must investigate the Aboriginal conception of the spirit or soul. A comparison with beliefs from other parts of Australia indicates that Adelaide concepts of 'after life' were not unique and were, in fact, consistent with that of most other Aboriginal groups. On this matter, Berndt and Berndt state:

In ordinary life a man plays many roles, and in this respect the new situation [death] is not altogether dissimilar. One part of him in spirit form may be a trickster, another may go on to the Land of the Dead, or return to a nucleus of

60 Letter by Wyatt to the Colonial Secretary, 1 April 1838, 69/1838, Public Records Office, Adelaide.
61 Wyatt 1879:164,177,181.
62 Wilhelmi 1860. This bird is possibly a species of tern.
63 Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840:2:9; Schürmann, Personal diaries, 23 January 1840; Gell 1988. A variation in the recording of karkanya is narkanya.
spirit children awaiting rebirth, merge with the great ancestral and creative beings and so on.64

We must therefore include such psychic landscapes in the study of Aboriginal views of their total landscape.

**Adelaide as a Lower Murray landscape**

I will now draw attention to problems that have arisen with the process of defining particular cultural traits as being 'Adelaide'. As will be shown in the following discussion, there has been a general failure by 20th century scholars to acknowledge and account for Aboriginal reactions to the colonial situation in their ethnographic reconstructive work for southern South Australia. From the very beginning of European settlement, Aboriginal people were attracted by the availability of a new technology from European settlements. The very existence of the colonisers, initially explained within Aboriginal cosmology, aroused curiosity amongst Aboriginal people from far beyond the frontier. The gravitational effect of the city on Aboriginal demography is well illustrated by Cawthorne who says that by 1843 nearly all of the Mount Barker people, previously situated to the east about 35 kilometres away, were camped in Adelaide. He says:

if you ask them 'You Mount Barker [man]', 'No' they say and then again 'No' and explain themselves thus - 'long time ago me Mount Barker Man, now me long time set down at Adelaide, me now Adelaide man.'65

The intention of foreign Aboriginal groups to incorporate themselves into the Adelaide settlement does not appear to have been generally welcomed by the original Adelaide inhabitants. There are several accounts of conflict between Adelaide people and neighbouring groups suggesting this. For instance, in 1844, an Adelaide Aboriginal man, known to Europeans as King John, said:

Before white man come, Murray black fellow never come here. Now white man come, Murray black fellow come too. Encounter Bay and Adelaide black fellow no like him. Me want him to go away. Let them sit down at the Murray, not here. This is not his country.66

It is likely that the Adelaide people considered that they had more rights, than did other Aboriginal groups, to the rations and other goods available in the city.67 The initial conflict and absorption of the Adelaide territory by other Aboriginal groups appears to have been in a pre-European fashion, reflected in a predominance of sorcery killings, ritualised fighting, and, as I will argue, the taking over of the landscape mythology. It is in relation to this last aspect, that I wish to discuss the Lower Murray influence on the recording of the 'Adelaide' Aboriginal ethnography.

The most detailed account available of a myth concerning the Adelaide landscape is of the Tjirbruke spirit who created such geographical features as freshwater springs and hills.68

64 Berndt and Berndt 1981:476.
65 Cawthorne, Literarium diarium, 27 January 1843, CY reel 214, A103 items 1-8, frame no. 209.
67 Foster 1989 provides a detailed account of the effects of South Australian ration depots on Aboriginal people.
68 Accounts of Tjirbruke are given by Tindale and Mountford 1936; Tindale 1987; Smith 1930:331-341; Harvey 1939; Berndt 1940b; Lucas 1989. Campbell 1985 questions whether Tjirbruke is an Adelaide myth. Variations in the recording of Tjirbruke include Chirr-bookie, Tjilbruke and Tjirbuke.
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Tjirbruke's mythological track runs along the Saint Vincent Gulf side of Fleurieu Peninsula from the vicinity of Adelaide, along the coast to Cape Jervis, and inland to Brukunga near Mount Barker. Tjirbruke finally turned into a bird, some versions say a blue crane (*Ardea pacifica*), others state a glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*). One problem this myth presents is that all recorded versions of it date from early 20th century, with no hint of it from the Teichelmann and Schürmann 1830-40 period. Tindale, who provides the most detailed account, presents another problem as the bulk of his informants were not Adelaide descendants, but people from Encounter Bay, Lower Murray and the Coorong. Many of the verses Tindale recorded were in the Ramindjeri language of Encounter Bay, the Yaralde of the Lower Lakes, and the Tangane of the Coorong. Even the name of Tjirbruke appears linguistically to be a Lower Murray word, rather than a term from the recorded Adelaide language. Also in Tindale's version, the importance of the *ngaitji*, a Lower Murray term for a spirit familiar, is emphasised. Although there must have been considerable variation among versions Tindale heard, as shown by the shorter accounts of Tjirbruke from his contemporaries, Tindale failed to account for these inconsistencies. He simply selected what he considered to be a 'correct' version. Undoubtedly, Tindale's rigid notion of 'tribe' was a strong influence in his treatment of cultural information, such as myth, as existing in a more homogeneous way than should have been. Tindale standardised geographical knowledge in the Tjirbruke myth to such a degree that his final version could not have represented the views of the Kaurna, as he defines them.

Whether there would have been such detailed knowledge of this myth outside the broad Adelaide cultural region in pre-European times is difficult to determine. One explanation is that this mythology was imported by the Lower Murray/Encounter Bay groups after colonisation, when they extended their range along the lower Fleurieu Peninsula coast to fill a vacuum probably left by the previous Aboriginal population moving north into settled areas around Adelaide. By 1860, Lower Murray Aboriginal people living on the Point McLeay Mission reportedly considered all the original Adelaide Aboriginal people to be dead. At this time, Lower Murray people were already seasonally camping at various spots along the coast between Encounter Bay and Adelaide. In 1899, there were groups of Point McLeay people living in the Adelaide district, such as on the banks of the Patawalonga at Glenelg. Once in place, the Tjirbruke mythology would have provided Aboriginal travellers with a valuable record of suitable camping spots and places to find freshwater springs. The taking over of an unoccupied region, or at least a sparsely inhabited landscape, would have amounted to a pre-European type response to a post-European situation. This level of integration of historical changes into mythology is similar to the 'Dreaming' track modifications recorded in the 1970s from displaced Pintupi people in the Western Desert. However, in spite of the absence of Tjirbruke accounts from the early ethnographies, it is possible that this mythology existed in some form amongst Adelaide

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69 In the Encounter Bay language, *ngaitye* was listed as 'friend, countryman, protector' (Meyer 1843:86). Taplin 1979:1 records this term in the Ngarrindjeri language to mean a 'tutelary genius or tribal symbol'.

70 Taplin, Journals, 31 January 1860.

71 The Taplin Journals 1859-1879 have many references to Point McLeay people travelling to Adelaide. Ross 1984:21 and Hemming 1985, 1987 record camping spots along the southern Fleurieu Peninsula coast that were used by Lower Murray people.


73 Myers 1986:53-54.
The congealing blood of the 'devil' formed a rich red ochre deposit at this place, now part of an Adelaide outer suburb. Mirka fled back to the Mount Gambier district, his dripping blood creating other ochre outcrops on the way. This particular version of the Ngurunderi myth is unique among the recorded mythologies of southern South Australia for its extremely broad geographic coverage. The mythical sites of other known versions of Ngurunderi are contained within the South East cultural bloc. The existence of the broader account is probably best explained in terms of post-colonial Aboriginal people gaining extensive geographical knowledge through participation in early statewide agricultural activities, such as shearing and harvesting. The importance of Red Ochre Cove, in the post-contact situation, is indicated by the record of Lower Murray people from Point McLeay Mission, travelling to Noarlunga to obtain initiation ochre in 1860. The construction of mythology would not have been restricted to a time long before European invasion, but has been a continuing process.

Another Adelaide landscape myth, showing a Lower Murray influence, is the legend of Pootpobberrie, which explains the formation of Waterfall Gully. A number of Aboriginal words have been recorded in association with it, some of which are linked to Adelaide languages, such as Mayu - man, and Ngulta - a person past the last stage of initiation. However, other words are obviously derived from non-Adelaide Aboriginal languages. For example, Miminnie - woman, and Muldarbie - sorcerer/spirit, are words that have only been recorded from Lower Murray languages. The term, Wirirri-malde for a sorcerer, is probably derived from the Encounter Bay word, wiwiri-malde - 'doctor, one who cures or charms away sickness'. This recorded version of the myth has clearly received a significant influence from the Lower Murray region.

It is my argument that the researcher acquiring ethnographic accounts of a culture, must always consider both the post-colonial history of the group concerned, and the varied cultural affinities of primary informants. The cultural influences operating must be identified, whenever possible. Unfortunately, in recent times, myths such as Tjirbruke and Pootpobberrie, have been too readily absorbed by some as part of the growing body of literature concerning the 'Kaurna' people of Adelaide, without recognition of possible

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74 Tindale in The Advertiser, 16 May 1936.
75 Taplin, Journals, 12 September 1860.
77 Meyer 1843:107.
78 Meyer 1843:19,52,76.
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foreign Aboriginal influences. Accounts of mythology and other cultural expressions are not passed on to different cultural groups without some degree of interpretation, and therefore modification, having taken place.

Discussion

Aboriginal relationships to the land have, in the past literature, been treated as a somewhat uniform set of linkages, classified according to 'tribal' divisions. The data provided here suggest that Aboriginal views of the landscape are not easily grouped into such units. One of the results of using the outdated anthropological concept of the 'tribe', has been the incorrect treatment of pre-European Aboriginal culture as existing in more or less homogenous conditions. This has led to serious flaws in the reconstructive ethnographic work of various authors. For instance, many ethnographers have tended to look for 'correct' versions of cultural expressions, such as myths, when many equally valid forms exist. Another flawed assumption has been that Aboriginal culture is primarily static, resistant to change in its pre-European state, with post-European cultures being over simplified by an imposition of a 'traditional'/non-traditional' dichotomy. From the brief historical reconstruction given in this paper, I have indicated several probable examples of the reinvention of tradition, not easily explained by 'detribalisation' and 'assimilation' concepts.

The influences affecting 'Adelaide' culture have been cross-cultural in several ways. Firstly, in the sense that foreign Aboriginal groups, such as those from the Lower Murray, have had a significant affect on the recording of 'Adelaide' Aboriginal culture, particularly after the Teichelmann and Schürmann period. Secondly, that Europeans have been a major influence on the construction of beliefs concerning supposedly pre-European Aboriginal culture. This effect was not simply confined to the missionary period, but has been particularly strong during and since the reconstructive work by Tindale. Both sets of influence have combined to shape modern concepts of pre-European Adelaide Aboriginal culture, typified by the use of 'Kaurna' for the name of this group. The continuing widespread institutionalisation of the concept of 'Kaurna' has meant that this term will continue to be used in the future. The making of tradition is therefore a process that is still strong today, involving people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

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FROM CHURCH TO STATE: THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT TAKE-OVER OF ANGLICAN MISSIONS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

Noel Loos

In 1886 the Griffith Government in Queensland began a policy of supporting Christian missions to Aborigines which subsequent governments continued so that Queensland provided much more support to missions than any other government in Australia until the second half of the twentieth century.¹ This meant that the Queensland Government and the churches entered into a partnership through the various missionary bodies. The churches thus became important arms of government policy. Increasingly, the advantage of this system was with the government which obtained an Aboriginal social service and control agency on the cheap. The Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Brethren established twelve large missions in remote areas of North Queensland, ten of which still exist, under the 1984 Deeds of Grant in Trust legislation, as self-governing Aboriginal Communities.

The Anglican Church, through its constitutionally appointed mission agency, the Australian Board of Missions (ABM), and in conjunction with the local dioceses, founded four of these missions: Yarrabah (1892), Mitchell River, now Kowanyama (1906), Lockhart River (1924), and Edward River, now Pormpuraaw (1938). Yarrabah is in the Diocese of North Queensland; the other three missions are in the Diocese of Carpentaria. ABM also supported Forrest River Mission in Western Australia, founded in 1913, and a number of chaplaincies. In 1915, it accepted the Torres Strait Mission from the London Missionary Society and converted it to the Anglican rite. The story of the Torres Strait Island Mission is very different from the missions established for Aboriginal people and will not be discussed in this paper. Nor was the Torres Strait Island Mission involved in the take-over with which this paper is concerned.

The transfer of administrative and financial responsibility from the Anglican Church to the Queensland Government was an epiphanal event, in that it brought to the surface many issues underlying Anglican missionary policy and practice, the relationship between church and state, and the relationship of both with the Aboriginal people through the 75 years of Anglican government. Significantly the Aborigines who grew up on missions were thought of, and referred to, as 'inmates' until the end of this missionary era.

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¹ Australian Board of Missions (hereafter ABM) Board Minutes, 'Report on Aborigines of Australia and the work being done for them by Government and Missionary Bodies', 20-21 November 1940:4-5; Hann to Robinson, 28 March 1950, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Personal file: Alice Hann.
directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ministries. The Diocese of Carpentaria, whose cathedral is at Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, received almost two-thirds of the Aboriginal and Islander Mission Grant.2

Although periodically the Board at the national office in Sydney reflected seriously upon the implications of its continued administration of the Aboriginal communities created by its missions, the decisions to end this state of affairs were taken in the remote dioceses responsible for their day to day running. There the decisions were based on insufficient funds, inadequate government support, and the difficulty of staffing the various mission villages. In the case of Forrest River, supervised by now a subcommittee in Perth, the conclusion was reached that, after over fifty years, the results were not worth the effort. Indeed, the inability of ABM to institute major changes in mission philosophy and practice, as indicated by the failure of the Aboriginal Christian Co-operative Movement, stands in sharp contrast to the growth in social awareness that is evident in Sydney.3

A number of reports on the Forrest River Mission were made after World War II which confronted the Australian Board of Missions with the problems inherent in the paternalistic control of Aborigines that had been developed in earlier decades. These have been referred to in this study because they illustrate so graphically the general situation that applied for all ABM missions, despite the differences between them. Bishop Cranswick, Chairman from 1942 to 1949, is nowhere near as dominant a figure in the history of ABM as his predecessor, Canon Needham. However, his comments about the historical experience of Aborigines and the responsibilities resting upon white Australians for their future suggested that the 'new age' in mission history he referred to had dawned, even for Aborigines.4

In his instructions to the new Chaplain-Superintendent at Forrest River, the Rev. Keith Coaldrake, he attacked negative stereotypes, elaborated upon the richness of Aboriginal culture and the poor treatment Aboriginal people had previously received. He suggested surprising models, the camps organised for Aborigines by the army in the Northern Territory. Here they experienced 'security and fellowship, community life, and attention to diet and health' in contrast to their previous existence on missions and government settlements. While still reflecting the contemporary ethnocentrism, he insisted: 'It is for the natives to choose whether they will accept ... a better way and truer belief ... or will modify their own codes and belief, or will build up some blend both Christian and native'. The missionaries had to be 'fulfillers and not destroyers of the ancient law of the Aborigines to help these men and women left over from the stone age to survive and prosper in that contact with our advanced civilisation that has now become inevitable'.5 Although these instructions are still clearly daubed with ideas from the past, there is no escaping the more enlightened vision, much of it still considered new and challenging over forty years later. While still maintaining the importance of the missionary role, he admitted mistakes had been made in the past and that methods had sometimes been unsatisfactory. His lengthy 'Instructions' codified as 'The aim and policy of the Australian Board of Missions' concluded with the challenge that all involved in the missionary task had to ask from year to year: 'What is it we are really trying to do?'

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2 ABM 1984; ABM 1986; Partners February-April 1990.
3 Loos and Keast forthcoming.
4 Cranswick to Eileen Heath, 5 December 1945, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Personal file: Eileen Heath; ABM Board Minutes, 'Chairman's Report', 28-29 July 1948.
5 'Instructions issued to the Rev. Keith Coaldrake on the occasion of his assumption of the office of Priest-Superintendent of the Forrest River Mission', 19 February 1948, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Series 6, Box 2, Folder 10.
The Queensland Government Take-over of Anglican Missions

There are many other examples of the growing social awareness in Sydney of the problems confronting Aboriginal people in Australian society. Archdeacon Robertson, Chairman from 1949 to 1956, was clearly aware that missions had to contend with an Aboriginal response that was at least in part conditioned by colonisation. He wrote to Sister Delaney soon after her arrival at Mitchell River Mission:

They do not take discipline easily and it is very hard to change a nation of people who have been almost slaves into a nation of free people. We gave them such a bad time in the early days, we have been giving them such a bad time since ...  

In 1966 Canon Frank Coaldrake, Chairman from 1957 to 1967, challenged his Board and supporters of ABM to support the struggle for Aboriginal citizenship rights. 'The citizen's rights of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the State of Queensland have long been defective. ... The Church in Australia should not ignore the fact that so many Australian Anglicans are being kept in a condition of bondage'. Earlier, in 1960, he had informed the Board that the 6,000 Torres Strait Islanders were 'Anglicans in poverty - Anglicans in bondage'.

ABM, in association with the Diocese of Carpentaria, unsuccessfully sought permanent tenure of reserve lands, not only at Lockhart River for the Co-operative, but also at Mitchell River where the diocese was developing the Carpentaria Aboriginal Pastoral Company. The Queensland Government even rejected a proposal to allow Aborigines on Anglican missions to buy and own their own homes because it suggested a permanent Aboriginal presence that the Government could not contemplate. Increasingly, ABM found that its plans for Aboriginal people on its missions were in conflict with Queensland Government policy: 'To be in control of himself, his family and his property he [the Aboriginal] must be exempted from the Act'. But if he gained exemption he was not allowed to live 'among his own people, in his own country'. ABM found itself caught up with other churches, especially those involved in Aboriginal missions, in an exploration of what legal right Aborigines had to their land, an investigation that resulted in the Australian Council of Churches' support for land rights and compensation for the loss of land.

There was also an awareness of internal contradictions in mission policy and practice. From the beginning a caste system had been created of white missionaries and Aboriginal people that was manifested in the siting of the missionary residences apart from those of the Aboriginal Christians within the mission compound. The camp for visiting Aborigines and those who had not accepted mission authority or been accepted into it was completely outside the compound at a distance where each group could maintain a separate existence with a minimum of disturbance. While the missionaries thought of themselves as the ones who were being shielded from the noise and life style of the camp, it is equally clear that the camp Aborigines derived a similar benefit.

The caste system, however, extended well beyond the geographical placement of the living quarters. The quality and size of the missionaries' living quarters, while often

6 Robertson to Sister Delaney, 21 March 1951, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Personal file: D. Delaney.
7 ABM Board Minutes, 'Chairman's report', 3-5 May 1966: 10.
8 Ibid., 27-29 September 1960.
9 Ibid., 11-13 April 1961.
extremely primitive compared to what was the norm in white Australia, reflected the superior caste the whites assumed within the mission community.

A number of reports were made on the perpetually troubled Forrest River Mission in the late 1940s and 1950s when closing the mission was seriously being considered. They emphasised the contradictions posed by the caste system within missions. The Rev. R.B. Cranswick pointed out that the ration system of payment not only made mission inmates into beggars, but also discouraged them from working. They were obviously passively resisting the 'prison-like discipline which seemed to be enforced for its own sake and with little apparent reason'. He pointed out that it was on the spiritual side that the mission had been able to do least because of this guard-inmate situation and that the Aborigines 'have seen little of what Christianity is, and therefore are not attracted'. They were made to feel their inferiority not only at every meal, but even on a picnic as one at Forrest River dramatically demonstrated:

They see white people keeping all the best for themselves and have become accustomed to expect it of us. Scraps of food left on the plates of the staff are eagerly sought for. During the first week of my visit to the mission we went to Camera pool. At meal time they made our fire, got us improvised seats and saw us sit down to turkey and tinned fruit, having already carried everything necessary all the way. They then went away elsewhere to a meal of damper and tea. There seems to be a very definite feeling of inferiority on their part.

He pointed out that 'the prison-like discipline' had created 'an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust in which it is impossible to do much Christian work', and that 'corporal punishment, chaining of natives and punishments which show a complete lack of respect for native customs, seem to have been the rule back to the early days of the mission'. This regime had been so internalised that Aborigines who were given some authority thought this was the only way to run a mission. One said: 'I owe what I am to the thrashings Mr .... gave me'. In the 1970s and 1980s, some older Aborigines made comments about the 'civilising', Christianising effects of the dormitory system at Yarrabah. Cranswick also pointed to the ultimate contradiction in mission policy. It aimed at creating a new spiritual understanding by denigrating and disallowing the expression of Aboriginal spirituality; 'The native customs seem to provide endless opportunities on which to build Christian teaching, but we have shown a lack of respect for these'.

There was also an awareness by the end of World War II that the missions were going nowhere. With the exception of Edward River, the first stages of the evangelisation process had been completed. All Aborigines in the mission compound were now baptised and, if old enough, confirmed as Anglican Christians. Their understanding and commitment to their faith varied probably as much as that within any parish in the suburbs. Keith Coaldrake had felt the need to state this in his report to the Board and to his Perth Committee:

The exact nature of the spiritual work here is, I think, not understood by most people. Briefly, the period of its foundation is now part of the history of this Mission, and the place functions more as an isolated country settlement today. Likewise, the period of purely evangelical preaching and teaching on a very

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12 'Report on Forrest River, July to December 1947', ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Personal file: R.B. Cranswick. Rev. R.B. Cranswick should not be confused with Bishop G.H.Cranswick, Chairman of ABM, 1942-1949. Aborigines at Yarrabah made this comment in discussion with me on visits to Yarrabah in the early 1970s. In 1989, two of my Aboriginal students interviewed older relatives about the dormitory system and found that the three women they interviewed presented the complete spectrum from strong approval to bitter disapproval.
elementary level, and the proselytising of heathen primitives has passed and we now deal with natives who have most had lifelong Christian teaching and influence. Most of the teaching is on the Sunday School level.\textsuperscript{13}

Professor Elkin, an ordained Anglican priest himself, was nowhere near as complacent about this level of achievement: 'Our Church services and bell-ringing are all of a piece with the general routine we have introduced. The Compound is a boarding-school from which only death, or perhaps old age, will release its inhabitants'.\textsuperscript{14} The boarding-school label could be applied to all missions and government reserves where entry and departure were controlled. Elkin pointed to the self-perpetuating apathy these closed institutions had generated:

The young men of 1928 are still lining up daily to be allotted their tasks, having become specialists in nothing, having no sense of independence, having no money or other exchange-economy through which to express themselves in satisfying physical and mental needs. And all they can look forward to is a parasitic old age, probably out in the Camp. ...when they should be in their prime, as leaders of social groups, they are leading an aimless existence; unpaid workers on a Mission which, outwardly at least, gets nowhere...

He said this of Forrest River, but it applied to nearly all missions and government reserves at this time and for decades after: 'We are the cause of the apathy and penury of the people, and we ought to do something about it'.\textsuperscript{15}

Elkin's solution was starkly simple and reflected his own limited expectations for Aboriginal people: to learn from the Queensland Government and, as a consequence, to provide a much more expensive infrastructure and spend a great deal more each year. As he pointed out: 'The work in hand is to run an institution of a peculiar kind - the building up of a community'.\textsuperscript{16}

Consequently, by the 1950s, the Board had been confronted by the sociological and religious contradictions and problems inherent in governing Aboriginal communities 'to maintain a work,' as its Executive Officer, Rev. M.A. Warren, said, 'which only in its minor aspects could be called evangelistic'.\textsuperscript{17}

Yarrabah, like Forrest River Mission, was beset with administrative problems from its inception but there was soon a great deal more to show for it. A sizeable mission village of over 800 people developed to which the Queensland Government was only too happy to send Aborigines it considered in need of such confinement, more so than to any other Queensland mission. There was conflict with the Queensland Government because it considered the Church gave too little attention to the industrial side of the mission and too much to the religious, especially because of its failure to make the mission anywhere near self-supporting. The Government was also drawn into the conflict within the Anglican Church over the administrative control of Yarrabah.

Although within the Diocese of North Queensland, Yarrabah had been administered from its beginning in 1892 by the Sydney based Executive Council of ABM because North

\textsuperscript{13} 'Report for year July '52 to June '53', ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Forrest River Mission.
\textsuperscript{14} ABM Board Minutes, 'Report on Forrest River by Professor Elkin', 13-14 November 1946.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} ABM Board Minutes, 'Aborigines: Forrest River Mission', 26-28 July 1955.
Queensland was unable or unwilling to assume responsibility. The Bishop of North Queensland was responsible for overseeing its spiritual life. Like the Diocese of North West Australia, North Queensland was a poor, struggling diocese in a vast, sparsely populated region. In 1910, when the Queensland Government objected to dealing with a New South Wales committee, an administrative committee was set up in Brisbane with the Archbishop as Chairman. This situation persisted until 1937 when Bishop John Oliver Feetham of North Queensland gained administrative control for his diocese after a bitter campaign that began in 1929. The correspondence contains serious allegations by Feetham of poor management and some agreement from ABM that it was in need of improvement. Subsequent events suggest that the North Queensland Diocese was incapable of meeting the challenges implicit in governing a mission community.

From 1948, the Queensland Government put pressure on the Yarrabah Committee to improve living conditions on its mission and was in turn challenged to provide more adequate financial support because the Church was doing government work. Even after receiving a grant of 25,000 pounds, the Yarrabah Committee considered it would have to hand over the reserve to the Government unless it received more adequate support. The Government met all Yarrabah’s accumulated debt in return for a position on the Committee. It was still much cheaper to retain church involvement than to take on full responsibility.

The difficulty of finding and retaining suitable staff had always been a problem at Yarrabah, as at all of ABM’s Aboriginal missions. In 1952, the decision was made to employ Anglican Church Army officers as superintendents. Their discipline, training, and commitment to evangelism and service led them to set high standards for themselves and to aim at a similar response in the people they ministered to. This had proved attractive to some Aboriginal people at Palm Island and Yarrabah and a small number entered the Church Army training college at Newcastle. Some of these graduated and eventually worked among their people. Bishop Arthur Malcolm and Sister Muriel Stanley of Yarrabah and the Reverends Alan and Norman Polgen of Palm Island owed their Christian formation to the Church Army example and training. However, many Yarrabah Aborigines objected to the greater demands the Church Army officers made upon the labour force and to the increased penalties they imposed upon those offending against mission rules. Eventually, in 1957, the Yarrabah Aborigines staged a strike to protest against their inadequate rations, poor working conditions, and the autocratic rule of the superintendent.

In retrospect, it seems that the Church Army officers, at that time unfamiliar with the aspirations and problems confronting Aboriginal people, were trying to impose the strategies of the 1930s and 1940s upon a people who were increasingly aware of what was normal and acceptable. In 1956, 86 men and women were employed outside the mission. By this time, contact had been made with the trade union movement and some union officials were becoming concerned at the living conditions on Aboriginal communities. The

18 ABM Board Minutes, 'History compiled from official documents in the possession of the Board concerning the relationship of the Bishop and Diocese of North Queensland, the Australian Board of Missions and the Yarrabah Mission', 13-14 March 1935; ABM Board Minutes, 'Chairman's report: Yarrabah', 14-15 April 1937. The correspondence of this struggle is contained in 'ABM Chairman's Correspondence: Yarrabah'.
20 Discussion with Bishop Arthur Malcolm at Yarrabah during 1988 and 1989 and interview at Townsville, 10 November 1989. Sister Muriel Stanley was a trained nursing sister, but 'Sister' was also the title given to female Church Army officers. Male graduates were referred to as 'Captain'.

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development of the vast bauxite deposits at Weipa, a Presbyterian mission, inevitably focused the attention of the relevant trade unions on all the Cape York Peninsula missions.\textsuperscript{21}

The Superintendent, Captain Wilcox, with the support of the Queensland Government, expelled three leaders of the strike. Approximately 200 residents of Yarrabah, many of them supporters of the strike, were quickly given exemption from the Queensland Act and left the mission over the next two years. This massive increase was justified as part of the policy of assimilation. Yarrabah seemed to settle down. A social welfare committee, similar to those on Government settlements, was formed to involve staff and Aboriginal residents; rations were increased; more attention was given to health; more trained teachers were employed; and farming was expanded with the assistance of the Department of Native Affairs.\textsuperscript{22}

However, when the Minister, Dr Noble, and the senior officers of the Department of Native Affairs, Con O'Leary and Pat Killoran, visited Yarrabah in late 1959 they were shocked at the condition it was in. They confided to John Warby when they moved on to Lockhart River that Yarrabah was a 'headache'. They needed to spend 250,000 pounds on improvements and would not commit such a large outlay on a non-government settlement. Perhaps, even more worrying was the rowdy resentment expressed at a community meeting that lasted till 2a.m. that O'Leary and Killoran attended. The Aboriginal residents kept 'interrupting and shouting out that the Superintendent was a liar etc etc'. Noble was also concerned at the conditions the people at nearby Bessie Point were living under, many of whom had left Yarrabah in the previous two years. Noble considered the treatment of the Bessie Point people 'a disgrace'. They were forced to consider proposing to Bishop Shevill that the Queensland Government take over the administration of Yarrabah.\textsuperscript{23}

By this time, the Townsville Committee and ABM had had enough, even though the government was by then contributing 50,000 pounds per year to Yarrabah's upkeep. The Superintendent reported in the diocesan yearbook: 'The Church at Yarrabah is no longer running a mission but a large Social Service project beyond the financial and manpower resources of the Church'.\textsuperscript{24} After a decade of propping up the mission to avoid the inevitable, the Queensland Government took over administrative and financial responsibility on 1 July 1960, even paying the Chaplain's salary. The Church of England was guaranteed that no other religious denomination would be allowed access to Yarrabah. Until there was a schism among Aboriginal Christians in 1990, St Alban's Anglican Church was the only one in the community.

In 1960, no one expressed the view that the Diocese of Carpentaria missions should also be handed over to the Government. After a special visit to the three Aboriginal missions in which he saw the desperately poor conditions under which the Aborigines and

\textsuperscript{21} Queensland Parliamentary Papers (hereafter Q.P.P.) 1956-7, II:1250; F. Thompson to Clint, 19 January 1958, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Series 14; Interview with Fred Thompson, 17 December 1990; Warby to Bishop of Carpentaria, 7 October 1959; Clint to Coadrake, 20 March 1957, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Series 13; Robertson to Clint, 23 August 1955, ABM Chairman's Correspondence, Personal file: Alf Clint.


\textsuperscript{23} Warby to Bishop of Carpentaria, 7 October 1959, ABM Chairman's Correspondence re Aborigines, Series 14.

missionaries lived, the Chairman, Frank Coaldrake, was optimistic for the future. He had confidence in the Diocese, the wealth of natural resources of the region, and the goodwill of the Aborigines at Lockhart, Mitchell, and Edward River Missions. If ABM had been able to draw more upon the resources of the Queensland Government or had the capital of multinational companies like Comalco or BHP, Coaldrake's optimism might have been justified.25

The new Bishop, John Matthews, had earlier visited the Diocese and was appalled at the state of the missions. He had then taken up a senior appointment in Carpentaria before being consecrated Bishop. In 1961 he reported that the three missions were 'almost at the point of disintegrating' because of lack of staff and the pressure on those working there. 'It does not look as if the Church in Australia is vitally interested in this work', he wrote, echoing the cry missionaries had uttered during the previous 100 years.26

The first indication that the Bishop of Carpentaria might seek a radical solution to the problems confronting his missions surfaced the same year when he suggested moving Lockhart River Mission 50 kilometres to be closer to Portland Roads wharf and Iron Range aerodrome, a plan the government was ready to agree to. This plan was then abandoned. With the collapse of the Lockhart River Aboriginal Christian Co-operative, the future of the mission looked so difficult that in 1962 consideration was given to moving the whole community to Edward River and Mitchell River missions, provided 'the consent of the people concerned is freely given'.27 After discussions with the Queensland Government in which he had requested greatly increased Government subsidies to Carpentaria missions, he suggested that the people be moved to the government settlement of Bamaga at the tip of Cape York Peninsula where they would have much better food rations, educational and medical facilities, employment prospects and housing than the Church could supply. They would thus have become the Government's administrative and financial responsibility. All of these suggested shifts were over distances of approximately 300 kilometres. Fifty people from Lockhart River were persuaded to move to a village at Bamaga which was given the Lockhart River name, Umagico. The rest of the community soon made it clear that they did not wish to move. The decision was then made to relocate the village in the mission reserve near Portland Roads wharf and the airport, as first planned. There, in its present site, it was at least much easier to service.

By this time, Bishop Matthews had concluded he could not get adequate funding from the Queensland Government to run the missions satisfactorily. Aborigines and missionaries would have had to continue to exist in deplorable, degrading conditions with substandard services beyond the means of the Diocese or ABM to improve. Consequently, with the support of ABM, he decided upon the transfer of all of the Aboriginal missions in Cape York Peninsula to Queensland Government administration. The takeover of Lockhart River, Mitchell River, and Edward River Missions occurred on 1 May 1967.28

25 ABM Board Minutes, 'Special visit to the Diocese of Carpentaria by the Board's representatives', 27-29 October 1959.
28 Hudson to Director of Native Affairs, 30 June 1961; Memorandum of interview of Minister of Health and Home Affairs with Right Reverend S.J. Matthews, 30 June 1961,
When the removal of Lockhart people was considered in 1962, Coaldrake emphasised that all associated costs would have to be borne by the Queensland Government and that, in the new situation, the Church would only exercise a pastoral ministry. The Yarrabah model was fresh in his mind.29

There were a number of other factors that supported the conclusion that the administration of the missions should be transferred to the Queensland Government. Diocesan concern extended well beyond the Bishop. A number of reports in the early 1960s had indicated how deplorably inadequate the communities were in terms of food, housing, clothing, sanitation, mission development and maintenance. One submitted to the Board by the Superintendent of Edward River, Gordon Green, finished with a section headed in bold capitals: THE CONTINUING DISGRACE OF ABORIGINAL LIVING STANDARDS AND LACK OF REASONABLE IMPROVEMENTS ON ABORIGINAL MISSIONS. Green urged the Church to 'make public the scandalous conditions on these missions' unless the Government quickly remedied their secular aspects. However, he sheeted home the responsibility to the Church for being so pusillanimous in its dealings with the government.30

In addition, by 1966, Church and Government administrators had accepted the inevitability and the logic of the transfer. In February 1964, the cyclone 'Dora' had destroyed Edward River and Mitchell River Missions. The Government had accepted the responsibility of rebuilding the two townships at standards comparable to government settlements, a task clearly beyond the Anglican Church. ABM began a Special Appeal reaching out ecumenically beyond the Anglican Church within Australia and overseas through inter-church aid, raising a 'generous' $84,000, which was enough at least to rebuild the church in each community. Thus the Government was involved in rebuilding, and with Lockhart River, resiting all of the Anglican missions in the Diocese of Carpentaria. By this time, the 'goodwill' of the Aborigines on these three missions was wearing thin. Many worked outside the missions and were increasingly aware of how poor their conditions were and how bleak was their future. The Chairman reported in 1966: 'In these two areas [Cape York Aboriginal missions and the Torres Strait Mission] there has been much unrest as the people's expectations rise'. ABM was unable to meet the expectations or to persuade the Government of their urgency. The Government's response to ABM's request that it take responsibility for the schools had met with a slow and hesitant acceptance. Finally, ABM accepted the impossibility of staffing the Cape York missions. There were always important positions vacant and a rapid turnover. Few staff lasted longer than the initial two-year term, many not even that long. Where ABM could expect a missionary to serve five or ten years in other places, in Carpentaria they could be burnt out in two years, thus


magnifying greatly the recruitment problem. 'There is no greater challenge to sacrificial services anywhere in the Church', the Chairman, Frank Coaldrake, lamented. It was part of the challenge that finally had beaten the Church.31

On 15 September 1966, The Minister for Education and Aboriginal Affairs met with the Bishop of Carpentaria and the Chairman of ABM and agreed that the transfer of the three Cape York Anglican Missions should occur as soon as practicable to make available greater resources for their management. The Bishop and the Minister agreed 'that this would be a transfer of management but that Church and Government would continue in partnership to serve the interests of the Aboriginal people'. The Anglican Church was left with its religious monopoly of the three missions for at least the next ten years. It was still intact in 1990.

The Board and the missionaries in Cape York were very much aware that, when the Queensland Government had taken over the Presbyterian Mission at Mapoon in 1963, it had been closed down and the people moved, some by force, to Bamaga. In 1966, Weipa was taken over by the Government and a large part of the Aboriginal reserve cancelled and thrown open for the mining of bauxite by Comalco. The Bishop was assured that the Government would maintain the three Anglican Aboriginal Reserves at their existing extent and that the cattle, stock and plant would be vested in the Aboriginal Welfare Trust, thus assuring ABM that profits from the very large herds of cattle that the Diocese had built up would not be used instead of Government expenditure. The Board noted that the transfer was part of a 'general trend to transfer missions to Government control throughout Australia'.32

In Queensland, beginning with discussions over Yarrabah in 1950, the ABM missions had initiated the trend with a reluctant Government.

The concept that underpinned all of the negotiation was assimilation, sometimes expressed with such frankness that it seemed to be assimilation gone mad. The degree of social engineering that was contemplated with well-intentioned equanimity was breathtaking. 'The training of Aborigines in the development of skills which will enable them to take their place in the general community is the avowed aim of government programmes,' Frank Coaldrake observed in 1962. 'This must mean the eventual movement of Aborigines from Cape York into southern townships and rural areas', except for the aged and incapacitated who would be institutionalised in their mission locality and a small number who could find employment in the few projects, being developed in the Peninsula, most associated with mining. Consequently, it was seen to be no great hardship for most Lockhart River or Yarrabah people to be transferred to other areas if that was necessary. Coaldrake believed that eventually 200 of the 300 Lockhart people 'could be ready for absorption into the general community in the South'.

It is clear that at this time, for the Government and the Anglican Church, the rebuilding of Edward and Mitchell River communities and the resettling and rebuilding of Lockhart River were but temporary expedients until Aboriginal reserves ceased to be needed. By 1967, confronted with the reality of the closure of Mapoon and the transfer of its people, and the reduction of Weipa Reserve to a fraction of its original size, the Church had realised that the rights and wishes of the Aborigines deserved greater consideration.

The Board had formulated its policy with regard to Aboriginal reserve land in 1959 in association with the ecumenical National Missionary Council. It stipulated 'security of land

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tenure for residence and economic enterprise must be provided for Aborigines and Missions in Reserves'; and

Australia's honour demands that Aborigines be considered for preferential treatment concerning any use of reserve lands ... In the case of unexempted, or backward persons, such rights should vest in trustees or guardians on their behalf. Such provisions are an integral part of any assimilation process.

The stand was clear despite the ethnocentric paternalism starkly evident in its expression. As the Anglican Church prepared to divest itself of its missions with, in retrospect, a somewhat indecent haste, Cochrane asked his Board:

should the Church respect the people's wishes and uphold them, even if the Church is convinced of the ultimate need for the things planned by the Government.33

To its credit, the answer was given in the affirmative.

By allowing the Government to take over the four missions in North Queensland, the Church performed an extraordinary miracle, a twentieth century example of the loaves and fishes. Resources that it had begged for for so long began instantly to appear. Plans were made to rehouse completely the residents of Yarrabah in 120 new houses. Twenty were occupied within a year of the take over, part of a massive building program which would transform Yarrabah. Milk and vitamins were provided for the children and trained teachers improved the standard of schooling. Trained staff worked in Maternal and Child Welfare clinics, and hygiene, education, nutrition, indoor plumbing, and sanitation programmes were developed to make Yarrabah a healthier place. Powdered milk, Farex, Baby Rice, Vegemite, peanut paste, cheese, Hypol and fruit, common enough in Cairns but luxuries in Yarrabah, were made available to young children. Electricity was introduced and Yarrabah fully electrified by 1965. A new primary school was constructed and taken over by the Queensland Education Department in 1962.34 At Edward River and Mitchell River, the extensive rebuilding programmes had begun in 1964 after cyclone 'Dora'. After the take-over in 1967 the provision of services and amenities was similar to that at Yarrabah. At all missions a cash economy replaced the previous ration and mixture of ration and cash economies that the missions had used.35

The miracle the Church had wrought was, of course, the necessary effort and expenditure the Government needed to bring these communities up to the same standard as the other Aboriginal reserves at Bamaga, Palm Island, Cherbourg, and Woorabinda. The effort devoted to hygiene, sanitation, diet, reticulated water, and community health programs reflected the need to raise the health of the community. The Government was attempting to meet the minimum standards on Yarrabah and the other missions now that it was responsible and not the Church. Yet the standards of housing, diet, clothing, education, and community health were well known from Government inspections. In the 1920s 90% of Yarrabah Aborigines had been infected with hookworm; 80% were reported suffering from skin diseases in the 1930s. In 1938, the anthropologist, Norman Tindale, had reported the rations were 'only enough to prevent starvation'. In 1935 Dr Raphael Cilento, a Government medical officer, had reported that the diet was 'entirely lacking in vitamins', and represented 'an actual menace to healthy development'. The Government had criticised the

dormitory system and the close supervision of girls and unmarried women although similar supervision existed at Palm Island. Yarrabah's education standards were poor even in comparison with the low standards expected and accepted on government reserves.36

Yet, there was a good deal of justification in Bishop Shevill's angry protest when the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Dr Noble, informed the press in 1959 that Yarrabah Mission 'lacks all facilities'.37 'Of course, we want housing, new school, a new hospital, and an airstrip. For these things we have been battling for seven years', the Bishop retorted. He pointed out that each year they had estimated the costs of servicing the community and each year their requests had been 'cut to the bone by the Government of Queensland'. By 1967 the Government's cheap ride at the expense of the Anglican Church and to the cruel detriment of the Aboriginal people was over.

By 1968, the post-missionary age had dawned for the Aborigines on ABM supported missions. The theological significance of that was probably lost on the Aborigines. One set of administrators who had been given authority over their communities was replaced by another, the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs. The Anglican Church moved from its central role in the secular activities of each community, to which it had devoted such a great deal of its efforts, to the periphery. For many Aborigines the religious trappings of the mission years lost their significance. The move from mission to church meant that the senior advocate of culture change was now the government. Aborigines were keen to accept many innovations from the white intruders while wishing to maintain basic cultural values. As John Taylor said of the Edward River people, they bound themselves to Europeans 'in a culture-donor/culture-recipient relationship'. Once the missionaries withdrew from this central role, they turned to the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.38

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36 Craig 1980:74-5. Craig cites a number of reports.

37 Courier Mail, 25 August 1959.

THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT TAKE-OVER OF ANGLICAN MISSIONS


Interview with Mr Fred Thompson, retired Amalgamated Engineering Union Organiser, 17 December 1990. Telephone.
Introduction

All human societies have rites and taboos surrounding death. In mainstream Australian society, for instance, the dead are disposed of in rites of the funeral, either by burial or cremation. And there is a taboo - which usually lasts for some weeks or months - on mentioning the words 'dead', 'death', 'die' (and many others such as 'kick the bucket', 'croak') to, or in the presence of close relatives of the dead; this taboo is particularly strong in reference to the dead person, who 'passes away'.

In traditional times, Australian Aboriginal societies had their own unique, highly developed and elaborate death rites and taboos. Quite a lot is known about them, as they have enjoyed a prominent place in anthropological studies, which usually include a full chapter on the rites of death. Accounts such as these are 'normally' pieced together from information gleaned from a variety of quite disparate sources, including, primarily, other anthropological works, participant observation, and interviews with Aboriginal people. In doing this, the anthropologist acts as a bricoleur, weaving together his or her coherent and (hopefully) internally consistent account from the materials available to him/her.

One may well wonder how Aborigines themselves understand, conceptualise, and speak about their own rites and taboos of death. Do they see the same events as most significant, and most worthy of being spoken about? Do they understand, and represent particular events associated with death in the same, or similar ways to the ways attributed to them by anthropologists? Do they invest the same significance in these events? Having asked these questions, we might proceed to ask, where there are differences in opinion, interpretation, or 'facts', which is the more reliable, or which is the truth, or a better representation of the truth? These issues of verisimilitude are not of particular interest to us in the present...
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context, and I certainly do not wish to claim that members of a culture are always right in
their interpretation of their rites, or even that their interpretations are necessarily preferable
to, or better than the interpretations of a non-member. I will, however, be suggesting that
speakers' accounts, particularly in the form of biographical narratives, can provide important
insights, which cannot be ignored by the anthropologist.

In fact, the literature contains very few accounts of the rites of death, and associated
taboo, as told by Aborigines themselves. Accordingly, the main purpose of this paper is
to begin filling this gap in the literature, and to publish some accounts of traditional death
practices of Aborigines in the southern-central Kimberley region of Western Australia, as
told by Jack Bohemia, a member of the Gooniyandi 'tribe' (see map), in his mother tongue,
Gooniyandi.

Mode of transcription

Each text is represented in two written versions. The first is a transcription of the
original spoken Gooniyandi text; this appears on the left-hand, even numbered pages. The
Gooniyandi text is divided into lines (each of which represent, roughly, a sentence); these
consist of one or more pause units (or stretches of speech between pauses), which are
delimited by commas. Pause units usually coincide with tone units, or stretches of speech
uttered on a single intonation contour; those few pauses which occur within tone units are
indicated by semi-colons.

The transcripts also indicate vowel lengthening, by a colon following the vowel. In
Gooniyandi, word final vowels are lengthened either to indicate intensity or duration, or to
indicate conjunction, 'and'. Another way in which word-final vowels may be modified is by
a following period of voiceless articulation; this has been represented by the letter h. Such
final syllables usually have greater than normal stress, and it seems that the effect is to add
emphasis to the word.

For spelling Gooniyandi words I have adopted a phonemic orthography which is
similar to the (non-phonemic) orthography which speakers of the language have chosen to
use. This system is fully described by McGregor. The majority of the letters and digraphs
have the expected values. It should be noted, however, that oo symbolises the high back
towel normally written u in Australian languages, and dd represents the apical tap normally
written rr (written with a single d in the Chestnut-Hudson-Street system).

The texts contain a number of words which are clearly not traditional Gooniyandi
words. These are mainly borrowings from English, and most have been assimilated into
Gooniyandi phonetics. They have been spelt according to the Gooniyandi system. In a few
instances a word of English derivation was pronounced in a more English way (that is, in a

3 Exception include Pompy Siddon's 'When a relative died', in Hudson, Richards, Siddon,
4 Ideally, I believe, two other representations of the texts should be included: one
containing interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme translations of the type traditionally
provided by linguists, and a second providing a free translation of each text as a whole.
However, considerations of space preclude the inclusion of these versions. In their place,
I have opted for a final section with a summary and commentary on the texts, which
highlights the principal matters raised.
5 For a detailed description of the system of transcription, see McGregor 1986b; a similar
system is employed by Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunmarra 1985.
6 Street and Chestnut 1983.
7 1986a.
Fig. 1. Map of Kimberley region.
way that more closely approximates English phonetics); such words have been spelt either as in standard English (where it is clear that there has been a shift towards that language), or in a phonemically accurate way, using an extended Gooniyandi orthography (where e.g. a non-Gooniyandi sound such as [s] occurs).

Opposite each Gooniyandi line, on the right-hand page, is a 'loose translation' into English - that is, a translation which attempts to preserve the flavour of the original as a spoken utterance. The same conventions are employed throughout this translation as in the original, except that no attempt has been made to represent the lengthening of vowels.

The texts
The following six texts, and one excerpt from a longer text, were narrated by Jack Bohemia to William McGregor in 1982, during the course of the latter's second field trip to Fitzroy Crossing, investigating the Gooniyandi language. They represent but a small fraction of the corpus of Gooniyandi texts collected by McGregor which mention death and associated rituals or taboos. The six full texts have been chosen because they are all quite short and to the point, and restrict themselves to the themes of death rituals (texts 1 to 5) and taboos (text 6). Although there is a good deal of repetition between the first five narratives (reflecting the commonality amongst performances of the rites) there are also a number of interesting differences of detail, which accounts for the inclusion of them all.

The excerpt (text 7) is included also, because it gives descriptive detail which in places surpasses the detail given in the six full texts. The full story is far too long to include here, and only a small part is relevant to the theme of this paper. In fact, this text is a retelling of a story which had been told a few days previously; in the meantime, I had asked a number of questions of detail about death rites, and this prompted Bohemia to recount a fuller version of the story.

Plate 1: Jack Bohemia in Police uniform, at Fitzroy Crossing Races, 1982, with daughter Daisy.
Text 1: An inquest
yoowooloo ngamoongamoonhingi, boolgawoolga ngamoongamoonhingi, nyag; maa, gamdiwiddiyiddingga; yiganyi gamdiwiddingga, yoowoo gamdiwiddingga, nyagjawoo, nyagbiddiniyi, yoowooloo, lanygiya (1)
bagiwayi::, milawiddayi:: gijbindi
bajgiwindi thithi, bidi; yiganyinyali bajgiwiddiyi, maroowa
wardbiddiyh, barnbiddiyi; yilba
warangbiddi::; ligoowiddaniwiddangi (5)
goowaa bijngarni, niyaji yoowooloo nangbani
thangarni, goowaa bijngarniwiwiddangi
wambah; bidingga yoodbidi; (coughs), yaabjangga; yoo; gaminaya thadbiddadi ngaaddi
ngaadddi wilajgawoo thadbiddanhi yingingaddi ngaaddi
thadbiddanhi:: wilajga (10)
wamba boolthoogjawindi, wambanyali ligawidda, yanhthooddgjawani, migaya; girili;
milawidda:: wil, ngaaddi wila; wilajga milawidda::, yoowooloo gamdiwiddi gilbawinbidiyi,
yingingaddinyali, ngirndajyooddoongga; maroowa; nyagbiddini niyaji, thouddijbiddaddi, nawoongarni girilyyangga thouddijbiddaddi babiddi
wardbiddah, wayandi jardbidi, garanyi
wamba ligawidda yanhthooddgban (15)
garanyi dagoooddwiwaddinhi yoowoolooya, niyaji nga; gijaliya
garanyi dagoooddwaddiwiwiddaddi: wila
thirgibi
ligoowiddaniwiddangi::; gamdiwiddi yoowooloo gadbiddaniyi
waddinbiddani (20)
waddinbidi:: wayandiga ngabbinayi
waddinbiddi:: nangbiddani
garna; gaminaya yooodbinbidiyi
milawinbida, marlami, wayandiga ngabbinayi
yoowooloo mangaddi; gilbawawdi ngaaddi niyajiya, wilajga; gaminaya, marlami (25)
wayandiga ngabgoonayi yah, migawinmi gamdiwangooddoo
wayandiga ngabbinayi
niyinhingi; marlami galoowinbidiyi, wayandigarni ngaabnga
bidi niyajiyooddo; yaanya, yoowooloo, thardgyawiddi:: yooodbinbidi doowooya babaabiddi
niyaji yilba; mangaddi barnbarngoo ngambiddi, yilba; yooodbinbidiyi (30)

Text 2: Another inquest
goornboo yoowooloo, goornboo yoowarni, ngila, ngoorndoongoorniya, loowijaya, ngila
goolgaddraya (1)
goornboo yoowarni nyagbiddini; yoowarni; gamdiwiddingga nyagbiddiniyi,
boowooddoonhingingga yoowooloo; gimangarnangga8
warangji::, ngarlooddja goornboo niyaji waddinbani
milawidda::, wamba goonybidda::; boolthoogbindi, joowoorloo

8 The term gimangarna (literally 'bush dweller') is used to refer to Aborigines who have had
(or are believed to have had) little or no contact with whites, and who lead essentially
traditional lives. It seems that this term does have some negative connotations, and
suggests that the people referred to are unsophisticated.
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Text 1: An inquest

olden days people, olden days people, spear; meat, two; maybe two, yes two might spear,
they speared him, a man, in the middle of the day (1)
he was lying there, and as they looked he got up
he got up and went, they; they got up and went sneakingly, the murderers
they went, and returned; for good
they waited; they listened for news (5)
news of death arrived, that man had died
word, word of his death came to them
later; they put him; (coughs), some; er; they put him up on a burial platform
they put up stones all around named stones
they stood (stones) up around (10)
while the body burst, they waited, and when it had decomposed, then, the tree, they looked at it
they looked OK, at the stones; they looked around, and discovered the two men, whose names were on rocks, those two; murderers; who speared him
this one, they took him down, the dead body then they took down from the tree
they took it, they lit a fire, in a cooking trench
they waited until it had decomposed (15)
they put hot stones inside the body of the man, in that um; in the dead man
they put a few stones inside his body OK
they covered him up
they listened for news; the two men fell
they got sick and died
plat; they put the two of them on a tree platform
they looked at them, but nothing, the fire had burnt them
no men, they weren't able to find anyone marked on the rocks there, around; the burial platform, no one (25)
'a fire burnt them,' they said
'a fire burnt the two of them'
then; they found nothing relating to the two, a fire had burnt them these two; the others, the men, they put these other them up inside a cave that's for good, they can't go back again, for good; they put them away (30)

Text 2: Another inquest

people, one woman, in the east, at what-cha-ma-call-it, at Louisa, east at Goolgaddra (1)
one woman they speared; one; two men speared her, men from the north, bush blacks
she was sitting there, and after three days this woman fell ill
they watched, and they waited, until it burst, her stomach
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wambanyali goonybidda yanhthooddgban (5)
giriliya wardbiddi, moongaya
milawidda::; yingingaddi gilbawinbidiyi, yoowooloo garndiwiddi, yoowooloo
booddoongoonhingi, gimangarna
niyaji wagardi; nijaji; goomboo doowwidda, laandi girilinhiinghi thooldijbiddaddi
wardbidda:: goodggoor; widdijbinmi
way; wayandi jardbidi garanyi yoodbidi (10)
garanyi yoodbidinhi:: willi, ba; nijajiya goombooya, ngaandiya babaabiddi
middaya, yoodbidinhi garanyi, ngal; joonbangaddingga
doornbinmi, bagi yi
doornbinmi:: willi, bagi yi yilba
niyinhingi ligoowiddani::; boowooddoo gardbiddani garndiwiddi yoowooloo (15)
boowooddoo waddinbiddiyi:: nangbiddaniyi
briyandiya, migawinim yaabja, briyandiya yoodbinbidiyi
yal; booddoongoonhingingga yoowooloo migawinmi, gijangaddingga
briyandiya yoodbinbidiyi, wila bagoowooddiiyi
mangaddi; ngambiddi barndaj; aa; mangaddi ngambiddi::, ngoorndoonoongoroonooyoo,
barndajbamdaigoo, marlami (20)
wila bagiwiidddi, wamba bagiwiiddiyi

Text 3: A murder at Noonkanbah
yoowarningga, yoowooloo::; jangala, jangalangga garli, wajbaddi, maningga (1)
thiddi, wajbaddi, limimi; aa: limimiya, man-gaya yalawa, garlingaddingga nijjiya,
warawara;9 gardbini
garli yingi bali jaddangoo, garli, yingi, baljaddangoo
nag;ganyali gardbini, garlingaddingga
yoowooloo niyaji nangbani (5)
nijji ya yoowooloo gardboowidda, moooddoongaddingga, garndiwangooddoongga
gardboowidda yoowooloongga:: willi
yood; yoodbidi niyi gijali, moongayayoo
gijali::; yoowooloooyi::, jambiyindinhiingi, jambiyindi
bagi yi, moongaya, wardbidda, garmanaya, thardbiddaddi (10)
ngaaddi, jarndiddi, wilaiga, thardgoowa; widdani
ngaaddi; niyi, yingingaddi
yoowooloo; garndiwiddingga, milawiddyi, maroowangaddi yoowooloo:: garndiwiddi,
yalawan ya
yalawa; niyajiyanyali mayaroo; waranggilawooddooyoo yoowooloo warangbiddi
warangbiddi niyajiya, milawiddaniddi, milawiddyi, garndiwiddingga jimbilangaddingga,
nyagbiddini, yiganyingga(15)
yiganyingga; nyagbiddiniyi, jimbilangaddingga
gadbiddini
wardbiddi:: balbiddawinmi; riwiyiddaa
garndiwiddi:: garndiwiddi yoowarni, riwi bagiwiiddi
yoowarni; wik, bagiwiiddi (20)

9 Warawarda does not appear in the field transcript, nor is it a word I am familiar with. It was detected during the process of rechecking the transcripts in preparing them for publication.
DEATH PRACTICES IN NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA

they waited until her body had decomposed (5)
they went to the tree, one morning
they looked; and found the named stones, of two men, men from the north, bush blacks
this tree(?) this; they got the woman, and took her down from the tree
they took her and a hole; they dug
fir; they lit a fire, and put in hot stones (10)
they put hot stones into her body OK, um; into the woman, inside her body
in her head, they put hot stones, sing; singing songs
they covered her up, lying there
they covered her up OK, and she lay there for good
then they listened for news; the two men fell in the north (15)
in the north the two of them fell sick and died
'in revenge,' the others said, 'they killed them in retribution'
er; the northerners said (that), the Kija men
'they were put down in retribution, and they can remain like that'
no; they won't sneak up again; um; not again, what's it called?, they don't attempt to sneak
up on anyone, no (20)
they leave it at that, they let the two of them remain (unavenged)

Text 3: A murder at Noonkanbah
one, man, a jangala man, jangala man a boomerang, he threw it, one night (1)
in a fight, he threw it, cheek; um in the cheek, close to the ear, with a boomerang there, he
hit him
the boomerang was a baljaddangoo boomerang, the boomerang, was named, baljaddanggo
he killed him dead, with the boomerang
this man died (5)
they belted this man (the murderer), with sticks, everyone
the men belted him OK
put; they put the dead body down, until the next morning
the dead one, a man, was of the jambiyindi subsection, jambiyindi
he remained there, next morning, they took him, on tree burial platform, they put him (10)
rocks, divining rocks, all around, they were standing
rocks; these, had names on them
men; two, they saw him, two murderers, close by
from a nearby homestead, where they lived
they sat there, watching him, they watched him, the two, and with a quartz-tipped spear,
they speared him, sneakingly (15)
sneakingly, they speared him, with a quartz tipped spear
they left him
they went and returned; to their camp
five, days they camped
one; week, they waited (20)
wikja, aa mandiya, mandiya; girili; milawidda
wardbiddi:: milawidda girili
wilajga milawidda::: wili
gilbawinbindyi gamdiwiddi yoowooloo yingadding ngaaddi
wila (25)
laandinhingi waj; biddaddi, (coughs)
babiddi wajbiddaddi, wardbidda; langgagoorliya; yoodbidi
bagiyi langgagoorliya
biddibbindhini; langgagoorloo, yoodbidi
barngiwiiddi, nga; aa ngarloodoo yoowooloo barnbiddiddi, yiganyingga (30)
yiganyi; ngarloodoo yoowooloo barnbiddiddi, yaanyaya wik
wayandiya yoodbidi, garanyiya:: wayandiya yoodbidi niyaji yoowooloo, gjali
marnawamarnawangga
yoodbiddi
bagiyi:: h, yoowooloo ngirnda gamdiwiddi gardbiddi, maroowayooddoo
waddinbiddi:: h, ojibidi, yiddaa balawinbindyi, derbyyiddaa (35)
derbyya; nangbiddani, ojibidi, ya
ya; niyajiyanyali; derbyya; thirigbinbindyi, bandaya, wajbalingga goowajgoooda biniril
niyajiya; thirigbinbindyi, yilba

Text 4: Another murder at Noonkanbah
thiddinyali gardbiwiddani ya; ngambiddinyali yaab; ngambiddinyali, thiddi gardbiwiddani,
yaabjangga, aa; maningga, maningganyali (1)
yoowooloo; h, yingi booroonooroong
niyingga gardbini, yaanya; jambiyindinyali
ngajangoowa, marnawa gjali bagiri, ngamoonhingi, and ngajangoowa,12 wanggalhmani
gardbini broongbroon; ngga, yoowooloo yingi booroonborooongngga:: gardbini,
wanggalhmani
yilbanyali gardbini, gijaliyiddaa (5)
blanketingaddingga doombinmi; maningga, gijali; moongaya; giriyyayoo, wardbidda
thardbiddaddi
wilajga ngaaddi yoodbidi, yingaddingyally, garmnaya
yoodbidi:: wila
niyaji; nhingi, balbiddawinmi (10)

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10 The presence of the ergative postposition on yiganyi 'uncertain' is unusual, since the clause is intransitive (there are however a number of like examples in the corpus of texts, so I do not label the clause as ungrammatical). Note that in the next clause (sentence 31), the ergative does not appear, even though the verb is identical.

11 Ngambiddinyali ('again'-REP) 'again' here alludes to the previous text (text 3), which was uttered immediately prior to text 4.

12 Note that both the term for the younger brother and the term for the older brother are marked by the genitive (glossed 'his'). This is in keeping with a general principle of Gooniyandi grammar whereby both objects in a frame of comparative reference are taken as the standard of reference - thus, for example, we usually have the equivalent of 'the other was walking, and the other was standing', rather than 'one was walking, the other was standing' (see McGregor 1984:367).
next week, um on the Monday, on Monday; the tree; they had a look at it
they went and looked at the tree
they looked all around OK
they found the two men with their names on the rocks
OK (25)
you threw it (the body) down from above (coughs)
you threw him down, and took him; and in a hollow log; they put him
he lay in the hollow log
they blocked it off; the hollow log, having put him inside
they returned, the; um the three men returned, sneakingly (30)
sneakingly; the three men went back, the next week
they put him in a fire, they put that man in a long cooking trench, the dead man, his
brothers
they put him
he lay there, the two men fell sick, the two murderers
they fell sick, and were sent to hospital, to Derby hospital (35)
in Derby; they died, at the hospital
yes; right there; in Derby; they buried them, in the ground, in what white people call a
funeral
there; they buried the two of them, for good

Text 4: Another murder at Noonkanbah
they fought together again; again some; again, they fought together, some people, um; one
night, again one night (1)
a man, called Booroongbooroong
he killed him, another; jambiindyi man
the younger brother, whose older brother was dead, some time before, and the younger
brother, he was hit in the skull by Booroongbooroong, the man called
Booroongbooroong hit him, in the skull
he hit him, to death (5)
you covered him with a blanket; that night, the dead man;
in the morning; to a tree, they took him
they put it up
they put rocks around, named rocks, under the burial platform
they put them around and finished (10)
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yoowamiya; jaalinyi, milawawinmi, girili niyaji, garna

garna; milawawinmi, wardbiddi:: milawawinmi
wilajga milawidda::; marlami, galowo, ngaaddi mangaddi; maroowangaddiya

gilbawawidi marlami, galowo

niyingga dagnyali gardbini (15)

wila thaddnganhi mooddo; maroowa marlami, migawinmi garndiwangoooddo yoowooloo

mangaddi binaddi mooddooyoo niyaji yoowooloo, gi, mangaddi binaddi

wanggalhman; mangaddi wanggalhman y gardyoorni, li; ngirrda limi; e:: man.ganhdngi

thaanoonggoor gardbini

yilba niyaji gardbini; gjaliyidda

aa: wardbidda, thooddijbiddaddi (20)

wardbidda:: langgagooliya yoodbidi

migawinmi wamba, wayandiya yoodbada wamba

bangiwiiddi, riwiyidda, yaanyaya wik; barn bi; balbiddwinmi

wayandiya yoodbidi, warangji:: wili

niyaji yoowooloo niyajiya yangalni gardbani, maroowa (25)

yingi:: booroongbooroong, jagaddanhingi yoowooloo; y; jagaddanhingi, niyajiya; gardbani

bagiyi:: waddinji:: nangbani, niyajiya; moo; noongganbayanyali nangbani mayariya

niyimi yoodbidi; garna

garndaniya; laandi, wardbidda:: garnaayoo, niyaji yoowoooloo maroowa

yoodbidi laandi, giriliya (30)

gadbiddini bagiyi wi, wilajga wila yoodbidi

wilajgawoo yoodbidi:: ngaaddi, yingingaddi yingingaddi

gadbiddini, balbiddwinmi yoowooloo, wardbiddi riwiyidda

yaanyaya, garndwiddi; aa ngarlooddja wik; milawawinmi

marlami, galowo, mangaddi maroowa gilbawawidi (35)

mangaddi; thawooddawini, marlami

wajbiddi, wajbiddawinmi babiddi

wayandiya goolwadawoo, migawinmi, marnawamawangga, jagaddawannoonga

garniawangoooddo mara; jagaddawarnoo

wayandiya goolwidi, yi::h, marlami niyiniyali wila, maroowa (40)

niyinjali wila maroowa, niyingga gardbini, ngirndajingganyali, ngooddooy yaanya gi, jili,

migawinmi

wila gadbiddini yilba

balbiddwinmi, maya: ligoowi; ligoowiddaniwiddangi:: marlami

marlami ngoomdoongaddiya waddingoowawani:: marlami

niyingga yili wila gardbini, migawinmi (45)

bagiwiiddi, warangbiddi yilba, ligoowiddani marlami

mangaddi gardgoowawani yoowooloo, mangaddi wayandiga ngabnga, ngoomdoongaddiya;


garniawaddingaddiya, marlami

niyi wila; maroowanyali; gardbani

Text 5: An unavenged death

thiddi gardboowiddarni, ngilayani (1)

gardboowiddarni thiddi, soonookngga, gardbini, wanggalhman;
mangaddi wanggalhmani dagi, jabi gardbini, maningga

jabi gardbini nagganyali, jagaddanhingi yoowooloo, gardbini
yaabjangga; yawanbiddarni, gardboowiddarni (5)

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then, they went back after one; month, they were looking, at the tree, at the platform at the tree platform; they were looking, they went and were looking at it they looked around; but nothing, they found nothing, no rock; any murderer, they were finding nothing, they found nothing he had hit him in the right place (15) 'OK he hit him with a hitting stick; there was no murderer,' all the men said that man didn't know about hitting sticks, the dead man, he didn't know in the skull, he didn't mean to hit him in the skull, chee; there chee; um, he hit him a little up from the ear he hit him for good; to death um, they took him, and threw him down (20) they took him and put him in a hollow log they said 'later, we'll put him in the fire later' they went back, to their camps, in another week; went back; they returned they put him in the fire, and left him sitting there that man fell sick there, the murderer (25) his name was Booroongbooroong, a jagadda man; a jagadda man, there; he fell sick he lay there sick and died, right there; Moo; right at Noonkanbah he died there in the homestead they put him next; on a tree platform on a tree platform; up, they took him to a tree platform, this murderer they put him up, in the tree (30) they left him lying there, having put rocks around they put rocks around, named rocks they left him, the men returned, they went back to their camps another, two; um on the third week; they looked nothing, they found nothing, they didn't find a murderer (35) no, the body didn't decompose and mark the stones, nothing he threw him, they threw him down 'let's try him in the fire,' they said, his brothers, all the jagadda men his brothers were all; jagadda men they tried him in the fire, ..., but nothing that was all, he was the murderer (40) 'he himself is a murderer, he killed him, he himself, that other dead man,' they said OK they left him for good they returned, um; listen; they listened for word but nothing no one got ill or anything 'he himself killed someone,' they said (45) they left it at that, they stopped there for good, having heard nothing no one fell sick, the fire didn't burn anyone, no one nor two people, nothing he himself, was a murderer, and had fallen sick

Text 5: An unavenged death they fought together, in the east (1) during the big fight, Snook, hit someone, in the head not right on the skull, but on the back of the neck he hit him, one night he hit him dead on the back of the neck, a jagadda man, he killed him the others; belted one another, fighting together (5)
garboowiddami:: wili, niyi garboowidda, mooodoo thaddggilanganhi
garboowidda::: wili
na yoowooloo; no; gijali, bilanggidiya, roolimabbidi, yoodbidi, moongayayoo
moongaya, girilinya; yoodbidi, garananaya
ngaaddi; wilajga; yarndili, ngaaddi yarndili, tharddbiddani:: wilajga, yingingaddi (10)
gadbiddini, barniwigiddi riwiyiddaa
bagiwigiddi, jaalinya garndiwiddiya
milawwinmi; girili
milawidda::, marlami
yarndili milawidda:: yingingaddi::: marlami (15)
yaabja migawinmi, mangaddi, yilba mooodoo thaddgnganhi
mangaddi ngirnda; booladi; ngaaddi, bagiri, waraari
booladi; ngaaddi; warawooddaaddi
wila; mooodoo ba; thaddgnganhi mooodoo
aa ngambiddi aa milawidda:: marlami (20)
yoodbidi
wayandiya; goolwada, wayandiya goolwada, winhi
wardbidda::, booddoonggo wardbidda, barnaddyayoo riddinggi, biddinhingi; warlibiddiya,
ridinggi bamaddy
niyajiya, garanyi::: wayandi:: jardbidi gooddgooya
ngabnga:: wili (25)
garanyingga dagoodddagooodwiddaddinhi, gijaliya
garanyi dagoodddwiddaddinhi joorliya, middaya, garanyi dagoodddwiddaddinhi
doombinni
doombinmi::: wila, gadbiddini
babbiddawinmi, wardbiddi:: riwiyi bijbiddami (30)
ligoowiddani::: marlami, mangaddi yoowooloo gardgoowawani, maroowa
wila mooodoo thaddgnganhi, migawinmi
jaaliyanyi; jaalinyaanyi:: jaalinyaanyi, ligoowiddani marlami
mangaddi gardgoowawiddani; yoowooloo; maroowa
wila mooodoo thaddgnganhi migawinmi (35)

Text 6: Death taboos
marniwa, aa: (1)
W.McG. um
yiganyi, garingoowa, nangbani, ngoombarnawa thithi bajgiyi niyinhingi
gooodmoor; goomooloo riwi gadbini
ward; wardjji, yaanyaya riwi bagiri, bagiyi (5)
yaanyaya riwi bagiyi, niyinhingi wardji yaanyaya mayarooja; yilba waranggiri
mangaddi barnbargiri ngambiddi niyajiyiddaa, riwi goomooloo gabdiini, garingoowa;
nanggilawaninhi

Note the contrast between this clause and the immediately previous one (in sentence 26); the two are near minimal pairs. In (26) garanyi 'hot stone' is non-participant Actor - that is, an Instrument - in a clause referring to putting stones in the dead body. In (27), it is a goal of the same process. One might attempt to encapsulate the difference in meaning with the following English translations: 'They filled up (in) the dead man with hot stones' vs. 'They put hot stones into the dead man's stomach and head'.

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they fought together and finished, they belted him, the one who had killed the man with a hitting stick
they belted him and finished
the man; now; the dead man, in a blanket, they rolled him up, they put him down, until the morning
in the morning, in a tree; they put him, on a burial platform
rocks; around; divining stones, divining stones, they put around underneath him, with names (10)
they left him, and went back to their camps
they remained there, for two months
they looked; at the tree
they looked, but found nothing
they looked at the divining stones with names but found no indications (15)
some of them said, 'no, he killed him with a hitting stick'
'no this; dry; stone; it is, it stands'
'dry; the rocks; are standing around'
'OK; hitting stick; he killed him dead with a hitting stick'
they looked again but nothing (20)
they put him down
'in the fire; let's try him, let's try him in the fire, hey?'
they took him, they took him south, towards the side of a hill, on the north side; of the river, on the side of a hill
there, they lit a fire in a hole
it burn away OK (25)
they put hot stones in him, in the dead man's body
they put hot stones in his stomach, in his head, they put hot stones in him
they covered him up
they covered him up OK, and left him
they returned, and they went back to their camps (30)
they listened for news but nothing, as a murderer
'right, he killed him with a hitting stick,' they said
another mon ... another month and another month, they waited to no avail
no one fell sick; no person; as murderer
'that's it because he killed the other man with a hitting stick' they said (35)

Text 6: Death taboos
his older sister, um (1)
W.McG. um
maybe, his wife, died, the husband got up and went from there bereave; he left the place of bereavement went; he went, and camps at another place, he camped (5)
he camped at another place, then he went to another homestead, he remains for good he doesn't go back there, he left the place of bereavement, where his wife; died he stops for good
yilba waranggiri
dooonggooloo wardgiri, maa mangaddi ngabga, jaalinyi: ngarloodiya
migaya nganggooloo maa, nyoongoodda (10)
ngabga maarna, maarni ngabga
dooonggooloongaddi ngamoo wardjayi
W.McG. ah
ngirndaji thangarndi, aa::, mangaddi yingi goowajgoo, niyaji gijali, marlami
goorn.gaa, ngoombarnawangga goon.gaa (15)
 yaabjangga mangaddi yingi goowajgoodda, ngoombarnawangga, ngoombarnawangga
 mangaddi goowajga, marlami

Text 7: Murder at Leopold Downs
boolga, waddinbani (1)
waddinji, yoowarniya wik, gandwiiddi wik, yoowoo, gandwiidiya wik, waddinji
ngidi; balbiddayinmi, ngilmangi
wilangi waddinbani, mooلbarni; warangjiddi niyajiya mooلب
waddinji wilangi, jalingangoo doonggooloo yoowooloo, milawidda, doowwiddanhi jimbila
 yoowarni (5)
niyinghingi wamba, wambanyali bagiyi, waddinji
ligayidda, a:: nangbani
boooddoonggooloo; wardjidda, garna, ngaragjinminhi
laandi, thadjiddaddi, garna, yai
nganyijooloo, thadjaddi, varayiddi, nganyi laandi barloandi (10)
laandi, barloandi, jidiblimi, laandi garna, yai
bidingga, ngaaddi wilaja, nganyi thoodngani, thoodjiddanidi ngarloodooy yoowooloo, ngarloodooy thoodjiddanidi, bandayiddaa, giri, ngarloodooy thoodjiddanidi
 ngaaddi; wilaja, yooodgoowawidi, yingingaddi ngaaddi, yoowooloonngaddi yingi
 wilaja thadibiddanhi:: wila
ngirnda yoowooloo, yingingaddinali thadibiddanhi biyaadwnggool (15)
wamba bag; niyinghingi banggiyiddi
bagiyiddi::, garna, yai; ngarloo, garna
milayidda giri, giri milayidda:: wila
yoowarni; yoowarni; doownga, yoowarni thawooddwinii, ngirnda; biyaadwnggool, ngilmanginhingi yoowooloo
milayidda wila (20)
thaanoonggooloo barinmi, jidibbinmi; laandi, bidi bawardbinmi thaanoonggool
babiddi; wajibiddaddi
doowwidda, goooddoombaya mirdbinmi
boooddoonggoolo wardbidda::, migawinmingiddangi, gidi balbiddawingginmi, ngirnda
wardgidda, doowooyayoo, migawinmi
nga; ngajangoowangajangoowangga wardbiddaddi, wardbiddaddi doooddoonggool (25)
boooddo, ngaaddi, doowooya yoodbidi babaabiddi
 biddibbidinhi ngaaddi
balbiddawinmi
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he goes under a meat taboo, he doesn't eat meat, for three months
then they give him meat, and rub him (10)
he eats meat now, meat he eats now
he had been under a taboo before
W.McG. ah (tape recorder turned off briefly)
this word, um, he can't say the name, of the dead person, no
he must remain silent, the husband must remain silent (15)
no one can say the name, none of the husbands (classificatory), the husbands can't say it, no

Text 7: Murder at Leopold Downs
an old man, fell sick (1)
he was sick, one week, two weeks, yes, two weeks, he was sick
we; we were returning, west
he got sick behind, together; we were sitting together as a big group at that place
he was sick behind, the doctors, they looked at him, and removed a piece of quartz from
him (5)
then later, for some time he lay, sick
we waited, and he died
north; we took him, a burial platform, we made for him
up, we put him, on the burial platform
me too, I put him up; we climbed, I climbed up (10)
up, I climbed, and lifted him, up; on the platform, I put him
they, (put) rocks around, I got down, we three men got down, three jumped down, to the
ground, from the tree
rocks; around, they put them, named rocks, with names of people
they stood rocks around OK
this man, was named by the stones a man from Biyadd (15)
later lie; then we returned
we waited, three, weeks; on the third week we went back
we looked at the tree, we looked at the tree OK
one; one; it got it, it wet one (stone), this; man from Biyadd, the eastermer
we looked OK (20)
we climbed up, they lifted him up; up, they climbed up
down; they threw him
they got him, and wrapped him up in paperbark
they took him north, and told us, 'go back, we'll take this to a cave,' they said
urn; his younger brothers took him, they took him north (25)
north, in a hill, they put him inside a cave
they blocked it with stones
they returned
Commentary and conclusions

Texts 1 to 5 and text 7 are narratives dealing with inquests and subsequent acts of retribution, the first five texts being biographical, the last being autobiographical. A number of interesting observations emerge from these six texts.

1. Inquests were performed by putting the body of a dead person on a tree platform, below which was placed a circle of stones, each of which represented someone who may have been responsible for the murder. The body was left for a few months, until it had decomposed. The stones would be examined, and those marked by the exudates of the corpse would indicate the murderer. Text 2 shows that women as well as men were accorded this type of inquest. (Another text explains that inquests were not normally performed for young children.)

2. A recurrent theme is that if death took place at night, the dead body was left wrapped in a blanket until the next morning (see line 10 of text 3, line 6 of text 4, and lines 8 and 9 of text 5), when it was placed on the platform.

3. It is notable that even if someone is witnessed killing another person, an inquest is still held (see texts 3 and 4). And as text 3 illustrates, the inquest may identify someone other than the person who actually struck the blow as the one really responsible.

4. Once the murderer had been determined, action was taken to redress the death. In texts 1 to 5, sorcery was employed to kill the murderer. This was accomplished by putting hot stones in the corpse; the effect of this was that the person responsible for the death would fall sick, and die. More direct methods were, of course, also employed. One text describes how a group of relatives of a dead woman travelled over an enormous area, tracking and eventually killing the murderer. These 'avengers' (or "soldiers", as Jack Bohemia would say) painted themselves in white ochre before going on their expedition; thus their Gooniyandi name is galardingama, literally 'white ochre dweller'. On the other hand, in text 7, a white agency, the police, was used: the police were informed, and their trackers succeeded in capturing the murderer.

5. Each of texts 1, 2, 4 and 5 show that an inquest is not always successful. Text 4 and 5 show that, if the inquest fails, the body may still be tried in the fire, as a second inquest. Here, the hot stones are placed in the body, and the bereaved just await for news of someone's death, this person is then held to have been responsible.

6. The second inquest may or may not be successful. In each of the texts 1, 2, 4 and 5 there is at least one death for which no murderer is found. In each instance, some reason is advanced for this failure. In texts 1, 2, and 4, it is because the dead person was in turn responsible for killing someone else; in text 5 it seems to be because the death was accidental (note that the same explanation is given for the failure of the first inquest in text 4).

7. The corpse is finally disposed of by placing it in a cave, or in a hollow log, the entrance of which is blocked up. According to text 7, the body is wrapped in paperbark first (see plate 2); this text also indicates that it was the responsibility of the brothers of the deceased to carry the body from the burial platform to the final resting place.

8. The texts mention another way in which a person may be ensorcelled dead: by magical spearing with a quartz-tipped spear. The ensorcelled person falls sick and finally dies. The actual process is not described in detail in any of the texts, but is alluded to in text

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14 See, for example, the photographs in Idriess 1949:98, and 1937:198.
15 Interestingly, this process is what Bohemia understood me to be referring to when I questioned him about pointing the bone.
Plate 2: 'Remains of a dead blackfellow'. Courtesy of The West Australian. Published in Western Mail, 22/2/1940.
Text 6 is expository rather than narrative; it presents a general rather than a particularistic account of the taboos that were placed on relatives of the deceased. Three taboos are mentioned: (a) a proscription on remaining in, and later visiting the place of death of the relative (compare the proscription on returning to the place of burial, mentioned in text 1); (b) enforcement of a taboo on eating meat for some months after the death;\(^16\) and (c) proscription on uttering the name of the dead person. Reference to all of these can readily be found in the anthropological and linguistic literature.

I have already commented briefly on the anthropological importance of texts such as those included here. I will conclude by mentioning what in my opinion are the most important implications to anthropology.

Firstly, traditional rites and taboos are not practised by the Gooniyandi, and probably have not been for some time.\(^17\) Inquests are no longer held, and payback killings no longer take place; corpses go immediately into the control of white institutions. (There is some evidence, however, that inquests - albeit not the full rites, with the platform - are still held by desert peoples residing in Fitzroy Crossing.) Even the taboos are rarely observed either rigorously or strongly. Thus the only way of obtaining information relating to the traditional practices is by talking to individuals alive today, who remember the past, or who have heard about it from others. What Jack Bohemia's texts show very clearly is the importance of biographical texts; as we have seen, such texts can reveal where general principles fail. I did on a number of occasions question Jack Bohemia and other Gooniyandi men about death rituals, asking what was done in this or that circumstance; the results were almost invariably generalisations of the type which predominate in text 6. They did not suggest that the inquests sometimes failed, or why.

Jack Bohemia's silence on certain matters is also, I believe, significant. He does not for instance distinguish in his texts between those rituals performed by Gooniyandi, and those performed by others - although we can in places make good guesses: for example, the Noonkanbah murders (texts 3 and 4) presumably involved Walmajarri people; the Louisa murder (text 2) and Snook's murder (text 5) presumably involved Gooniyandi people (Snook was a Gooniyandi man); and the Leopold murder presumably involved mainly Bunuba people. This could be a reflection of the destruction to traditional life which followed white colonisation; or there may be some other explanation. Furthermore, he takes white interference for granted; for instance, no attempt is made to justify the failure to hold an inquest for the two men who died in Derby (text 3), or to try to obtain the corpse.

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16 It is likely that there was a rite surrounding the lifting of the meat taboo - see Hudson et al 1978:45, which describes such a rite in Walmajarri. Bohemia's mention of rubbing (see line 10) is presumably a reference to a similar rite in Gooniyandi. It is not clear in Bohemia's text what is rubbed on the bereaved person; Siddon (Hudson et al 1978:45) says that fat was rubbed over the mouth and face of the bereaved, and it may have been the same in Gooniyandi tradition.

17 Internal evidence suggests that the events described in the texts took place sometime this century. For instance, Snook (see text 5) was a contemporary of Jack Bohemia; mention of sending sick Aborigines from Noonkanbah to Derby hospital suggests some fairly recent date, and later in text 7 there is mention of police tracker Joe, who was a famous tracker in the 1920s and 1930s (see for instance Idriess 1935:76). My hypothesis is that all of the events described took place during the course of Bohemia's lifetime, which is why he is able to provide such detail.
**DEATH PRACTICES IN NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA**

Thirdly, another interesting thing brought out in these texts (usually given short shrift by anthropologists) is the traditional names of various items and actions relating to the particular field of social action or experience, in this case death. (Not all of these are specific to this aspect of experience.) Such terms give us some notion of the way in which Gooniyandi culture divides up the 'semantic space' of death and death ritual, etc. Not surprisingly, terms of this type are difficult, if not impossible to elicit formally, in response to English prompts, and in any event, their significance can only be appreciated through examination of textual occurrences. Below I list these terms, in alphabetical order, together with a short explanation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biniril</td>
<td>'funeral'; this term is clearly a borrowing from English, and is used in reference to the burial rites of the dominant culture in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boolthoog-briyandi</td>
<td>'in revenge, in turn'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>briyandiya</td>
<td>'in revenge'; the difference between briyandi and briyandiya (which presumably involves the LOC postposition) is unclear at present. It seems, however, that briyandi is more usually used as a manner adverbial, relating one event to a previous one (usually mentioned in the immediately preceding text), whereas briyandiya does not normally relate two events in contiguous clauses (see line 19 of text 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doonggooloo</td>
<td>'taboo'; this term appears to be restricted to the meat taboo enforced on the death of a close relative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garanyi</td>
<td>'cooking trench, hot stones'; interestingly, this term is also used in reference to guns, rifles, and bullets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garnana</td>
<td>'tree platform on which a dead body is placed'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gjali</td>
<td>'dead body, dead person, dead'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goomooloo</td>
<td>'bereaved'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goon.ga</td>
<td>'refrain from speaking, speak circumspectly'. This term is used in reference to various situations in which speech should be either avoided, or monitored carefully. The paradigm circumstances for this behaviour are (a) speaking to, about, or in the presence of one's mother-in-law; (b) speaking about the recently dead. Gooniyandi speakers most frequently gloss it 'don't speak'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goowaa</td>
<td>'news of a death'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jarndiddi</td>
<td>'divining stones'; stones placed under a burial platform in an inquest to find the person responsible for a death' (see also yarndili).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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19 Jack Bohemia referred to this structure as a *galbari* in his variety of English. This clearly shows the influence of Christianity: it is Bohemia's pronunciation of Calvary, the place at which Christ was crucified.

20 The stones used to divine the person responsible for a death in an inquest are variously called *yingingaddi ngaaddi* 'named stones', *yingingaddi* 'with names, named', just plain *ngaaddi* 'stones', *jarndiddi*, and *yarndili*. The last two terms are of interest because they show the well attested correspondences *j* of Walmajarri (and other Pama-Nyungan languages to the south and south east) with *y* of Gooniyandi, and *dd* (=rr) of Walmajarri with *l* of Gooniyandi (see McGregor forthcoming). It is also noteworthy that the first term, and not the second, occurs in text 3, which concerns a death at Noonkanbah, which
jimbila 'quartz, a quartz spear-tip inserted in a body by sorcery'
ligoo 'listen for news of the death of someone who has been ensorcelled'
maroowa 'killer, murderer'. Usually given the English gloss 'murderer' by Gooniyandi speakers; however, this term contains none of the implications of intentionality of 'murderer' in English.21
nawoornga 'dead body, dead person'
yanhthooddg- 'decompose (of a dead body)'
yarndili 'divining stones'; stones placed under a burial platform in an inquest to find the person responsible for a death'

Many more terms could in principle be added to this list, but these are the main ones mentioned in the texts.

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Western Mail, Perth, 22 February 1940.

has been a Walmajarri stronghold for a number of years, while the second term, but not the first, occurs in text 5, which apparently refers to a death at Louisa Downs. This may well be a reflection of the connection between language and place which has been noted by a number of Australianist linguists (e.g. Nash 1985).

21 See Maley 1985.
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PART 2

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To the south-west of North Queensland's lush Atherton Tablelands the land rises to over 1500 metres. Rainforest gives way to a dry country of weathered granite hills and open eucalypt forest. Further west the land falls away through rocky spurs and escarpments to the inland plains. In this country are the headwaters of the Herbert river, which flows southwards to fall over the eastern side of the Dividing Range to the coast. The land is also the source of the Walsh, which flows westwards, eventually joining the Mitchell in its flow to the Gulf.

This country was occupied by the Mbabaram people until the early 1880s. Then European demand for tin, copper and silver brought mining pastoral development, and death. Cattle, hunting and the damming by miners of the various streams feeding the upper Herbert and Walsh rivers all had a swift and detrimental impact on the ecology of this dry region. Before long starving Mbabaram were forced to take cattle and, as in many other parts of Australia, conflict ensued. Through 1881 reports of Mbabaram attacks on isolated camps spread panic amongst the region's four hundred or so miners, who demanded and gained the protection of the Native Police from the 'black scourge'. In January 1882 the Cooktown Herald could report that 'our valiant and vigilant native troopers had recently done their duty in the vicinity [of Herberton]'\(^1\). Violence continued over the course of the next year or so, ending with a series of Native Police-lead actions that spared very few of the Mbabaram.\(^2\)

In February 1882, Francis Lyons, who took part in a punitive raid against the Mbabaram, sent the following letter from the Cairns Post Office to the Curator of the Australian Museum in Sydney:

Sir,

I take the liberty of addressing you trusting that I have in my possession a curiosity, which may be a great addition to your valuable list. It is that of a Queensland 'Aboriginal Mummy' I procured it a short time since When in pursuit of the nigger who are very mischievous killing cattle in the Vicinity of the Herberton Tin-Fields. When their camp was stormed they abandoned everything except the Mummy in Question, a scull &the dilly bag which contained them And it was not until after a long & desperate chase and when their lives were in imminent danger that they gave it up or rather dropped it I managed to capture one of the tribe in question. An intelligent boy about eleven year of age. And I learned from him through an interpreter that the mummy is that of a 'native King's Daughter' Who got shot a considerable time since.

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\(^1\) Brisbane Courier, 16 January 1882.

\(^2\) See Loos 1982:95.
And having 'Blue Blood' They preserved it and carried it about with them. As a mark of loyalty to their Chief

It is quite apparent that what the boy said is true as there is a small hole in the top of the forehead like that caused by a bullet. The body is in a splendid state of preservation. And all the flesh is on the body. The Arms and legs together with the fingers & toes are quite life like as is the whole body. It has been pronounced by everyone who saw it as the best specimen they ever saw. If I could take it to the Southern Colonies & exhibit it I am sure it would realise a very handsome sum. But my position prevents me from so doing. If you require the like for your museum Kindly let me know at once by 'letter' or 'Wire' stating your terms &c &c as I am negotiating with other parties likely to purchase An answer at your earliest convenience will oblige.

One could just treat Francis Lyons' letter as a particularly graphic illustration of how far a man could be tempted - for whatever reason - to turn the violence of frontier conflict to financial advantage. Given the popularity of anatomical exhibitions and 'freak-shows' in late nineteenth-century Australia, one can well believe that a mummified female corpse was displayed in the pubs of Cairns, perhaps before the seller learnt that a museum in a southern Australian city might pay a large amount of money for it. However, as this paper will argue, Lyons' letter is illustrative of more than a naive attempt by a settler to interest Sydney's Australian Museum in a macabre curiosity. The historical context in which the letter is best understood is that of the violent movement of the frontier across nineteenth-century Australia converging with the intellectual frontier of contemporary science.

At the time Europeans arrived to exploit the lands of the Mbabaram, science readily interpreted non-Europeans as if they were repositories of stubborn, previously unconstrued fact. There was little, if any, questioning whether the truths disclosed by science were valid only within the frame of broadly endorsed European cultural assumptions. Rather, by science was understood the rigorous and impersonal application of inductive procedures. It was a method of producing objective and universally applicable knowledge, the diffusion and practical employment of which would enhance the material and spiritual progress of all humanity. 'Ancient traditions', such as those of people like the Mbabaram were seen at best as phenomena to be 'tested by the severe processes of modern investigation', and then allowed to '...fade away into mere dreams'. If the knowledge of the Mbabaram had any further use to humanity it was in this new guise of dissipated superstition: objective comparison of savage thought and custom might disclose similarities of behaviour; these similarities in turn might prove useful in understanding the nature of difference amongst the people of the Earth.

The half-century or so after 1860 witnessed a remarkable surge of interest in morphological and anatomical investigation of the Australian Aborigine; so much so that by the early 1880s there was a complex scientific discourse in operation, centred on the Aboriginal body. The discourse was generated and sustained by a variety of scientific and cultural factors. It derived cognitive strength from ideas which had long enjoyed broad assent, especially the blanket assumption that the peoples of the Earth were divided into

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3 F.Lyons to Curator, Australian Museum, 13 January 1882, MS 1589/4:9-12 (Mitchell Library).
distinct 'types' or 'races'. Still more influential was the climate of debate stimulated by ideas of human evolution which, from the 1860s, seemed to many to imbue older concepts of racial difference with a new order of explanatory coherence and power. Arguments both for and against the concept of human speciation - as it was variously interpreted - were generally advanced from the premise that humans were divided into distinct 'types' or 'races'.

By virtue of their geographical isolation and supposedly harsh material circumstances, Australian and Tasmanian Aborigines were viewed as arguably the world's most distinct and morphologically unsophisticated races of man. Structured morphological and anatomical examination of 'racially pure' Aboriginal bodies - preferably undertaken in the controlled conditions of the laboratory - was seen as the best means to solve what was widely agreed to be the central problem of science. Clinical typological comparison and classification of 'half-caste' bodies, too, was seen as having an important role in resolving the vexed question of evolution, by disclosing the nature and magnitude of the changes occurring when such a geographically isolated and morphologically 'primitive race' as the Aborigine supposedly bred away from its type.

Nineteenth-century British medical science was characterised by a general lack of sensitivity towards the bodies of the recently deceased. Yet the quest for knowledge of the morphology and anatomical structure of the Aborigine had a particularly dark aspect. The hauls of 'resurrection men' and, after the passing of the 1832 Anatomy Act, the pauper dead of the asylum and the work-house, were of little interest to racial science. European racial character was deemed best determined by examination of remains from barrow burials and the crypts of Britain and Ireland's most ancient churches. Even so, researchers who sought to examine medieval bodies did not always gain community approval. In contrast, the logic of racial science demanded the procurement of 'fresh' Aboriginal bodies; it required bodies, or parts of bodies, in a fit condition to allow investigators to satisfy themselves and the scientific community at large as to the certainty of their findings. There was also anxiety whether science could be provided with sufficient Aboriginal bodies of high racial purity to meet its needs. Since at least the 1830s it had been argued in scientific circles that the Aborigines were 'dying out' before the advance of European 'civilisation'; by the late 1860s it was seriously questioned whether, in a generation or so, the Aboriginal race might not be extinct.

The value of the Aboriginal body to science was further enhanced by the immense prestige to be won by contributing to original knowledge in the field of human evolution; and it was this aura of prestige that also led professional scientists, scientific institutions, amateur naturalists and some ordinary colonists, to treat Aborigines as if they were endangered, though crucially important scientific specimens.

It would appear that in writing to the Curator of Australian Museum, Francis Lyons possessed a fair idea that the corpse he had stolen from the Mbabaram had attributes making it a valuable scientific specimen. The corpse's mummification alone made it a rare find; so
Ramsay's regime

much so that museum curators would be sorely tempted to outbid each other to acquire. Furthermore, as the 'Blue-Blood' of the corpse could be verified by both native and European testimony, it could be taken as an example of the 'racial type' of the Northern Aborigine. Indeed, the fact that the woman was young and had in all probability died from a bullet meant that the rigours of savage life and old age had not been allowed to distort her anatomical structure. Even if the corpse was found unsuitable for preservation and exhibition intact, dried flesh and muscle preserved a whole skeleton which would prove extremely suitable for articulation and display.

That this is indeed how we might reasonably interpret the letter is firstly suggested by the fact that the Australian Museum's Board of Trustees entered into business-like negotiations with Lyons. On learning that the asking price of the corpse was no less than fifty pounds, they resolved '...to purchase it for a sum of £10 (ten pounds), if delivered in Sydney in good order and condition.' Further examination of the surviving letterbooks of the Museum, and the correspondence of the then Curator, Edward Pierson Ramsay, does not reveal whether the Museum acquired the corpse; but it does suggest that this type of negotiation was not uncommon. Indeed, the only unusual aspect of the negotiations was that Lyons does not appear to have been a regular trader.

During the 1880s and 1890s the Australian Museum encouraged the collection and trade of Aboriginal remains, viewing them as scientifically interesting specimens of natural history. The Museum readily paid freelance collectors for skulls, skeletons and whole bodies after considering the state of their budget and judging the scientific value of the remains on offer; in doing so, they behaved no differently from when assessing the worth of an wallaby corpse or bird-skin. Typical of the regular freelance traders was James Yardley, who supplemented his income in the 1880s by supplying colonial museums and private collectors with natural history specimens ranging from bird skins to Aborigines (it would appear that in the 1880s no-one could make a living solely out of independent collecting). In April 1889, Yardley was in Murwillumbah, where he learnt of an old Aboriginal burial place 'a few miles from here in the mountains'. He wrote to Ramsay that

...the man that is going taking me to look at them is going to get a skeleton from one of the graves to send to someone in Sydney if you was wanting any skeletons or skulls I could get them while we had the tools there.

The following September, however, Yardley wrote to apologise that he had

...not obtained any good skulls or skeletons I have turned up a good few but they have all been too much Decayed it is a very wet place anything a few inches under the soil soon gets water-logged and all of them that are Buried now are put in a hole and covered with soil formerly they made a hole and put

I have not yet been able to determine the subsequent history of these remains. However, the Australian Museum displayed mummified bodies of a woman and a child 'from Cairns' in a wall case during the 1890s, probably collected by Robert Etheridge from the Bellenden Ker region. See Guide to the contents of the Australian Museum. Sydney, 1890:144.

In 1878 Ramsay advised a would-be Queensland collector of '...the great difficulty you would have in making a living at collecting. in fact making a living out of it alone in this country is out of the question. ' E.P.Ramsay to Price-Fletcher, 19 February 1878, MS 1589/3:14 (Mitchell Library).

J.Yardley to Ramsay, 12 April 1889, MS 1589/6:109 (Mitchell Library).

1890:144.
the corpse in it in a sitting posture and covered it with a sheet of Bark never filling any earth at all.\textsuperscript{12}

Clearly, Yardley had previous experience of taking bodies from traditional burial grounds.

Another regular collector was William Day, a young Englishman of some education, possibly a medical student, who appears to have partly funded his travels in Australia by collecting a wide variety of natural specimens. Day also collected Aboriginal remains and items of material culture in North Queensland with a view to becoming a professional ethnologist. In 1891, Day lived on the Russell River mining field, to the north of present-day Innisfail. From there he supplied the Australian Museum with swords, shields and the bodily remains of the Bagirgabara rainforest people. In June 1891, he sent Ramsay '...two skulls of Bungee (Russell River) blacks, the last of their tribe as they all got shot', and wished to know 'What is a perfect skeleton worth of a Russell river black?'\textsuperscript{13} Day also tried to meet a request for more specimen skulls, even though, as he informed Ramsay in November 1891, getting them was proving extremely hazardous: 'I do not know when I can get you more black curios as the blacks killed a miner and all are on the war path or what ever you call it in Australia'.\textsuperscript{14}

When the Museum Trustees could afford to do so, they hired collectors on a contract basis, and instructed them to be especially on the look-out for Aboriginal bodies, without specifying any guidelines of ethical conduct to be observed in obtaining them. In October 1882, Charles Jenkins was instructed by the Trustees to explore a set of caves near Cowra, 'at the same time obtaining as many Skeletons and Skulls of Aborigines as may be found buried near your camp'.\textsuperscript{15} Facing the end of a six-month contract and anxious to have it renewed, Jenkins wrote to the Trustees from Yass in December 1882 'offering skeletons of Aborigines with no further expense to the Museum than carriage'.\textsuperscript{16} Dissatisfied with Jenkins' overall performance, the Museum refused his offer.

The known correspondence of Edward Ramsay records only one occasion on which a collector hesitated to procure a body. In October 1886, C.J. McMaster wrote to Ramsay from Moree, in north western New South Wales, to say that he had his 'eye upon a number of aboriginal skeletons which I will send you as soon as I can find time to get them.' He had also discovered that 'a very remarkable man' and 'a great warrior in his time' had been buried in the Warialda district cemetery. Rather than try to exhume what was, presumably, a Christian corpse, McMaster thought it best to ask Ramsay 'What steps could I take to get him?'\textsuperscript{17}

Far from simply responding to the approaches of freelance collectors, Edward Ramsay and the Trustees of the Australian Museum appear to have played an instrumental role in investing the bodies of Aborigines with value as 'specimens'. In 1887 the Museum published a pamphlet by Ramsay, entitled \textit{Hints for the preservation of specimens of}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.:174.
\textsuperscript{13} W.Day to E.P. Ramsay, MS 1589/7:108 (Mitchell Library).
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.:194-5,206.
\textsuperscript{15} C.R.Buckland, to C.Jenkins, 16 October 1882 (copy). Letter Book 7:1882 (Australian Museum Archives).
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} C.J.McMaster to Ramsay, MS 1589/5:161-2 (Mitchell Library).
Ramsay's Hints also give practical advice about preserving freshly killed mammalian specimens. 'The brains of many of our Australian animals', the Hints declare, 'are interesting and valuable to naturalists, and should therefore be collected whenever opportunities occur.' To this end, the collector is carefully instructed how to cut the head off an animal, peel away the skin, saw around the skull and prise off the top with a knife. After cutting through the dura mater 'over the centre and sides of both hemispheres' the whole head is to be placed 'in strong spirits of wine or other preserving fluid to harden'. After ten hours the dura mater is to be removed and the preserving agent allowed to flood the interior cavities and surfaces. When this is done, the top of the skull can be tied back in place, the whole head re-immersed in fluid and the container sealed ready for shipment.

Thus far, Ramsay's instructions seem an illuminating guide as to how collectors of Australian fauna might preserve the brain of a kangaroo or platypus. However, the instructions take on a different implication when they conclude with this brief, italicised note:

'The brains of Aborigines so prepared would be of great value.'

Also, on the closing page of Ramsay's Hints, appears a list of 'Special desiderata of the Australian Museum'. Heading the list are:

- Skins, skulls and skeletons of Aborigines, males and females.
- Authentic skulls of Aborigines from the graves of the native of each tribe, also the whole skeleton if possible.

Although there is no evidence that specimen brains were in fact made available to science in this way through the Australian Museum, there is evidence of a continuing scientific interest in the subject. When he arrived at Cambridge from Sydney in 1896, Grafton Elliot Smith, the young brain anatomist and later anthropological theorist, wrote to his old teacher, James Thomas Wilson, the Challis Professor of Anatomy at Sydney University:

Among anthropologists over here there is an extreme desire to know something definite of the soft parts of the Australian Aboriginal. A full account of the morphology of even a single individual aboriginal would be welcomed here. Could you get someone to do the work?19

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18 This was the third edition of this slim work; the first edition carries no date; the second is dated 1876. A fourth and final edition of the Hints was published in 1890. To date I have only located and cited here the third 1887 edition.

19 G.Elliot Smith to J.T.Wilson, 18 November 1896, MS 969/35/2 (Sydney University Archives).
In 1903, Elliot Smith, by this time Professor of Anatomy at the Government Medical School in Cairo, questioned Wilson as to whether any studies had been published on Aboriginal brains gathered by Wilson's Sydney colleague and mentor, Anderson Stuart.20

It is impossible to gauge how widely Ramsay's *Hints* were used in the field, but the stress laid on the racial pedigree of corpses to be found in the handful of known letters from collectors for the Museum does suggest that the work was read and its prescriptions followed. Further, the Museum's letter books suggest that Ramsay took pains to explain to would-be collectors that the Museum was especially interested in indigenous corpses that had never been buried. In November 1890, he advised one collector:

> As regards Skeletons:- we require two (one male, one female) of natives of New Hebrides or other island, as fresh as possible, so that the bones can be whitened. Any history concerning the individuals, their names, tribe, &c will render them more acceptable. If you obtain fresh specimens leave the sinews on the hands and feet to prevent the small bones going astray, and leave the scalp and hair on the head. Good, perfect specimens as above, are worth £10 the pair. If, however, you only get those that are dug up, or otherwise are not in good order, or incomplete, the price will be less - perhaps about £5 the pair - but I cannot quote definitely till I see the specimens.21

While Ramsay's personal scientific interests were largely in the fields of ornithology and ichthyology, he aimed during his tenure as curator to make the collections of the Australian Museum outstanding in all fields of natural history. In making Aboriginal bodies 'special desiderata', he aimed especially to create within the Museum a key centre for the study of the physical nature of man. Ramsay cultivated close links with the Anatomy Department at Sydney University, giving James Thomas Wilson free access to all the Museum's human crania. Having cultivated a network of trusted natural history collectors throughout eastern and north west Australia, Ramsay took care to obtain a wide variety of specimens for the research and exhibition purposes of the Museum, and also items that could be traded or strategically presented to institutions and influential scientists throughout Europe and the rest of the British Empire. Ramsay understood Aboriginal bodies to be a desirable commodity in dwindling supply. As he explained regretfully to George Rolleston, of Oxford University's Anatomical Museum, who had approached Ramsay for Aboriginal crania in March 1881:

> ...we have so few duplicate crania in the Museum, but in a few weeks I hope to be able to advise you respecting them. Nearly all of the N.S.W. Aborigines are gone, and the skulls are so much sought after by collectors that it is, even now, very difficult to obtain good specimens.22

With 'all the native races' believed to be 'fast dying off the face of the Earth', the bodies of Aborigines served Ramsay as a unique and persuasive currency, to obtain rare specimens of fauna from other parts of the globe, and also to procure 'specimens' of other 'dying' races. Trading of Aboriginal crania with the Auckland Museum appears to have commenced in 1878.23 In 1882 Ramsay wrote to James Hector, the Director of the Colonial Museum...

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20 Elliot-Smith to Wilson, 18 November 1896, MS 969/35/3 (Sydney University Archives).
23 See T.F.Cheeseman to Ramsay, 9 July 1878, MS 1589/3:63 (Mitchell Library).
RAMSBY'S REGIME

of New Zealand, that he was glad to be able to meet a request for specimen crustacea, adding,

With respect to the skulls I shall be glad to have authentic 'Moriori' and can send a few Australian exchange. The shooting season is over in Queensland and the 'Black Game' is protected now by more humane laws than formerly.

So it is impossible to obtain reliable skulls & skeletons.24

When Ramsay was unable to get specimens for the Australian Museum through exchange with other scientific institutions, he occasionally turned to a world-wide network of commercial dealers in natural science. Based near the large universities and museums of Britain and North America, the private dealers were generally small firms catering for schools, Mechanics Institutes and the many thousands of middle-class amateur natural historians. Many advertised their wares through popular scientific magazines and the great exhibitions which were so much a part of urban life in late nineteenth-century Britain, North America and the Australasian colonies. Astute dealers were always on the look-out for specimens likely to tempt a curator; and it was not unknown for them to inflate the price of 'desiderata' by playing ambitious curators off against each other.

One such dealer with whom the Australian Museum held an account in the early 1880s was Henry Ward, of Ward and Howell's Natural Science Establishment, based opposite the University of Rochester, New York.25 It was through Ward that Ramsay was able to obtain skeletons, 'beautifully white and nicely mounted', of a variety of North American mammals. Ramsay in turn appears to have been ready to sell 'duplicate zoological and geological material' to Ward.26 There is no evidence that Ramsay sold Aboriginal remains to Ward, but the dealer was actively engaged, as his letter-head reveals, in trading not only the skins and skeletons of animals, but also 'Anatomical Models, Human Skeletons, Skulls and Skeletons of the Races, etc.'

Ramsay also used Aboriginal bodies to bring himself and the endeavours of the Australian Museum to the attention of influential scientists throughout Europe. Between 1883 and 1892, he supplied a variety of zoological specimens and ethnological artefacts to Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, Curator of the Zoological and Vertebrate Museum at Florence's Institute for Higher Study. In September 1883, Giglioli informed Ramsay that a collection of...

... spears arrived all safe, but not in time to be shown yet. I will exhibit them and propose your nomination as Corr. Hon. Memb. of the Anthropological Society at our Next meeting.

I hope that you will be able to send to this Museum the Dugongs, Sphergis, Mammals, Fish and Birds agreed to. I shall not forget in that case my promise and see that the Government here send you a token of their esteem.27

In October 1883, Giglioli wrote again to Ramsay, asking him not to delay in sending a large and showy collection on which I may enlarge in my report to our Minister of Public Instruction, who may very probably inspect what you send

24 Photocopy of Ramsay to J.Hector, 28 August 1882 (original National Museum of New Zealand Archives). My thanks to Henry Reynolds for this reference.
25 See Ward 1948.
27 Giglioli to Ramsay, 18 September 1883, MS 1589/4:236.
as he often comes to Florence, that will ensure you the distinction of Knighthood from our King. 28

Giglioli informed Ramsay in March 1884 that he had spoken with the Minister of Public instruction and hoped 'ere long to see him knighted.' However, in the meantime, Giglioli continued, he would be especially obliged if Ramsay could supply the following items: some of the large New Guinea or Solomon Island mounted Adzes, clubs, &c also shell stone (obsidian) spears and daggers from the Admiralty islands; also any of the Australian stone implements. I should also like to have the Tasmanian [skull] casts and Australian Aborigines 2 Fiji skulls which you had written to have sent on to me as far back as April 1881 per S.S. Cotopaxi (but never left Sydney and certainly never reached me). 29

In the late nineteenth-century, scientific discourse invested the body of the Aborigine with meanings that we would now generally agree hid some crucial distinctions. What human attributes late nineteenth-century Europeans were prepared to give Aborigines, racial science placed beyond the realm of significance; they became rare specimens of natural history. Aborigines' 'qualities' as 'specimens' further took on precise monetary values; a Bower-Bird skin in good condition was worth five shillings; a 'racially pure'. Aboriginal skull complete with jaw was worth seven shillings and sixpence. A collector could write regretting that he had no bodies to offer, while adding that he was nonetheless forwarding some rare Trap-Door Spiders' nests to the Museum. The bodies of Aborigines also assumed value in terms of their potential to enhance an individual scientific reputation; they could even earn a scientist a knighthood.

However, it could be argued that Ramsay and the Trustees of the Australian Museum understood themselves to be acting out of scientific and thus, ultimately, moral necessity. Ramsay, for example, was like many late Victorian scientists in that he blended belief in racial difference and speciation with agnosticism. While quick to endorse received opinion as to what constituted moral impropriety or illegality, Ramsay seems to have viewed science as offering a surer future footing to law and morality than contemporary Christianity. In view of the wide acceptance of the belief that, as a race, the Aborigines were fast approaching extinction, Ramsay might well have viewed the procurement of Aboriginal bodies exhumed from traditional burial grounds, or obtained in the wake of 'dispersals' by Native Police troops or settlers, as ultimately for the moral good. Though the Aboriginal race could not be saved, scientific preservation of their bodily remains might answer important scientific questions and thus contribute far more to the future happiness of all humanity than had established religion.

That was certainly how Ramsay's colleague, the anatomist James Wilson justified procuring a skeleton in 1892. Sometime in 1889, a Chinese man died in the Prince Alfred Hospital. In his capacity as pathologist to the hospital, and a member of the management committee of Sydney University's Anatomical Museum, Wilson had the body taken to the hospital's post-mortem room, where the man's skeleton was removed.

After removal of the bones the body was carefully arranged, and so treated that the friends were afterwards permitted to view the body in the coffin before it was screwed down (the face had been carefully left intact). 30

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28 Ibid.:253.
29 Ibid.:330-1.
30 J.T.Wilson to Registrar, Sydney University, 8 April 1892, MS G.63/1 (Sydney University Archives).
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At the Museum the skeleton was whitened, articulated and exhibited as illustrative of the skeletal structure of the Asiatic race.

Wilson's action became public knowledge, and the University Senate was sufficiently disturbed to request him to explain the affair. Under the New South Wales Anatomy Act of 1881, it was unlawful for Wilson to take the skeleton. It was also unlawful to anatomise the body if the deceased had left written instructions, or told two or more witnesses during their last illness, that they did not want their corpse to be dissected. Kin of the deceased also could direct that the body be interred without interference. In his reply to the University Senate, Wilson made no claim of having complied with the provisions of the Act. Rather, he stressed that he was allowed to take the skeleton by hospital rules, which entitled the pathologist to obtain specimens of value for the University Museum, arguing that it is the invariable practice in all scientific and properly equipped medical schools in the world to secure material in this way for Anatomical Museums and the latter would practically cease to exist were liberty restricted in this respect.31

Wilson ended his defence by stressing that in his work he had 'always taken extreme precautions against publicity and consequent scandal', and that the account of the circumstances in which this particular skeleton had been procured came from a disgruntled ex-porter at the hospital. The Senate appears to have been satisfied with Wilson's account of the affair and no further action was taken.

Those who administered the law in late nineteenth-century Australia also appear likely to have condoned the erosion of key legal concepts by science, believing the consequent provision of knowledge as likely to serve a higher moral good. While it was not until 1908 that the legality of possessing an unburied body was considered by the High Court of Australia, the views expressed at that time were probably no different from those which would have held sway during the preceding half-century. In the 1908 case, concerning the legality of a showman possessing a preserved deformed (non-Aboriginal) foetus, Griffith, the Chief Justice, held that it is idle to contend in these days that the possession of a mummy, or a prepared skeleton, or of a skull, or other parts of a human body, is necessarily unlawful; if it is, the many valuable collections of anatomical and pathological specimens or preparations formed and maintained by scientific bodies, were formed and are maintained in violation of the law.32

Justice Barton upheld the traditional position that no-one had a right to possess a dead body, or what had once been part of a dead body, and that the only right course of action was to give the remains a decent burial. To his mind, the central question was whether a foetus was ever a body and could thus become a corpse. The third and final opinion was given by Higgins, who held that to recognise the right of possession of a corpse would create a situation in which there would be nothing 'to hinder anyone from snatching the corpse of some eminent man, such as Napoleon, and keeping it in a bottle, or using it for degrading purposes'. However, while acknowledging that bodies were being bought and sold, and quite illegally obtained from dissection rooms, Higgins conceded...that sundry contraventions of the strict law as to dead bodies are winked at in the interests of medical science, and also for the practical reasons that no one is interested in putting the law in motion.

31 Ibid.
Further, he was of the opinion that mere possession of a corpse was probably not unlawful; there was just no right of property that could be maintained against someone who took the corpse with a view to burying it.

Legal action was unlikely to be taken against those who took, sold or preserved Aboriginal remains, unless in doing so they acted in ways that, to European eyes, threatened public health or offended public decency. To take the body of someone who had died violently prevented the holding of a coronial inquiry and was thus a serious offence. But the offence was likely to be ignored, when the body in question was Aboriginal and the death occurred in a frontier district, where those charged with upholding the law generally condoned the killing of Aborigines. Obviously, Aborigines were in no position to use the established framework of law to take back and bury their own; and even if they did understand that this was their right in British law, neither they nor any sympathetic European were likely to gain justice when law so readily deferred to science.

But if men like Ramsay and Wilson did act in the belief that the scientific knowledge to be gained from procuring and examining Aboriginal bodies would increase the happiness of the descendants of the Aborigines, then the best that can be said is that they underscore the value of recent comments by the literary critic, Terry Goldie. In appraising the image of the indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand literatures, Goldie likens the discursive field governing literary representation of the indigene to a chessboard: the discourse of British imperialism governs an economy of knowledge in which indigene 'pawns' are moved by white signmakers in a given number of ways. Further, Goldie writes, A variety of factors are involved in incorporating the indigene for the page but still more are added when the genre requires that the indigene be corporally present, in the theatre. There must be presence in the theatre, although the presence is that of the actors and not of the author. If the pawn is played by a white actor in disguise, signifying processes are at play similar to those in the novel but if an indigenous actor is used the cross-cultural leap in which the white author creates the lines and context for the indigene's speech might seem a beneficial erasing of boundaries. It might also be considered a means of hiding some very necessary distinctions.33

Besides being a major element of the field in which literary images of the Aborigine functioned in late nineteenth-century Australia, racial science directly created its own 'lines and contexts'; in the Museum and the Anatomy theatre 'some very necessary distinctions were hidden.' In hindsight, we can see that men like Ramsay and Wilson acted in the name of scientific progress in ways that in fact helped marginalise what slender grounds there were in late nineteenth-century Australia for European recognition of Aborigines' human rights. They were blind to the cruelty inflicted on Aborigines by the desecration of graves and the stealing away of the bodies of those murdered in 'dispersals'. They were unmoved to comment on the work of more traditionally minded colonists, who were working to expose the 'sickening and brutal war of races ... carried on in our outside settlements, especially those in the North.'34 In the quest for scientific knowledge, Ramsay could even go as far as to cynically view the outrages of the North Queensland frontier as a 'Black Game' shoot.

There is, moreover, a danger in our simply assuming that Ramsay and the Trustees of the Australian Museum were cognitive prisoners of the racial assumptions of their day. Trading in Aboriginal remains gradually expired through the first decades of the twentieth-century as the paradigm of racial science that had fostered the trade since the 1860s waned.

34 Queenslander 1880:3.
Looking back in old age on his 1910-11 trip to western Australia, the Cambridge biologist E.L. Grant-Watson, recalled that 'the conscience of the white community was waking to the fact that, the natives, had, in the past been badly treated,' Grant-Watson thus thought it wise to get the remains of two Aboriginal bodies he had secretly exhumed back to England by packing them 'carefully in a strong wooden case, labelled 'Geological Specimens' ...and with the connivance of a young man, lately engaged as secretary to a Very Important Person, we smuggled them through in the luggage of the V.I.P. What was not known was not grieved over.35

However, the perspective from which we now view and regret the young Grant-Watson's body-snatching does not of itself guarantee that the production of knowledge in our own time and cultural space will be judged, in retrospect, free from cruelty. Indeed, one aspect of the current controversy over the return of Aboriginal remains held in scientific institutions has come uncomfortably close to illustrating as much. This is the initial stance taken by several European scientific institutions in the face of Aboriginal pressure for the repatriation of modern remains. Whereas there is a reasonably strong case on both scientific and ethical grounds for the preservation of ancient remains - dating in some instances to before 30,000 BP - Australian, and some European scientific institutions, have agreed with Aborigines that there are no, or at best slim, grounds for keeping the remains of individuals who died within the last 3000 years or so.36 Even so, some European institutions possessing remains whose actual identity or community can be established have resisted speaking with Aboriginal delegations. They have chosen to argue publicly that modern remains in their collection were legitimately obtained, and still had scientific value. But they refused to say exactly how the remains were obtained, or explain how they remain scientifically valuable. It has been left for Aboriginal spokespeople to spend time and scarce funds on swaying public opinion to the point that scientific need has come to be judged against extra-scientific, ethical criteria.37

35 Grant-Watson 1968:70.
36 See Goldsworthy 1990. The fate of ancient remains is a complex and tragically politicised issue. European science represents Australia's Aborigines as the genetic and cultural descendants of late pleistocene colonists who arrived on the Australian land mass around 40,000 years ago, or possibly a people whose ancestors include earlier migrants. Some scientists leave open the question whether Australasia was in fact a specialised site of human evolution. Aboriginal spokespeople reject these assumptions: they say they have been of the land that Europeans call Australia since its creation by ancestral spirits. They reject the claim that the remains of their ancient ancestors are the heritage of all humanity and should be made freely available for scientific study. They do so mindful of past dehumanisation and objectification by European scientific discourse. In a forthcoming paper I try to disclose something of the broad cultural contours to the current controversy over ancient Aboriginal remains. I suggest that the controversy cannot be resolved easily, as argument to date has necessarily been framed by the participants as critique and counter-critique of two very differently constituted bodies of knowledge. At heart these two bodies of knowledge construe history and the ultimate meanings of life in incommensurate ways. Nonetheless, this does not preclude the possibility of scientific investigation of Aboriginal remains continuing in ethically responsible and useful ways. On this score see Colin Pardoe's valuable, 'The eye of the storm: the study of Aboriginal remains in Australia' (in press: Journal of Indigenous Studies).
37 To give two examples: the Anatomy Department of the University of Edinburgh initially refused to speak with Aborigines, amongst whom was Monty Prior, a well-respected
Not only does the initial reaction of such institutions call to mind the objectification and dehumanisation of the Aborigine in past scientific discourse, in the late twentieth-century intellectual context it seems bad science. In recent times, the research generated within various disciplines of the natural and human sciences which has contributed most to explaining the sophistication and complexity of non-European societies has been that which listened to indigenous peoples. Listening has led many researchers to take care to ensure that neither the methods governing their particular discipline, nor the cultural concerns of the broader community they work within, are allowed to shape unduly their perceptions of what their science can claim to have established. In this way it has actually helped science be more impartial and objective. Moreover, in part due to indigenous critiques of western knowledge, the question is now often heard across the disciplinary spectrum of the sciences whether, since the seventeenth-century, European science has been seriously weakened by operating on the assumption that it is possible to slough away contingencies of time and cultural space, to reveal some essential nature or essence of humanity for impartial, 'scientific' study.38

Given what we now know about how museum curators like Edward Ramsay fostered the procurement of Aboriginal dead for the advance of racial science, it would seem worthwhile taking time to reflect carefully on why Aborigines think it so important to have these remains returned. The ways in which Europeans of Ramsay's time understood and acquired bodies underscores the fact that science is never neutral; it has made decisions and sanctioned developments which impact on all facets of our lives; and yet too often dissent easily meets the blunt response that science knows best. By seeking critically to evaluate the worth of European science and technology against other human considerations - as Aborigines have challenged us to do by their campaigns for the return of remains - we are offered dialogue that might be difficult, but could greatly enrich the quality of both cultures.

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North Queensland Elder and Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church, who had travelled to Scotland in 1989 on behalf of several Northern communities. The Anatomy Department argued that the remains were of crucial value to physical anthropology, but would not say in what respect. In the wake of student and staff pressure in 1989 the University Senate agreed to discuss the ethics of keeping Aboriginal remains and decided to return them. A small collection of Tasmanian remains were returned early in 1991; over 250 Australian relics are to be returned by Autumn 1991. Several authorities in the field of physical anthropology have condemned this decision. In Paris, the Musée de l’Homme has refused to discuss the repatriation of a much smaller collection of modern Aboriginal remains. Again Aboriginal delegations have been told bluntly that these remains are being kept for some unspecified scientific good. The matter looks likely to be brought before European Human Rights Authorities in the near future. See Mansell 1991.

38 The history of dissatisfaction with essentialist theories of humanity is complex; the philosophical grounds of dissent are best put by Rorty 1979 and Taylor 1982:15-57. See also Feyerabend 1987:ch.3.
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Overview
This paper is about observing a scene and then interpreting it in order to communicate the experience to others. The end product, the description of people, places or events, is evident. When this is compared to the original - the people, terrains, flora and fauna, or happenings - discrepancies often become apparent. We say the recorder, scribe, artist or raconteur, got it wrong. However, why should this be so? What is it that blights the eye and twists the mind to produce a distorted vision and version? The answer lies in culture.

The observer approaches the scene with a predisposition to be affected intellectually and emotionally by certain aspects over others, because of his (or her) acquired body of wisdom with which he attempts to understand the world. Reality might impinge in a surprising way, jolting complacency, or alternatively, emotional and intellectual detachment from the exotic may remain intact. Either way, when the observer comes to describe the scene, his only recourse is to metaphor drawn from his culture in order to create a sense of familiarity with the strange. Through metaphor and allegory, the observer tries to understand the scene and to convey it to others by making it seem familiar to them too.

While we know that this is what happens, only rarely is the process exposed in any clear way. A set of naturalistic sketches by a young artist, Richard Atherton Ffarington, are excellent examples of the work of an observer, his first visions. His later paintings of the same scenes bear all the hallmarks of someone casting around in his own culture for suitable ways of describing his experiences to others, in effect, of communicating. In comparing the two sets of works, the process of interpretation is exposed. Ffarington's work is also set in the wider context of other works of the day on the same subject, to expose more clearly how dispositions are shaped, and views directed, by categories of thought which are a part of the culture of the viewer.

Introduction
Between 1943 and 1947 Ffarington made several fascinating pencil sketches of Aborigines of south-western Australia, engaged in various activities. He later developed these into a series of watercolours, and sent a folio containing both sketches and paintings to his relatives in England, probably in 1850. At least two of the landscape images were adapted by engravers working for The London Illustrated News between 1850 and 1875, while a set of 22 artworks survives as a folio collection now held by the Art Gallery of Western Australia.1

This folio of Ffarington's is remarkable in two respects at least. First, it is one of the few bodies of work featuring south-western Australian Aborigines as the subjects and as

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1 Ffarington's folio has been published by the Art Gallery of Western Australia and an exhibition held of his work. See Tilbrook 1986.
such it complements contemporaneously written accounts of their appearance, social interaction and land use. Second, it is a particularly clear example of the process of cultural interpretation, where cultural understandings intervene to infuse a scene with meanings derived from other contexts in order to communicate to an audience.

South-west Australian Aborigines

Aborigines occupied the south-western corner of Australia relatively unhindered for at least 40,000 years before their way of life was irrevocably interrupted by European settlement and colonisation. People held individual and group rights to the resources of defined tracts of territory to which they were bound by ritual ties and practical usage, and were distinguished from their more distant neighbours by language and variations on local custom, plus their perceived right to occupy their lands in accordance with their religious lore. They shared with other Aboriginal societies from all over Australia an economy based on hunting and foraging, and themes for living drawn from a body of belief based on a creative period, the Dreaming. They were culturally distinct in certain beliefs and practices, such as the particular rules of kinship and the form of their initiation ceremonies, as well as linguistically, while remaining indentifiably part of the whole. In outlook they were extremely localised, distinguishing between kin and allies and fearing their more distant neighbours with whom they interacted in ritual and warfare. These local divisions were marked by dialect, and emphasised by the infrequency and formality of contact between members.

In 1826 a British garrison was established at King George's Sound, the furthermost tip of the south, under Lieutenant Lockyer of the 57th Regiment, following several European visitations to the area including those of Baudin (French, 1801-1803), Flinders (English, 1801-1802), de Freycinet (French, 1818), Phillip Parker King (English, 1818-1822), de Bougainville and du Camper (French, 1825) and d'Urville (French, 1826) (see below for further mention). This presaged profound changes for the Aborigines of the entire south west, although initially, in the King George's Sound area, only the local land-holding groups were affected materially. The big change came in 1829 when the Swan River Colony was founded under Governor Stirling with a detachment of the 63rd Regiment, and boatloads of Europeans began arriving and usurping the land and its resources. This met with vigorous and violent Aboriginal resistance on a local basis, which was inevitably ineffective in stemming the tide.

By 1843 when Ffarington arrived in the south-west, European settlement had spread from the Swan River Colony in an arc encompassing Toodyay, York and Beverley in the east; and south to Leschenault on the Collie River, along the Vasse River, and inland from King George's Sound, with an overland route linking the latter to Fremantle Harbour on the mouth of the Swan River. The Aborigines persistently tried to continue their traditional lifestyle, but they faced ever-increasing food shortages and social disruption mirroring in most respects the experiences of their fellows in New South Wales. It was these people whom Ffarington sketched.

2 For example, see Hallam and Tilbrook 1990; Green 1979; Hallam 1979; Tilbrook 1983. Extensive quotes could be cited to accompany all of Ffarington's works, describing appearance, artefact and activity of the Aborigines of south-western Australia. However for the present purposes, only one quote from Captain Ellis's journal has been cited - see below under discussion of 'Corroboree' by Ffarington.

Ffarington's works

Seven of Ffarington's pencil sketches match with seven watercolours, and in addition there are five watercolours without corresponding sketches (three featuring Aborigines, plus two landscapes), and two pencil sketches (of life aboard ship bound for India), plus an additional watercolour of Cleopatra after Guido Reni.

Ffarington's pencil sketches are naturalistic portrayals of what he observed: a couple returning from the hunt with a firebrand and a kangaroo; two figures at a grave site intent in solemn ritual; a man tensed and about to spear a fish from a thick branch overhanging a river or estuary; two men absorbed in handling a freshly speared emu; a small group sighting a kangaroo; a camping ground; and a man climbing a tree in search of possum, or honey. Interpretation is minimal, abstraction is hardly entered into, and atmosphere is captured and highlighted by the intense involvement of the observed in their tasks. The figures are portrayed as Ffarington saw them (as far as this can be said with certainty), with a strong sense of movement and deliberateness of purpose, and an absence of any self-consciousness or posturing. Attention to body decoration and draping, and head-dress, is subservient to a focus on the task at hand, the physical endeavour. The landscape settings are sensitively handled reflecting the native flora, with tell-tale sighs of European presence in the chopped logs, constructed tracks and ships in the distance or on shore.

Ffarington's watercolours differ in a number of respects from his sketches. The figures become stylised, posed, unnatural and unrelaxed in posture and exaggerated in gesture; dress and decoration become a focus; and comparisons with other people in other parts of the world start to intrude as the artist embellishes his figures with drapery, decoration and gesture. Much attention is paid to composition and picturesque construction of the landscape which consequently loses something of its Australian feel while more closely resembling European foliage.

The lapse of time between when the sketches were first made, and the watercolours were finally executed, allowed Ffarington's sense of the emotional intensity of the scenes to become dissipated, while his intellectual ideas took over as the main communicative force. The tensions inherent in the actions of the participants become lost, as the artistic intention shifts from recording, to restating. The watercolours could do more to tell a story, once they were one step removed from direct experience. There was time to reflect (imperfectly) on detail as seen in body decoration and cladding, and scenery, and to stylise and dramatise gesture and action. The figures could become more than what they were, they could turn into archetypes and they could engage in generalised tasks rather than the specifics of the moment.

The net effect is a dual record of great interest: of ethnographic detail; and of the casting of a different way of life in one preferred manner, as an idealised representation drawn from Ffarington's own culture.

The artworks

A detailed description of all of Ffarington's artworks will not be given here, nor a full discussion of its ethnographic content relating this to what is known of the south-west Aboriginal way of life in that epoch, as this has been done elsewhere. Instead, a selection of his work will be discussed in order to illustrate the points discussed in this paper.

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4 See Tilbrook 1986 for reproductions of the artwork (except 'Cleopatra') from Ffarington's folio, and description of the ethnographic content of his works. See Tilbrook 1988 for discussion of south-west Aboriginal society based upon historical documentation.
'Throwing a spear' (more aptly titled 'Family hunt'): the contrast between the sketch and the watercolour of the same subject highlights the intrusion of previously held notions about people from far reaches of the world and their ways. The naturalistic pencil sketch is of a small, rather relaxed group of four, one member of which is standing with arm raised, captured in the act of aiming his shipped spear at some distant and unsuspecting game.

The transformation which has taken place in the watercolour is impressive. The group has focussed into a family in which attention is on the standing figure of the man about to throw his spear, while a woman turns towards a child and points dramatically. The scene has become a timeless depiction of socialisation, in which the child is being taught about the provisions of nature and how to obtain them, by the vigorous action of the man and the gesture of the woman. There is also something of the glory of the hunt, or the nobility of the hunter, in this scene. The fur cloaks of the Aborigines have turned into fabric-like drapery, reminiscent of Indian or Maori clothing, and the woman's possum skin bag has become rectangular. The man wears elaborate face paint and headdress. The drama which is being played out is about the origins of human society as Europeans imagine it, where the environment is kind, food is abundant, and the nuclear family group is the basic institution of social life and the foundation stone of civilisation. This is a painting of the 'romantic savage', with strong 'noble' overtones, almost before any fall from grace, and it is revealing of the European notion of the origins of their own society.5

'Spearing an emu': Ethnographically, this is a most interesting sketch because it shows two men cooperating in the task of obtaining food, the game they sought, and the natural environment in which they hunted. It depicts hunting with spears as a male activity, and it shows something of the coverings men wore and how they suited these to the task at hand. The men are captured in the act of cutting up an emu which they have just speared. They are intent on their task and their preoccupation is expressed in the lines of their bodies. One has cast aside his cloak, and is working unencumbered. There are reeds growing in the foreground, indicating the swampy conditions which provided abundant food resources for south-western Aborigines in which emu, too, were critical in their diet in that era.

The present of Europeans is hinted at by a large, sawn log. This also presages the enormous changes to the environment, and to Aboriginal social and cultural life, that the Europeans caused. Already, the Aboriginal actors are caught in a time warp created by the simultaneous existence of their traditional social life and the new order of colonial society, as they pursue their traditional hunting in an environment which is changing rapidly both in the resources it contains, and in appearance as the land is cleared.

The watercolour sketch of this incident does not differ significantly from the pencil sketch, as far as ethnographic detail is concerned. Compositionally, many changes have taken place. An additional (third) figure has been added, resting with his foot on the sawn stump of a large tree. The actors are more stylised, wooden and staged, and they are wearing face paint and headdresses and staring into the distance rather than at the emu carcass. Nevertheless, the overall intention remains much the same, and no incongruity is suggested by the sawn tree stump, as men continue to live off the resources of a benign environment. The sawn timber was a constant feature of the military settlements where Ffarington was posted, and must have seemed as natural to him as the event of European settlement itself. The landscape has undergone considerable pictorial re-arrangement, losing its dense swampy characteristic and becoming almost park-like, with notably more formal trees in the middle ground.

'Gravesite': This watercolour stands with 'Corroboree or native dance' (below) for its rarity value. In both pencil sketch and watercolour, many ethnographic details are apparent, such as the fires lit by the gravesite, and the weapons stuck upright in the freshly dug graves. The landscape retains its naturalistic character, with minimal compositional rearrangement. This could be a burial site, rather than an isolated grave. However, in the watercolour a strong sense of drama prevails. While drama was no doubt a feature of funerary rites, the sense of soft, human sadness is missing, which is so revealingly captured in the quietly standing and withdrawn, standing figure in the pencil sketch. In telling the story of the funeral and the intense emotions evoked, something of the human has been lost.

'Corroboree or native dance': No pencil sketch survives to partner this work. The ethnographic content of Ffarington's painting becomes more apparent when it is matched with descriptive accounts of the day. This watercolour is remarkable in that it is the only known visual record of south-west Aboriginal dance, and it accords extremely well with written descriptions of this, as well as with visual records from the eastern states of Australia.6

The following account of a corroboree by another military man, Captain T.T. Ellis, in 1833, serves to illustrate this point:

In the evening a Corroboree was given in compliment to the visitor. This Corroboree was extremely well got up, the spectators being seated in a semi-circle with a number of small fires in front resembling the stage lights in a theatre. It was the first at which I have seen a woman perform. Gibban's wife advanced reciting and waving her arms as if to excite the performers, who came forward in a band of eighteen young men with spears poised, they danced forward and formed a circle then a line and after a number of manoeuvres retired out of sight until the next act. During the interval a man sang remarkably well and accompanied himself with a Callee (throwing stick) struck against a Meero (shield) so as to produce the effect of Castanets. The same air, correct to a note, was answered by the band behind the scenes first faintly and then increasingly as they advanced to the state or foreground. They have regular airs, and persons noted as good singers, one of them sung the air I heard at the Corroboree and repeated it until I was enabled to write it down.7

This watercolour shows the line of dancers, with elaborate body paint and head-dress, the lead performer highlighted by the light from the small fires and additionally adorned with feathers or wood shavings attached to his hair. The Aboriginal onlookers are depicted around the perimeter of the dance ground, and once again the European presence is indicated by the sawn logs in the foreground. In this watercolour the sense of drama is strong, matching the stylised nature of the staged event itself. For once, European interpretation matched with the observation of Aboriginal interpretive intent. This, of itself, is strong testimony indeed to the communicative success of formal Aboriginal performance.

Biographical outline

Who was the man Ffarington, responsible for this record, and what influences might have been at work upon him?

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6 For example, works by J.S. Prout, Henry Darcy and H. Glover, reproduced in Wild 1987, as well as Joseph Lyckett reproduced in Smith 1989:237, plate 149 and Hoorn 1990, plate 13 (see below) and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (1803) in Eisler and Smith 1988, cat. 218.

7 Ellis, T.T. Colonial Secretary's Office - Inwards Correspondence, vol. 29, 1833:157-159.
Corroboree or Native Dance.
FFARINGTON'S EYE

Ffarington (1823-1855) arrived in Sydney, New South Wales, with the 51st Regiment of Foot (South West Yorkshire) aboard the 'Somersetshire' in 1841, aged 18. He sent a sketchbook home entitled 'From Australia 1841' containing eight pencil drawings of scenes made during his journey to the colony. Two years later, in 1843, he returned to London aboard the 'Trusty', purchased a commission of Lieutenant and set sail for Western Australia via Launceston, Tasmania, aboard the 'Champion' with his wife Ellen Julia Rowes. He served as Ensign with the 51st Regiment which had stations at King George's Sound, Kojanup, Bunbury, Williams, Leschenault, Pinjarra and Rottnest Island. He remained in Western Australia for four years and was granted four Perth suburban lots in 1845. He left aboard the 'Java' for Calcutta, the military headquarters of the 51st Regiment, in 1847. There is no record of any return visit to Western Australia between 1847 and 1855 when he died in Salford Barracks, Lancashire and was buried on the Isle of Wight. He was then only 32 years old. There is some disparity with the date of his death8 which might be a confusion with a later husband of his widow, for he is listed as dying in 1870 and having five children in addition to the first three born between 1843 and 1847.

Ffarington was the grand-nephew of Joseph Farington (1747-1821), topographic draughtsman and watercolourist,9 and seems to have shared with him a keen interest in observation and recording. Any influence his grand-uncle might have had on his interest in art is conjectural. Ffarington observes several artistic conventions in his works which display a repertoire of forms and theoretical concepts to construct picturesque compositions, emphasising the 'Claudian' formula using repoussoirs10 which suggests exposure to artistic circles, and it is likely that his grand-uncle was directly or indirectly influential in stimulating his interest in drawing and watercolouring. Neither is anything known about Ffarington's preference for spelling his name with a double 'f', making it easily misread as 'Harrington' in handwritten historical documents.

It is obvious from his work that Ffarington had at least a modicum of artistic training whether formal or otherwise, together with a strong interest in art and an amount of artistic talent. He was presumably not rich or he would not have had to work to earn his commission, and had he been of greater financial means his career might have followed an artistic rather than military pathway, and endured longer.

The historical context

The sense of otherness wrought upon European consciousness as a direct consequence of their foraying to the far corners of the earth over the preceding three and a half centuries, was founded in the European cultural tendency to reflect upon their own state of existence when confronted by contrasts. Interpretations were made through a web of European political, economic, social and cultural conditions that profoundly affected the descriptions of the encountered.11 From Pigafetta (and Magellan) and Columbus onwards, accounts of observations and experiences of distant people and places were coloured by imagination, and with the intervention of time, romanticised versions emerged which retained certain identifying characteristics and changed or added others to suit taste and belief.

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8 See Erickson 1979:vol.3.
9 See Tilbrook 1986:5 'View up the river from Millbank, 1793', coloured aquatint by J.C. Stadler after Joseph Farington.
Eighteenth century Enlightenment ideas about the nature of native people interwined with the stress on observing them as part of the scientific approach of the nineteenth century. The French expedition in 1801-1803 to chart the coast of Australia under Baudin, was guided in this task by a manual prepared by Joseph-Marie Dégérando, as well as by artists including Nicholas-Martin Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (1788-1846) and a bevy of scientists. The English survey expedition under Matthew Flinders had aboard a naturalist and the painter William Westall (1781-1850), in the tradition followed by the English and Dutch explorers to the southern hemisphere, and before them the Portuguese and Spanish.

Ffarington was exposed directly or indirectly to a body of artistic tradition, and to the contemporary art of his day. This included formal European classical and neo-classical artistic conventions, as well as the observational style of art of the colonial era which emphasised an accurate representation of nature and the depiction of typical elements to illustrate the characteristics of foreign lands. He was no great artist, lacking the time and opportunity, and possibly also the inclination, to develop his natural talent. It matters little that he was an amateur, earning his crust by other means than the sale of his art, for he was nevertheless applying observational skills within the context of a tradition to make an interpretation which he hoped to communicate visually to others.

The eye available to Ffarington

Precedents found in the work of other artists who painted Aborigines, may have influenced Ffarington when he came to do his own sketches. This included details of Aboriginal appearance and artefacts produced by professional artists such as Nicholas-Martin Petit and William Westall, and later de Sainson (aboard the Dumont d'Urville expedition of 1826-1829). However, he was interested primarily in action, what the Aborigines did rather than their portraits, and a number of artists had already depicted Aboriginal scenes, some in published form, in the half-century since the time of the Port Jackson Painter of Botany Bay circa 1788. The latter painted a number of Aboriginal subjects in a sympathetic, naive style revealing curiosity, humour, lyricism and keen observation. Among his works are paintings of Aborigines engrossed in their own activities such as cooking fish and canoeing, and in interaction (violently) with the settlers spearing a rushcutter.

12 Dégérando 1969.
13 See Eisler and Smith 1988, cat. 221 and cat. 220 for examples of Aboriginal portraits by Petit and Lesueur; see Chapman 1979, fig.7 for William Westall's sketch of an Aborigine of King George's Sound, 1801-2.
14 Eisler 1988:14-34.
17 Smith 1989:159-162 and 374 (footnote 6) suggests that the Port Jackson Painter was Henry Brewer (1745-1796), clerk to Governor Phillip.
18 The rushcutter was almost certainly being speared for disrupting an important food resource to which he had no rights in Aboriginal terms, possibly nesting birds, in addition to any other reason.
David Collins published *An account of the English colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement, in January 1788, to August 1801: with remarks on the dispositions, customs, manners &c. of the native inhabitants of the country* (vol.2), in London in 1802 with eight engravings illustrating Aboriginal life by James Powell taken from drawings by William Alexander or, most probably, convict artist Thomas Watling (1762-c.1810). The Aborigines are shown engaged in various activities such as tooth evulsion, and are the result of direct observation and intended as ethnographical record. Watling painted many landscapes between 1798 and 1802 in which he characteristically included a group of Aborigines in the foreground in order to take the scene appear typically Australian, and also to render it more picturesque. This artistic device was widely employed by other artists, relegating Aborigines, flora and fauna to the perimeters of views of European settlement, dominance and cultivation of the land. Ffarington's work bears a certain compositional resemblance to these works, and if he did see the Collins volume it might have stimulated his interest in the Australian Aborigines.

A much more likely influence is *Field sports ... of the native inhabitants of New South Wales* published by John Heaveside Clark in London in 1813. Clark worked from sketches done by others, without any first-hand Australian experience of his own, depicting Aborigines as noble and savage sportsmen while making allusion to the European sportsman and praising game and bird hunting as activities of the upper class. Ffarington might have viewed, and been boyishly intrigued by, these scenes of action as he probably shared Clark's interest in physical or 'sporting' activities prior to his military enlistment. He drew and painted many of the same subjects as Clark, although not too much should be made of this as certain novel scenes (to European eyes), such as of Aborigines climbing trees, were favourites with many artists. Clark's figures affect classic poses in highly romanticised and formally constructed compositions, of which Ffarington's watercolours but not his pencil sketches are slightly reminiscent.

Another painter whose works Ffarington might have seen was Joseph Lycett (1766-c.1825) who produced several landscapes, published *Views in Australia or New South Wales and van Diemen's Land delineated* in London between 1824 and 1825, plus a folio of Aboriginal works intended for publication in England but never published. Lycett was transported to New South Wales for forgery in 1814, granted ticket-of-leave and employed in the Police Department, re-convicted of forgery and sent to Newcastle prison 1815-1817 where he worked for the regional commandant Wallis, and between 1819 and 1822 is listed in the colonial muster, Sydney, as an artist. In 1821 Wallis published his *Historical account of New South Wales* containing engravings by a convict, Preston, most likely from...
drawings made by Lycett, including several Aboriginal figures and a corroboree (also the subject of both an oil painting by Lycett, and one of his folio watercolours).²⁴

It is likely that Lycett's Aboriginal folio was known privately in artistic circles and the young Ffarington might have been aware of it. It contains 20 watercolours of groups of Aborigines engaged in various activities, set in a naturalistic Australian environment with a strong eye to composition. Lycett executes the figures in naive style, and generally observes the convention of clothing them in shorts or loincloths. The paintings have a strong ethnographic content, echoing Clark (whose work Lycett might have been aware of) in topic but not style, as a reflection of what Lycett imagined would interest the buying public. The informative intent results in a move towards the typical ethnographic scene paralleling the typical landscape as Lycett composed his picture to include a variety of associated activities illustrating various facets of Aboriginal life.²⁵ This is most clearly seen in 'Aborigines spearing fish, others diving for crayfish; a party seated beside a fire cooking fish' where Aborigines are shown doing four sorts of fishing, cooking fish, socialising in a domestic scene and as a party keeping a look-out on top of a cliff.²⁶

Lycett's treatment reveals curiosity and acceptance of his subject matter but with a detachment which suggests little sympathy, and in his naive style he exhibits none of the good-natured and quizzical humour of his predecessor The Port Jackson Painter.

Augustus Earle (1793-1838) was in Sydney and the Illawarra, New South Wales, between 1825 and 1828. He painted several landscapes in which he took an empirical approach rather than composing typical views. He also did several portraits of Aborigines and Aboriginal scenes documenting their degradation by depicting the destructive effects of European settlement on Aboriginal culture and individuals.²⁷ Ffarington's emphasis is different in that, while he documents a European presence, his work is absent of a commentary which may not have occurred to him to make. His approach of landscape has much in common with Earle although the latter was much more skilled as an artist, and both are of a similar age when producing their Australian work.

Another view of Australian Aborigines which Ffarington may have been aware of, although his perception and work give no hint of this, was the uncomplimentary common caricature. This view depicted Aborigines engrossed in their own interaction, suffering the devastating effects of grog and physical exploitation, comic and hopeless. One example which epitomises this is the glaze on porcelain 'View of the town of Sydney in New South Wales, 1812-1814'.²⁸

The importance of direct observation

Ffarington stands apart from Clark, but alongside The Port Jackson Painter and Lycett (and also Earle) in one important respect: he worked from his own, personal, direct observations of Aborigines going about their mundane tasks. Because of this, the transformation made in seeking to present images of Aborigines to a viewing public is unwittingly exposed in Ffarington's work when his pencil sketches are compared with the later paintings of the same subjects. The contrasts between his pencil sketches, done 'on the spot' as an impartial observer, and his composed watercolour paintings completed some

²⁵ Reproduced in Hoorn 1990.
²⁸ McCormick 1987: plate 146.
time later working from these original drawings, are singularly illuminating of how culturally based ideas are intruded between observation and description. Through this process, description becomes a combination of what is directly observed, and the ideas and knowledge already held about the subject, regardless of the extent to which the two actually correspond.

Clark, in contrast, was removed from the immediacy of contact with Aborigines, and relied solely on the descriptions of others, reconstructing his paintings from these. His work is inspired by the enthusiastic descriptions of other fellow Europeans of what they had seen, together with his (or his publisher's) enthusiasm for the classical ideals of physical prowess and sport, but it is not stimulated by any direct personal experience gained outside his own culture. Collins, on the other hand, did have the opportunity of first hand observation even though he did not do the artwork in his publication, and this undoubtedly influenced his direction of Watling's interpretation of the scenes they witnessed together as Watling is much less sympathetic in his artistic treatment of Aborigines on other occasions.

The spectre of the 'romantic savage'

Ffarington had an audience to consider in communicating about the Australian Aborigines, restricted to family and friends, although he might have intended it ultimately to include a book-buying public (or a newspaper readership). In portraying scenes to which his viewing audience could relate, he had at his disposal the contemporary stereotypes of Aborigines and their lifestyles. These were drawn in part from all the colonised countries including North America, India and Africa. Inevitably, Ffarington's figures became symbols for a category, the encountered and colonised 'other'.

The metaphor employed is that of 'romantic savage', head held high, elongated limbs, cloak more cape- or jacket-like, as Ffarington casts around for things in his own culture with which he can compare the Australian Aborigines. In this way they can be made to seem familiar and hence intellectually understandable to himself and others, without fear of emotional involvement in their way of life or circumstances because they are also depicted as 'other'. Characteristics such as love of personal freedom, courage, great emotional depth, devotion to race and generosity are strongly suggested by posture and gesture, augmented by ornament, in most of Ffarington's watercolours.

It is not surprising that this romantic image appealed to Ffarington, the young man of action, for its stress on physical prowess and independence. Moreover, apart from Clark's neo-classical figures other illustrations were also available which depicted Australian Aborigines in noble and romantic vein and which he might have been aware of, such as the book by Captain Arthur Phillip, first Governor of Botany Bay, *The voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, published in 1789 with engravings of Aborigines by T. Medland from drawings by Robert Cleveley; or the journals of Captain John Hunter, second Governor of New South Wales who in 1793 published his *Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* with a frontpiece by William Blake of a New South Wales family, from a drawing attributed to P.G. King, the colony's third Governor.

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29 See Smith 1989:187; also page 181 for an indication of Watling's cynical approach of Australia, perhaps founded in his own unfortunate experiences of transportation.


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One indication of Ffarington's attitude is hinted by the cloaks in which he drapes his figures. It is hard to discount the likelihood that Ffarington was influenced by the 'noble' and 'romantic savage' depictions of New Zealand natives. As pointed out by Eisler the New Zealand natives were admired by the colonists for their agriculture and their warlike disposition, and from Tasman's (c.1642-1643) grim men, to Dalrymples' (c.1767) 'noble savages' and Sydney Parkinsons naturalistic studies c.1769, images of them over 126 years exhibit the enduring common element of the cloak worn clasped across the chest.

A post-script

It is unfortunate that Ffarington died at the tender age of 32, like Captain Collet Barker who was in command of the garrison at King George's Sound for 15 months from 1829 until he was fatally speared in South Australia. The record of the south-western Aborigines could have been more complete and, possibly, more balanced, had these sensitive young men lived longer. Instead, verbal and visual views of the Aborigines grew increasingly harsh and intolerant, as is illustrated by the work of James Walsh (1833-?), another young man in his late twenties. With the exception of Earle, the artists were all mature men and, presumably, while innovative they were less at the spearhead of change. The Port Jackson Painter was probably in his mid-forties at least, Watling was in his late thirties or early forties, Lycett was in his mid- to late forties, and Clark judging by his style and publication was a mature man.

Walsh was active in England in the 1860s and was transported to Western Australia for forgery in 1852 and re-convicted in 1859, also for forgery, and was listed as a clerk and painter following his release and pardon in the early 1860s (thereby bearing a similarity of career to that of Lycett). He produced a series of watercolours of crudely executed caricature-like Aboriginal figures, depicting them as primitive savages further demoralised by the effects of alcohol and a poverty-stricken existence. Far from the humour and sympathetic tolerance of The Port Jackson Painter, Walsh exhibits none of the detached acceptance of Lycett, but actively seeks a reaction in his audience of revolt and disgust at the scenes of violence and savagery. These strongly border on the comic, furthering the sense of distance between viewer and viewed.

Conclusion

Thus, the comparison of Ffarington's sketches and paintings shows the transformation which has taken place between observation and communication. Comparisons with the treatment of the same subjects by other artists of the day show the influence of current ideas on their 'eye'. This highlights the influence of established notions about the nature of reality, on the communication of information about that reality, and on the consequent understandings of what is to be believed. A reality is constructed which contains elements of the observed, thus conveying some sense of the exotic, but this is made familiar and understandable by metaphor and allusion to other times and places. In this process, the observed becomes distorted, but the description becomes real and, because of the meanings it has acquired from the culture of the observer, comes to contain guidelines for future interaction with that reality.

33 Eisler 1988:30, see fig. 13 done in 1642-1643, fig. 12 done in 1767, and Parkinson's study done c.1769; for example see Smith 1989:29, plate 13.
34 Barker kept a journal containing descriptions of the Aborigines of the King George's Sound region, see Green 1989.
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Johnny Campbell is not as well-known as another bushranger hanged in 1880. His career was as interesting and could be as symbolic as the career of Ned Kelly. He was also less violent and more successful than Jimmy Governor. There are clear pragmatic and racial reasons for forgetfulness about Johnny Campbell.

When Johnny Campbell does appear in history, it is in one of four guises. First, he appears as another black rapist hanged, and used as a manifestation of the sexual-racial anxieties of whites on the frontier. Secondly, he is seen as transitional figure in an age of bush-ranging - someone between primary resistance against white settlement and the Robin Hood tradition of bushranging. By 1900, Jimmy Governor had virtually completed the transition, but in the meantime, the Wide Bay region of Queensland had nurtured a whole series of black bushrangers - Yarraman, Sambo, the Dora Dora brothers as well as Johnny Campbell. All of these men had grown up during white settlement and retained their native skills while adopting some European mores and techniques. He has been called, then and since, an Aboriginal Ned Kelly.

Another stereotype which lurks behind some later, more romantic characterisations is that of Kabi tribal warrior. One who, as a schoolchild, saw him arrested said that 'no better specimen of aboriginal physique could be found.' The most romantic version appears in an early History of Maryborough:

'(Black Campbell' was) a most intelligent individual, and conversant with many languages, speaking French, German, Italian and Gaelic. He received an education in Europe, where he was taken by Mr Campbell, a squatter. The linguistic facility and trip to Europe are attested elsewhere, but ascribed to his working for the Mortimers of Manumbar, which he did, but the trip and languages rest on no real evidence.

Finally, Johnny Campbell enjoyed some minor post mortem fame as an object of scientific study. His execution was brought forward for the convenience of the Moon Man, Baron Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, who pickled Campbell's body and sent it to Berlin for scientific analysis. Campbell also appeared later as an unintentional informant in the anthropological works of John Mathew.

The life and death of Johnny Campbell span the period from first contacts with Europeans in south-east Queensland to the beginnings of scientific curiosity about a dying race. His career illustrates resistance, the consequences of dispossession and the exploitation of indigenous peoples.

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1 Harris 1982:44.
4 Bull 1974:64.
Photograph of Johnny Campbell.
The original caption read:
"KAGARIU, OR JOHNNIE CAMPBELL, OF KABI TRIBE, MARY RIVER, QUEENSLAND, THE MOST NOTORIOUS NATIVE BUSHRANGER (Etat. 24.)

Photo kindly supplied by Queensland Penal Dept."
The photo may instead show Campbell at 34, (not 24) in 1880, before his hanging. From J. Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland* (London, 1910), facing p.137.

Note: The Editors acknowledge the assistance of the Department of Family Services, Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs in contacting members of the Kabi people to receive permission to use this photograph.
of Aboriginal labour on the land as well as the old theme of the 'man between two cultures'. \(^6\) Probably, the insights into European attitudes expressed through the criminal law and the influence of science on racial attitudes and vice versa are even sharper.

Johnny Campbell's real name was Kagariu, possibly a Kabi word for *kookaburra*. The Kabi-speaking people occupied the area north of Brisbane from Bribie Island to Fraser Island and inland roughly to the ranges which divided the valleys of the Brisbane and Mary Rivers from that of the Burnett River, though extending somewhat into the last around Barambah and Manumbar. Their culture and language were fairly fully described by John Mathew in *Two representative tribes of Queensland*. John Mathew is also our only reliable witness on the early life of Kagariu. \(^7\)

According to John Mathew, Kagariu was born in about 1846 at Imbil on Yabber (now spelt Yabba) Creek, a tributary of the Mary River. \(^8\) This was the heart of Kabi country, the territory of the Baiyambora clan. This clan name is open to question. As J.G. Steele points out, Mathew (tentatively) interprets the name to mean 'folk of the pipe' (with '-bora' as a standard ending for a clan name meaning 'folk'). Perhaps they changed their name to 'Baiyambora' after contact with tobacco. \(^9\) This particular clan, whatever its traditional name, had a long and close relationship with Manumbar station, just over the range and it was there that Mathew first met Kagariu and other 'Yabba blacks' in 1865, when he went to live there with his uncle, John Mortimer, the lessee.

Kagariu was born into the Dherwain section of the Dilbai moiety. His mother, Kami, would therefore have been Bonda-gan section of the same moiety. Kagariu was born at the very time the squatters were taking up runs in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, and there was a rumour that Kagariu's father was shot for stealing sheep, which may help to explain Kagariu's later career. The father would have been Barang of the Kopait-thin moiety. Evidently, the Barang had some particular prestige around Manumbar, as John Mortimer of Manumbar was assigned to Barang section. \(^10\)

Kagariu's mother remarried, necessarily to a classificatory brother of her deceased husband, another Barang called Bual. In due course, a younger half-brother was born, called Kilkaibriu. The half-brothers were not alike in appearance; the younger brother was to grow to six feet three (183cm) in height and Kagariu to about five feet three (160cm) and was particularly ugly by European standards. Mathew's better knowledge, photographic and other evidence weigh against the reminiscence of the witness to the capture of Johnny Campbell quoted above. \(^11\)

There is conflicting evidence, too, on the source of the name, Johnny Campbell. Loyau avers that Johnny Campbell was named after a squatter called Campbell, who took him to Europe. \(^12\) There is no evidence for this at all, indeed positive evidence of different employers at the likely times. Some witnesses suggest he had served in the Native Police and troopers were often given European names. \(^13\) The only time this could have happened

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\(^6\) Lockwood 1964:95.
\(^7\) Mathew 1880, 1889, 1899 and 1910.
\(^8\) Mathew 1880:2.
\(^10\) Mathew 1910:134, 135, 137.
\(^11\) Mathew 1880:4; 1889:341; 1910: facing 137; Lilley 1880:52; Bull 1974:64.
\(^12\) Loyau 1897:223.
\(^13\) Heap 1980:13; Loyau 1897:223. Like some other incidents, this may have been transferred from Billy Lillis's life.
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JOHNNY CAMPBELL

was a couple of years in his late teens. Heap suggests the name came from a period in which Kagariu worked in the timber industry. This is unlikely, given his constant liking for work with stock, his general preference for the hills and specific contrary evidence. Mathew is quite clear that Johnny Campbell was named after a storekeeper on Manumbar station. Even though this would have been before Mathew arrived, he was there long enough and is a credible enough witness for us to accept his version.

We may presume that Kagariu remained in the Imbil-Yabba area until about the age of 12. Furthermore, we are told by John Mathew that he had learned horsemanship by that age. In about 1858, a Mr White took him to Drayton, near Toowoomba, where he worked for two years or more with horses. Here he mastered English more thoroughly, to the extent of temporarily losing fluency in Kabi. He learned to whistle and sing several popular airs such as 'Early in de mornin' and 'In the tran [Strand]'. Two things emerge from this early employment: his acknowledged great skill with horses and his better than normal grasp of the English language, both of which became points of pride to him later.

After his stint on the Darling Downs, Kagariu moved back home. Around this time, probably 1860-61, the Baiyambora or Yabba clan had moved to Manumbar station. Manumbar remained 'home' to Kagariu for most of the next eleven years. The Yabba folk had previously worked from time to time on various stations, including Manumbar, Imbil and Yabber. One factor prompting the permanent move may have been the notorious Native Police massacre of February 1861, which occurred between Yabba and Manumbar and most seriously harmed the Yabba folk. John Mortimer of Manumbar emerged from the incident as the best defender the local Kabi-speakers could expect; it was his agitation which formed part of the impetus behind the setting-up of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Native Police in May 1861.

Johnny Campbell, as he was now known, lived and worked with his kin on Manumbar station. He acquired a reputation as a courageous horseman, who could ride securely on the wildest horse. He was said to be vain about his horsemanship and believed he was cleverer than other blacks. Bound up with this was his apparent rejection of what Mathew called 'the traditions and superstitions of [his] fathers' - he laughed at them. Though he could not read or write, he took offence at being addressed in 'the jargon' (pidgin) and prided himself on the superiority of his English.

We have only fragmentary information about Johnny Campbell's life on Manumbar. There is general agreement that he attended for a time the Sunday School run by the devoutly Presbyterian Mortimers on Manumbar. Through this he picked up a smattering of Christian doctrine and morality but, as John Mathew testifies, religion was not his 'favourite topic' and he went to the gallows officially described as a 'pagan'.

There are stories illustrating Campbell's service of his white masters. One, sadly untrue, concerns Charles Green, Manager of Yabba cattle run, who was out mustering, ran into a tree and knocked himself unconscious only to wake up three days later in the dining room of Yabba station, thanks to Johnny Campbell's carrying him safely there.

15 Mathew 1880:3. But see the last paragraph of this article, below.
16 Mathew 1880:2-3.
17 Prentis forthcoming.
18 Mathew 1880:5-6; Barber 1967:189.
19 Heap 1980:14. On checking Green 1939:9, this story also refers to another Kabi 'outlaw', Billy Lillis, and occurred in the 1890s.

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Mathew himself was saved from drowning in a waterhole by Campbell. Dating this incident is impossible, but around 1865 to 1867 is the most likely period.20

About this time, perhaps 1867, Johnny Campbell married Nelly, of Balkuin-gan section. Mathew's observation was that marriage to this 'vivacious and mirthful, amiable and attentive' woman had improved Campbell's character, at least temporarily: he was a 'confiding, contented and indulgent' husband. Nelly bore Campbell a baby son. However, before long, Johnny and Nelly Campbell began to have occasional tiffs. He blamed his loss of nerve on horses on Nelly and began expressing his jealousy by physically abusing her. On one occasion in 1871 two other black station workers, Waruin and Turandiu found Johnny and Nelly wrestling on the ground, Nelly having thrown her husband. Only Turandiu would help Johnny because Waruin was of Nelly's moiety. It was a question of brothers and sisters. On his release, Johnny beat Nelly severely and made her dive into a waterhole to retrieve an axe. They were now estranged permanently.21

John Mathew has left several clear descriptions of Johnny Campbell's appearance when they both worked on Manumbar station. The descriptions were gradually toned down. In 1910, a photograph of Campbell was provided; in 1899 he was described as unprepossessing. In 1889, he was 'about as ugly, from a European point of view, as it were possible to conceive.'22 In the unpublished manuscript of 1880:

- His appearance was decidedly disappointing, contemptible and repulsive. His only clothing was a blue serge shirt gathered at the waist by a saddle strap. Although at full stature, he was miserably stunted being only about 5ft 3in in height.
- He weighed less than seven stone (40kg), his 'hair was thick, long, wavy and tangled', his forehead 'low and retreating' and his 'nose broad and flat'. In this early unpublished work, Mathew made the unusually unqualified remark:
  - He was ugly even for a blackfellow and his physique and physionomy, the dimple only excepted, were an accurate index of his moral character as afterwards exhibited in full development.23

Violence was not only manifest against Nelly. As early as his late teens, Campbell began his life of crime against the whites. Or, at least, he was first accused of a crime at this time. The dates and order of events up to 1872 are difficult or impossible to establish. However, some time about 1864 or 1865, Campbell was accused of molesting the five year old daughter of a Manumbar shepherd known as Tom. Campbell and an associate, called Billy, who may have been Billy Lillis, another Yabba 'station black' who turned bad, robbed the shepherd's hut and rode off. After an absence of two years, Campbell returned to live with his family in the home paddock at Marumbar. He was given the benefit of the doubt on account of his horse breaking skills.24 Holthouse reports that a few whites at the time thought he started his life of crime 'by being blamed for an assault he did not commit.' If so, then the incident of Tom's daughter was probably it, though Campbell's record of interest in white women was long and fairly consistent.25

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21 Mathew 1880:6-8; 1910:137.
23 Mathew 1880:4.
24 Ibid.:3-4.
About 1871 or 1872, Johnny Campbell was working as a cattle-hand for Edgar Foreman, who had charge of a herd owned by a Brisbane merchant at Lake Dunethin in the Maroochy River valley. As with other white observers, Foreman commented on Campbell's apparently contradictory character. Campbell was never seen as a threat to the 17 year-old Mrs Foreman, even when her husband was absent. Foreman called Campbell a 'superb horseman and ... a man of his word' and added:

a better or more honest fellow could not be found, and when he turned out one of the greatest scoundrels that ever breathed I was simply astonished.26

On one occasion, Foreman gave Campbell some rum for the weekend and the latter promised to be back on Monday. Campbell turned up for work as promised with a huge gash down his left side from ribs to hip, the result of a drunken fight. In consideration of his valued worker, Foreman tended the wound and gave Campbell time off to recover. Foreman moved south to the Pine River and Johnny Campbell went west over the range to the south Burnett district.27

It is most likely that Campbell now headed for Manumbar looking for work. John Mathew mentions three incidents at this point. There was an attempt to waylay a Miss T., a shepherd's daughter. He is alleged to have sent a false message to a German lady which was wisely ignored.28 Holthouse mentions a story in which Campbell 'waylaid a schoolmistress riding through a property' where he was working, she whipped him across the face and had him flogged to boot.29

A somewhat better-attested story has Campbell starting his career of crime with an attack on a shepherd's wife at Manumbar. This is confirmed by Mathew, who names the shepherd as Tom F., whose young daughter Campbell was alleged to have molested previously. If the shepherd had thought Campbell guilty of the earlier offence, it seems strange that he would get Campbell to mind the sheep while he left his wife behind and went to the diggings to buy supplies. However, Mathew evidently knew the story in some detail, for he says that after Campbell took the sheep out, he reappeared at 10 a.m. and made indecent advances to Mrs F. and allegedly assaulted her, although the full extent of the assault was not divulged in public.30

Serious assault or hysterical over-reaction we do not know, but Johnny Campbell headed for Nanango, near which he stole a horse, and then abducted an Aboriginal-Chinese girl from Gayndah. On his way back in the direction of Manumbar, he stayed for a day or two with friendly Aborigines on Bonara station. Though harboured by Aborigines, he was betrayed by one of them.31 This contradictory relationship with black communities was to continue right up to his hanging eight years later. Just as Johnny Campbell constantly probed and occasionally violated the white-set boundaries of black behaviour, so the communities he used as protection when a fugitive explored the boundaries between traditional obligations and the need for a quiet life. Captured at Bonara station in 1872, Campbell was tried at Maryborough and sentenced to ten years for assault and attempted rape.32

28 Mathew 1880:i.
30 Murphy and Easton 1950:263; Mathew 1880:9.
31 Mathew 1880:10.
Campbell was released for good behaviour after seven years in about June of 1879, and immediately headed for his old haunts. There are interesting but unverified stories about his state of mind on his release from gaol. In essence, it is suggested that Johnny Campbell swore revenge for what white men had done to black women. Though he was obviously very keen on women especially white women, and he was eventually hanged for rape, this rape was the only actual rape he appears to have done and far more typical behaviour was the raid on an isolated farm-house. He was primarily a bushranger not a rapist, but became a fantasy hate-figure for a white community anxious to keep the 'Aboriginal problem' out of the way.

Between 19 June 1879 and 15 March 1880, when he was captured, Johnny Campbell terrified the white population of south-east Queensland. His raids were centred on Kilkivan but ranged far and wide. His modus operandi was generally to wait until a hut or homestead was deserted or the woman of the house was alone and rob it. He occasionally had help from, often had the company of, and several times was protected by Kabi people. Campbell was armed with a rifle and was claimed to be a crack shot, but he only shot at someone once during his nine-month rampage. He exploited his intimate knowledge of the topography and his great bushcraft to evade capture again and again. One ploy was to walk along the tops of the post-and-rail fences in order to leave no tracks. He often travelled at night. He often sent out a companion - usually a female - as a forward scout. Until almost the very end, police and trackers were unable to pin Campbell down.

Campbell began with a series of raids on houses in late June. By mid-July, many robberies later, several police had been thrown into the chase. In early August, he robbed an Aboriginal, and many of his people were growing tired of Campbell's demands for hospitality and help, and his helping himself to their women, not to mention 'constant harassment by police search parties'. Just after the early August attack, Campbell was camped with the Kilkivan station blacks. The owner found out and sent a black worker with some brandy to get him drunk, but another black warned him. A few days later, near Kilkivan, he abducted a twelve year-old Aboriginal girl and struck an older black woman. By October, the Kabi were growing markedly less co-operative with Campbell.

Through the rest of August and September, more homestead raids and attempted raids occurred near Gympie and 50 miles south near Kilcoy. Campbell was now said to be travelling with two women, whom he used as ambassadors when encountering an Aboriginal camp. Through October, travellers, lonely farms and a timber camp in the Gympie area were robbed.

Again, it is impossible to place the following incident exactly, but it fits best in early November, when Johnny Campbell headed for less inhabited parts with a large Kabi woman, reputed to have weighed 18 stone (133kg). Constable Tom King of Gympie and a tracker by the same surname were hot on Campbell's heels, and traced him to a farm on the upper Mary River, where the farmer told them Campbell was hiding in the pigsty. The

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34 Mathew 1880:10 says that assaults on women were 'all but perpetrated'.
35 Mathew 1880:10; Holthouse 1973:175.
36 Murphy and Easton 1950:264.
37 Holthouse 1973:171 ff usefully summarizes all the attacks in chronological order.
Area of Johnny Campbell's Activities in South East Queensland.
constable was unable to effect a capture, and Campbell escaped inland. He now lay low for about two months.

In January 1880, Johnny Campbell was in the Kilcoy area, robbing a farmhouse east of there on the 5th. In February, fatefully, he was about 30 miles (48km) south of Kilcoy, 35 miles (56 km) north of Ipswich, at Kipper Creek, Northbrook. At about 9 a.m. on 10 February, Johnny Campbell came to the farmhouse of the Stewart family. Flora McDougall Stewart was alone with her 14 year-old sister, Jane Macalister, and her two young children, one of whom was a baby. Campbell asked for matches, chatted generally with the two women, asked about the local blacks of Wivenhoe, where he said he was headed. Mrs Stewart gave him a bag as shelter as it started to rain. At this point, the stories diverge. Campbell claimed he had been solicited by young Jane Macalister; the court accepted that he had used threats to force her to succumb to rape. (This will be examined later in relation to the trial.)

Campbell and his large mate headed north once more. In the Pine River area, he had a brush with the police, when a Sergeant Campbell and his tracker Billy got close. Johnny Campbell shot Billy in the shoulder and the Sergeant unsuccessfully returned fire. Johnny Campbell continued northward, heading for the Noosa River. There is one version of this flight which implies that it was a pilgrimage, back to his home territory - almost as if going home to die. As we have seen, his homeland was Yabba Creek, further inland. Mathew was probably on the right track when he said that he was going to stay with the relatives of his 18-stone companion, as she did come from Tewantin. There are also suggestions that Campbell's flight was a desperate attempt to evade the police trackers. The police did not know about the rape yet and were after him for robbery and assault. Accounts suggest that Campbell's trek was far from secret, and the tracker Johnny Griffin was not relying as much on arcane bushcraft as he was on intelligence reports from Aborigines fed up with helping Campbell. A group of white school children saw Campbell and his mate moving through Mooloolah on their way to Noosa. Furthermore, Johnny Griffin the tracker was the half-brother of Campbell's companion so he and Constable Tommy King knew where Campbell was going and headed for Tewantin. He was captured on Monday, 15 March 1880.

The precise details of the capture vary slightly from story to story, but it would appear that Campbell was hiding near the bank of the Noosa River on a property called Hilton, near a large Aboriginal camp. (The area now has a park and street named after Hilton, just east of Tewantin across the Donella bridge.) Johnny Griffin was not known to Campbell as a police tracker and caught the latter off-guard, literally pouncing on him with a brother, Sandy Fleming, and another Aboriginal called Brady. Campbell offered them five pounds to let go, but Griffin retorted that the government would give much more to hold on. Indeed, Sergeant Pickering told the Tewantin Aborigines they would get a reward of 100 pounds. What rewards Griffin and the community actually received is unclear. John Mathew reports

41 Daily Observer, 28 July 1880; Lilley 1880.
42 Mathew 1880:12; Holthouse 1973:175.
44 Mathew 1880:12.
45 Heap 1980:15; Murphy and Easton 1950:264.
46 Heap 1980:15.
the Tewantin whites gave a feast to honour the black community.\textsuperscript{49} They were supposed to have been given a free trip to Brisbane on the steamer Culgoa for the hanging,\textsuperscript{50} which hardly qualifies as a reward. The captors were also reported to have been given a whaleboat, two fishing nets and other gear.\textsuperscript{51} The original source for most details is D.W. Bull, who was a schoolboy in Tewantin in 1880 and saw the aftermath of the capture and heard the story from Johnny Griffin himself and other Aborigines.\textsuperscript{52}

Two days later, the captured bushranger was sent to Gympie by Cobb & Co. and put in the lockup. Campbell's long-time pursuer, Constable King visited his quarry in the lockup and the following dialogue is plausibly supposed to have occurred.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
King: Hello, you black bastard. We have got you at last.  \\
Campbell: Hello, you white bastard. You couldn't get me, I was too good for you.  \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

King was determined to get the better of Campbell and tried to throw him. Sergeant Pickering and other police had to rescue King from humiliation, as Campbell had thrown the constable and had a good grip on his throat.\textsuperscript{53}

From Gympie, Campbell was transferred to Maryborough for trial. At the criminal sittings of the District Court in Maryborough on 3 April 1880, before Mr Justice Blake, Johnny Campbell was convicted of assault and robbery and sentenced to fourteen years in Brisbane Gaol.\textsuperscript{54} In the meantime - it is impossible to know exactly when - news of the Kipper Creek alleged rape came to light. Though the victim and her sister had told a neighbour, they did not immediately report the incident because (Mrs Stewart said) of the disgrace involved.\textsuperscript{55} On 12 May, three months after the incident, Jane Macalister was examined by Dr Alexander MacKintosh.\textsuperscript{56} On 20 May, in Ipswich, Johnny Campbell was committed for trial for rape by Magistrate William Townley. The trial was set for 26 July in the Circuit Court, meeting in Ipswich and depositions were to be received by 28 May.\textsuperscript{57}

Over three days, from 26 to 28 July, 1880, Johnny Campbell was tried for the rape of Jane Macalister. No chances were taken: the Chief Justice Charles Lilley presided and Virgil Power prosecuted.\textsuperscript{58} Campbell was defended by Frederick Ffoulkes Swanwick (1839-1913), a maverick politician and barrister well-known as a campaigner against the death penalty. He was independent MLA for Bulimba, 1878-1882.\textsuperscript{59}

In the second half of last century, Queensland had a higher rate of execution than the rest of Australia, especially for rape.\textsuperscript{60} An attempt to abolish the death penalty for rape in 1860 was overwhelmingly defeated in the Legislative Assembly. Significantly, the main

\textsuperscript{49} Mathew 1880:13.  
\textsuperscript{50} Bull 1982:70; Heap 1980:16 suggests they travelled overland.  
\textsuperscript{51} Heap 1980:16.  
\textsuperscript{52} Bull 1974:84.  
\textsuperscript{53} Bull 1974:85; Bull 1982:70.  
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Queenslander}, 10 April 1880.  
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Daily Observer}, 28 July 1880.  
\textsuperscript{56} Lilley 1880:31.  
\textsuperscript{57} Register of Criminal Depositions Received, 1865-85, QSA: JUS/52, p.208.  
\textsuperscript{58} Information, depositions and associated papers filed in Criminal Cases, Ipswich 1861-1882, QSA: CCT 2/1.  
\textsuperscript{59} Waterson 1972:175; Barber 1967:68-69, 201; Fowler 1962:84.  
\textsuperscript{60} Barber 1967:4.
arguments used by retentionists were the sparse population of Queensland, the isolation of women in the bush and the relatively large numbers of Aborigines present. Death was the only real deterrent for Aborigines, it was argued. Between 1860 and 1900, there were 14 executions for rape in Queensland of whom ten were Aborigines and three were Kanakas. Rape was only half as likely to have their sentences commuted as other capital offenders. All seven rapists hanged to 1875 were Aborigines who had raped white women. Quite clearly, rape was a race issue in Queensland. The death of a black woman was of less account than the violation of a white woman. Harris argues that

The rape of a white woman by a black man was regarded by the dominant ideology of Queensland colonial society as an assault on the supremacy of the white race for which retribution had to be exacted swiftly and surely.

On the Aboriginal side, this was decisively not what such rape meant, if the Campbell case was at all typical. In terms of European attitudes, the deeply ingrained and Biblically-derived belief and feeling about sexual intercourse as 'knowing' and as sealing the one-ness of flesh of the two parties gave special point to the revulsion evoked by rape. Rape was cruel but it was also inappropriate and presumptuous. So much more was this the case when the rapist was an inferior. It is not irrelevant that Johnny Campbell's religion was described officially as 'pagan' and that his brain was studied scientifically after his execution.

The prosecution case was based almost entirely on evidence from Mrs Stewart and Jane Macalister that Johnny Campbell pointed a pistol at Mrs Stewart, said 'I want a scrape', indicating her sister, and chased her until she submitted. Swanwick called no witnesses, though he did vigorously cross-examine, simply giving a speech in defence, which referred to the general treatment of blacks in Queensland, stating that numerous were the cases of white men ravishing black women, and the blackfellow naturally imitated his white fellowman to whom he looked for an example in morality and civilization.

He then appealed to the jury to be colour-blind. Secondhand stories about Campbell's alleged threats against white women, though contrary to what evidence we have, and Swanwick's imaginative defence are both persuasively misleading about Campbell's motives.

Lilley's summing up took nearly two hours. In it, he asserted about Swanwick's argument that

the diatribes in reference to the treatment of aboriginals by white men, were quite foreign to the case; and were no argument... sentimentalism must not be allowed to weigh;...

The Chief Justice was in no doubt and neither was the jury. Within fifteen minutes, the foreman John Hine announced the guilty verdict.

The only time in his life we hear Johnny Campbell's own words is his response to the Judge's invitation to speak before sentencing. The reporter noted that Campbell appeared nervous and emotional, accepted the invitation and spoke in 'broken English'.

61 Ibid.:53-55.
62 Ibid.:198, 62, 64.
63 Harris 1982:44.
64 Barber 1967:189.
65 Daily Observer, 28 July 1880.
66 Ibid., 29 July 1880.
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JOHNNY CAMPBELL

There's some story there; I did not do such thing; that woman tell lot of lie on me; I'm not supposed to be quilty; he [referring to female witness] says a lot of stories about me putting revolver to his head; I was standing by Creek and he called me down himself; before that he asked me how much money I had; I'm not supposed to be guilty.

The judge 'could not credit the statement',67 but the writer's subjective and instinctive reaction to it was that it seemed sincere. The medical evidence had been inconclusive, the neighbour's evidence second-hand and some passages of the sisters' testimonies were identical. There is also the long delay between the incident and formal complaint, which occurred after Campbell had been imprisoned in April. A plausible explanation would be that the two European women interpreted their actions as placatory defensiveness while Johnny Campbell perceived them as acquiescent, and that they reported the incident (possibly to counter the inevitable rumours about Jane) when there was publicity about Campbell in March and April. More sinister interpretations are possible, but unnecessary to explain known facts and lacking other evidence. It certainly suited the government to be able to try Campbell for a capital crime.

After the usual review of sentence, Johnny Campbell was hanged at Brisbane Gaol on 16 August 1880, in the morning. Three hundred Kabi people were said to have been brought down to witness it:68 the Telegraph reported an 'unusually large number of witnesses.' Campbell was reported to have 'showed strong emotion when his hour arrived,' attended by the conscientious Rev. J.K. Black. Death was also instantaneous.69

Johnny Campbell had a date with science. Waiting patiently since May for a choice specimen of Homo australis (his phrase) was the eminent Scots-Russian scientist, Baron Nickolai Miklouho-Maclay. Maclay had been studying exotic creatures in the south-west Pacific islands between March 1879 and May 1880, when he arrived in Brisbane. He had a particular interest in collecting the skulls and examining the brains of Melanesians and Aborigines, as well as measuring and photographing living specimens.70

Maclay had strong support from the Queensland government for his studies of Johnny Campbell's corpse. He had the full cooperation and help of R.H. Staiger, the former Government Analytical Chemist, and advice and hospitality from the Surveyor-General A.C. Gregory. While waiting for the execution, Maclay had gone bush and stayed for part of the time with Joshua Peter Bell of Jimbour. The government gave him the use of a room in the old museum as a laboratory.71

On the afternoon of the day of the execution, Maclay only had time to remove Campbell's brain. Later, he photographed and studied it, concluding that the 'convolutions ... indicate ... a good deal of intellectual capacity.'72 The next day, the Baron removed the entire intestinal tract and injected Wickersheimer's fluid into the corpse's veins and arteries. Cold weather on the 16 and 17 August helped temporary preservation until the corpse was immersed in a bath of a modified Wickersheimer's fluid: 40 gallons (192 l) of water in which was dissolved 40 pounds (18 kg) of common salt, four pounds of white arsenic, two pounds of potassium carbonate and three pounds of corrosive sublimate. The body had to be

67 Ibid.
68 Heap 1980:16.
69 Telegraph, 16 August 1880.
70 Webster 1984:241; Miklouho-Maclay 1881a:171-173.
72 Queenslander, 2 October 1880:421; Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:578.
pricked hundreds of times after ten to fourteen days to relieve swelling and increase fluid penetration.\textsuperscript{73}

After two months with what the press called his 'close companion', Maclay shipped the specimen to Professor Rudolf Virchow of Berlin, hoping it would add to knowledge of the comparative anatomy of mankind.\textsuperscript{74} The Anthropological Society of Berlin met on 19 March 1881 and was told by Professor Virchow that the poor preserved shell of Johnny Campbell had arrived safely and in good condition. The Professor and his pupils would subject it to 'valuable dissections'. In May 1881, Maclay told the Linnean Society of New South Wales about his scientific travels and the preservation of Campbell's corpse.\textsuperscript{75}

Science had not finished with Johnny Campbell. He makes several appearances in the works of John Mathew, who obviously had many opportunities to observe him and talk to him. At the time, circa 1865-70, Mathew was not an ethnographic collector, but was just interested. Later, in works in 1889, 1899 and 1910, he used Kagariu - Johnny Campbell - to illustrate or demonstrate kinship systems and types of physiognomy amongst the Kabi. Mathew was clearly fascinated by Campbell - he did not fit an Aboriginal stereotype.

It is easy enough to see Johnny Campbell as an incomprehensible victim. He was typical and not typical, a black man who welcomed much of the white world without leaving his kin, traditional life and skills behind. His behaviour, to the extent that it is clearly reported, has a certain consistency. He had personal demons, not just racial ones. He was used well by some whites and badly by others, and reacted accordingly. He was a bushranger like other bushrangers, but his use of bushcraft and kinship links to remain at large were definitely Aboriginal. His end demonstrates in sharp focus the transition of Aborigines from acute threat to scientific specimen, and the way in which they could be stripped of their dignity by well-meaning whites, as well as of their lives by the less well-meaning.

The personal demons suggest themselves: relationships with women, the loss of his father as an infant. In the presumed year of Johnny Campbell's birth, a report appeared in the \textit{Moreton Bay Courier} concerning an attack on Rosewood station in the Burnett. Twenty or so Aborigines approached the homestead and demanded money, tobacco and flour at spear-point. Their leader, who had quite good English, was among three who were shot dead. His name was Campbell.\textsuperscript{76}

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NOTE FROM I.M. WHITE

Sometime after we had published in Volume 12 the paper by Jack Brook entitled 'The widow and the child' I noticed on the map of Victoria a place called Ballendella about 30km south-west of Echuca. I told Jack Brook about this and some time later he wrote to me with the following information:

The two enclosed maps I received from Margaret Spinks the Curator of the Seymour and District Historical Society. The one dated 1843 was signed by Mitchell himself. The second one c.1870 has the streets on the east side of the river as they still are in Seymour. (FIG.

Seymour West is no more although the foundations of the hotel are still there, also remains which could be the school. Margaret informed me that the last Aboriginal family with local connections left Seymour at least thirty years ago and no one knows where they went.

On pages 207-8 of Alan Andrew's book Stapylton the following is written 'Assistant Surveyor Pickering it was who, in 1843, presented the plan of the village of Seymour. He located the village on both banks of the 'Goulbourn' River ... he did title the plan as 'on the Goulburn'. It was not long after Stapylton's untimely death and Pickering honoured him with, not only in 'Stapylton Street', but also a 'Granville Street' and a 'Chetwynd Place'. [I wonder if Mitchell's hand was behind the names?]

Poor Stapylton - unlucky again; this half of the planned village was subsequently wiped out by a change in the river's course.

With these names was lost also the widow's "Turandurey Street". But on the right bank the other Aborigines' names, the piccaninni's "Ballandella Place" - and that of the warrior guide - "Piper Street", survived.

Isobel White (Joint editor Vol.12)
The Chifley Labor government announced on 19 November 1946 that they had agreed to the British government's request that a guided projectile range be established in the 'largely' uninhabited spaces of Central Australia: 'except for a few pastoral leases at the firing point end in South Australia, the Central Australian Aboriginal Reserves and a few more pastoral leases adjacent to the Ninety Mile Beach in Western Australia, the area of the range and that which it is proposed to reserve for eventual extensions, is largely uninhabited'.¹ There was some concern over the effect this development would have on Aborigines living in the area and the encroachment on the nearby Central Australian Aboriginal Reserve.

The Guided Projectiles Project Committee was formed originally to oversee the testing arrangements of the rocket range but it had no interest in the welfare of Aborigines living in the testing area. A.P. Elkin was asked to join the Australian Guided Projectiles Committee to, in the words of his biographer, 'allay public fears that the Aborigines would be at risk'.² Elkin was aware that his appointment could be misrepresented and to avoid any accusations of collusion he suggested that the government invite the Australian National Research Council (ANRC) to nominate an anthropological expert. Naturally he would be nominated.³

Elkin used his influence and authority to advocate and support the government's decision despite the apparent dangers inherent to Aboriginal welfare if a rocket range was established within the boundaries of the Central Australian Aboriginal Reserve. In return for his support Elkin required that the government provide adequate safeguards for Aborigines living within the area of the rocket range. There is enough evidence to suggest that Elkin believed that it was best to leave Aborigines in their 'traditional' areas and that they could find work in the pastoral industry.⁴ Further there is reference to the protection of sacred

Geoffrey Gray has recently completed his M.A. Thesis at Monash University on A.P. Elkin and his authority with government in the 1940s. His current interest is anthropology and assimilation.

1 J.J. Dedman, Minister for Defence. Statement to the House of Representatives, 22 November 1946.
2 Wise 1985:199.
3 Ibid.
4 Berndt and Berndt 1987:32. Elkin asked the Berndts to 'study the social and psychological reasons' if Aborigines are 'not forthcoming' and to advise Vesteys on 'ways of improving the conditions and attitudes'. The aim, and this appears fundamental to all, except the Berndts, was to build up 'a contented [A]boriginal community in the regions in which they are accustomed, and around the Pastoral Industry which they like'. Implicit in Elkin's suggestion is that Aborigines are of value only within their locality and should not be encouraged to leave their areas and they were to remain an underclass providing cheap labour for the pastoral industry.
sites in the recommendations of the GPP Committee. Elkin was acceptable to government because he was reliable in the sense that his actions and purpose in matters relating to Aboriginal welfare were consistent and he was reluctant to criticise the government publicly. The Guided Projectiles Project provides a demonstration of his reliability. It illustrates firstly, the way in which he used his authority and influence, and how the government, in particular, relied upon this, and secondly, the problems of contact and change and the relationship between anthropology and the interests of the 'colonisers'.

There was no question for Elkin that Australia needed to have the guided projectiles experiments in Australia; it was a 'duty to Empire'. Both sides of the Parliament accepted it. Initially the problem was not with adequate safeguards for Aborigines, rather it was whether there were adequate safeguards against subversion, intrusion and espionage by Communists and fellow travellers.

The Minister for Defence, J.J.Dedman, asserted that the area was largely uninhabited and that the risk to Aborigines was negligible: 'the probability of a missile falling on them would be extremely remote.' He gave an undertaking, after opposition gathered public support, that the government would do 'everything possible to safeguard the [Aborigines] from contact, or encroachment on any area of special significance to them'.

These assurances and others given by politicians were not readily accepted by the various groups concerned with Aboriginal welfare and opposed to the creation of the project.

Opposition to the Project was led by Mrs Maurice Blackburn, an independent MHR, Dr Charles Duguid, an Adelaide surgeon and a leader of the Presbyterian Church, and Dr Donald Thomson. On 16 December 1946 Mrs Blackburn put on Notice the following motion:

That in the opinion of this House:
1. the proposal to establish a rocket bomb testing range in Central Australia is an act of injustice to a weaker people who have no voice in ordering their own lives; it is a betrayal of our responsibility to guard the human rights of those who cannot defend themselves; and a violation of the various charters that have sought to bring world peace; and
2. such action is against the interests of the people of the Commonwealth.

Public criticism led the government to co-opt new members onto the Guided Projectiles Project Committee. It was hoped, wrote F.G.Shedden, Secretary, Department of Defence, to the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, the new constitution of the Committee would bring about a satisfactory solution to the question of safeguards for Aborigines 'before the House meets and an adequate answer to any further criticism'.

The new members were Elkin, F.J.Moy (Director of Native Affairs, NT),

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5 See pp.3-4 this paper.
6 Hansard, 22 November 1946, statement to the House of Representatives.
7 Ibid.
8 See Wilson 1980 for the coalition of groups opposed to the GPP.
9 Hansard, 6 March 1947:435.
10 Shedden to Chifley, 31 January 1947, quoted in Japanangka and Nathan 1983.
11 Moy and Elkin shared a dislike of Donald Thomson's views about 'native' welfare; they concurred in their views on assimilation. Moy wrote to Elkin in 1947 that 'the matter of preserving tribal institutions and customs within the framework of our society...savours too much of keeping a live museum and there are certain of our friends who dread the
A.O. Neville (retired Chief Protector of Aborigines, and representative of the Western Australian government), and W.R. Penhall (Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board, SA). The selection of these people ensured the acceptance of the project. Duguid and Thomson were appointed as non-voting consultants. Wise claims Elkin was prepared to provide support for the Project in return for the following safeguards:

- a patrol officer to regulate contacts, protection of sacred sites, no transfer of Aborigines from place to place, no Aborigines to be used for labour, and airstrips to be used rather than roads.

This was agreed upon and Native Patrol Officer Walter MacDougall was appointed. Elkin then made no further protest to the government. Both Duguid and Thomson, who had been appointed as consultants to the Committee in an attempt to weaken their protest and to compromise their arguments, 'realised that reason and argument would have no effect against closed minds (of the Committee). The military mind was made up long ago'. Duguid clearly placed Elkin with the military's 'closed minds'.

Two months later, on 31 March 1947, in an address delivered at the Melbourne Town Hall, Charles Duguid accused Elkin of changing position; detailing the composition of the Committee and the members co-opted specifically to examine the problem of contact with the Aborigines he said of Elkin that he was in close touch with the thought of the Australian (Aboriginal becoming a normal citizen - one in particular would miss [Thomson's] occasional ill-informed articles in the Melbourne Herald.' (Moy to Elkin, 17 July 1947, AA:CRS, item 52/570).

12 Elkin wrote the foreword to Neville's *Australia's coloured minority*, 1947. Neville recognised Elkin's authority, and both shared the belief that the Empire's defence against external threats was important.

13 Composition of the Australian Guided Projectiles Committee:
- Major-General L.E. Beavis, Chairman (representing the Department of Defence),
- Commander N.K. Coldser (representing the Department of the RAN),
- Wing-Commander A.G. Pither (representing the RAAF),
- N.K.S. Brodribb (Department of Munitions),

The following appointments were made in response to the public outcry over Aboriginal welfare and safety:
- F.H. Moy (Director, Department of Native Affairs, NT),
- W.R. Penhall (Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board, SA),
- A.O. Neville (representing the WA government),
- A.P. Elkin (ANRC),
- L.F. Loder (Director-General, Department of Housing),

Two consultants were appointed:
- Dr Charles Duguid,
- Dr Donald Thomson.


15 Charles Duguid maintained that the only so-called 'achievement' of twelve months sustained protest was the appointment of McDougall; McDougall had earned the respect of the Aboriginal people whilst an employee at Emabella Mission. It was his task to provide care and protection of the Reserve's Aborigines and also to issue warnings regarding the firing of missiles.

16 Such behaviour by Elkin typifies of the way he worked.

17 Duguid 1947:12.
Federal Government through the Australian National Research Council...[and] admits he has changed his views regarding the effect of sudden contacts between white people and Aborigines since the Rocket Range was first discussed. He further admits he would not by choice run a Rocket Range through the Aborigines Reserve with a view to benefiting the Aborigines.

Duguid asserted that a 'recent trip' by Elkin through the Northern Territory had provided him with information that had convinced him that Army contact had not hurt the Aborigines. It was not an argument that held weight for Duguid; he referred to other 'authorities', such as Pastor Albrecht of Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia, who during the war saw the immediate effects of the Army on the natives, and is now seeing the late effects, is definite that no experience has ever done the natives more harm'; and Dr Donald Thomson who, during part of the war, was in charge of a native patrol from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Broome on the coast, and inland throughout the whole of the Northern Territory, is emphatic about the serious damage suffered by the Aborigines because of the military occupation of the Territory... No one is more competent to judge than he.

Elkin, who saw a solution in the provision of 'adequate safeguards' as he did not believe anything could halt the project, wrote in February 1947 to the Guided Projectiles Project Committee disparaging Duguid and Thomson:

neither of these gentlemen suggested any ways in which the Committee might fulfil its purpose, namely to safeguard the Aborigines while carrying out the project, their attitude being a negative one.

The recommendations of the Committee, announced in Parliament in May, essentially supported Elkin's proposals, and did not directly address the opposition of Duguid and Thomson. It was acknowledged that the project would cause considerable disruption to Aboriginal life but the Committee stated, in their first recommendation, that De-tribalization of the Aborigine is inevitable, and provided the contacts brought about by the construction and use of the range are controlled and of a wholesome nature, their only effect would be the putting forward of the clock regarding de-tribalization by possibly a generation.

This de-tribalization could be further controlled by the appointment of patrol officers. It was argued that any acceleration of the de-tribalization which 'is now taking place, or the interference with the habits of the Aborigines and areas of special significance to them, which have existed from time immemorial', can be controlled by the appointment of patrol officers.

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18 This is somewhat of an exaggeration by Duguid: Elkin's 'recent trip' was in August 1946 when he visited Darwin and parts of Arnhem Land for the first time.

19 Elkin argued earlier that such contact would be detrimental to the Aborigines but altered this view when it was evident that Aborigines had 'prospered'. He thought diet and the regime imposed by the Army, as well as fair remuneration were the main factors. (Elkin Papers, 55/1/12/6, Archives, Sydney University).

20 Duguid 1947:12-14.


22 Japanangka and Nathan 1983:55 state that the recommendations that were made public excluded parts which did not allay the concerns of those groups and individuals opposed to the construction of the rocket range and its effects on Aborigines in the area, nor did they make public how extensive the testing program was going to be.

23 Hansard, 1 May 1947:1832.
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officers. It continued that
interference with the aborigine by reason of:
  i) mass transfer of aborigines from the Central Reserves;
  ii) employment of aborigines for labour;
  iii) construction of roads within the Central Reserves;
  iv) undue publicity of the use of the range, causing the movement of the
aborigines towards it, can be discounted entirely, as none of these courses of
action is contemplated.

Publicly the Committee concluded that the welfare of the Aborigines would not be
jeopardised although it was well understood that the construction of the rocket range would
cause considerable disruption. Aborigines were expendable for the good of the Empire.

The recommendations of the Committee did not stop protest and criticism, but it
moved the focus away from Aboriginal welfare so that protest could be presented as
Communist inspired. As early as November 1946, S.R.Rowell, Lieutenant-General Vice
Chief of the General Staff, wrote 'that the communist party was inciting and using the
protest to their own ends' and that public opposition should be viewed with this in mind.\textsuperscript{24}
The Melbourne \textit{Argus} of 13 May 1947 wrote that the opponents of the project 'form a
motley crew' and behind the 'pacifists, day dreamers and humanitarians' it was not 'difficult
to perceive the directing hands of the Communists'.

Dedman claimed that much of the criticism was based on misunderstanding, firstly of
what the project meant, and secondly of its effects on the welfare of Aborigines. Such a
decision, as that reached by the Committee, was not made without a great deal of discussion
and a 'complete examination' of the possible effects 'such a project would have on our
aboriginal peoples in the areas that were most suitable for the purpose'.\textsuperscript{25}

Elkin was firmly identified with government. In a statement to missions and other
concerned humanitarian groups made after the Committee had made its recommendations, he
wrote that there was no point protesting because the project had been decided by 'Empire'
leaders and his task had been to protect Aboriginal interests, to see that the Aborigines were
not being interfered with in any way detrimental to their welfare. It was pointless wasting
energy in 'futile protests or abstract arguments'.\textsuperscript{26} This did not convince the missions; as a
body they stood in opposition to Elkin. Elkin's response was to resign from the Australian
Board of Missions (ABM) and the National Missionary Council (NMC).

He wrote a letter of resignation in July 1947 to the NMC in which he complained of
being put in a serious state of duplicity.

\begin{quote}
I have issued a statement along one line and now the Council of which I am a
member has issued a statement which does not agree with mine and to some
extent contradicts it.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

In the same month he wrote to the ABM strongly objecting to the suggestion that he
had been constrained as a member of the Committee and thus unable to express his 'true
feelings'. He wrote:

May I say I strongly object to the insinuation implied. It is the first time it

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{24} Rowell to Secretary of the Army, 11 November 1946, quoted in Japanangka and Nathan 1983.
\item\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Hansard}, 1 May 1947:1829.
\item\textsuperscript{26} Elkin 1947.
\item\textsuperscript{27} Elkin to National Missionary Council, July 1947. (Elkin Papers, 55/1/12/6, Archives, Sydney University).
\end{itemize}
has been suggested that I am a coward with regard to my fundamental views.\textsuperscript{28}

Some fifteen years later Elkin wrote about his role and again rejected the argument that he was constrained by the interests of the government. He claimed he was asked to ensure the well-being of the Aborigines was being looked after; he was given to understand that if, after the conference (sic), I cared to make a statement on this aspect of the matter, the Government would welcome my action, being sure such a statement would be received with confidence by all the humanitarian and missionary bodies who were perturbed.\textsuperscript{29}

Elkin believed the government had confidence in him, and that they could rely on his support, although it is difficult to judge whether his support would be unconditional. Not all humanitarian and mission bodies accepted his statement that Aborigines living in the test area would be adequately safeguarded despite his assertion that his statement 'reassured all except a few individuals who did not want to be reassured'.\textsuperscript{30} He wanted to leave the reader in no doubt of his correctness in supporting the project and any opposition was again dismissed as having the temerity of not accepting his authority.

Opposition continued from his old adversary Donald Thomson, who was unwilling to compromise his views which ran counter to the government's position. Thomson and Elkin had previously positioned themselves differently in regard to Aboriginal policy and representation. Those opposing representations were highlighted over the Guided Projectiles Project. Thomson believed 'the roads, scientific experiments, detonations and patrols would be highly disruptive and destructive of these peoples' way of life...so the range should be established elsewhere'.\textsuperscript{31} Elkin was adept at maintaining his links with government. He was pragmatic and willing to compromise his beliefs and principles; it could be argued that Elkin recognised that outright opposition would be unsuccessful. He recognised the inevitability of contact and its effects, but he nevertheless thought contact could be controlled. The experiences of the Army during the war provided evidence that contact need not be disastrous. Elkin was not there as an apologist for the government;\textsuperscript{32} it is however in the light of the above discussion difficult to get away from the fact that he placed the government's priorities above those of principle and belief.

Elkin's reversal was highlighted by his continued assertions, both publicly and in his correspondence, of the deleterious effects of contact. As late as 1948 Elkin was expressing concern over the effects of contact, and the consequent depopulation. Aboriginal health and reproductive power were undermined by the effects of contact. He added that the fact that their country is invaded, their ritual life broken down and that they are reduced to parasitism [on Europeans]...In the middle of this is the refusal of women to have children to face this parasitic future and in some cases their inability to do so because of disease contracted directly or indirectly from white men.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{28} Elkin to Bishop Cranswick, Australian Missionary Board, July 1947. (Elkin Papers, 55/1/12/6, Archives, Sydney University).
\textsuperscript{29} Elkin 1962:228-9.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Peterson 1983:13.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Welfare Authorities, 3 February
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Duguid and other humanitarian leaders were confused, and disappointed by Elkin's reversal and his support for the government. They had expected support from Elkin. Bishop Cranswick, for example, believed his own opposition to the Project was based on sound anthropological teaching as propounded by Elkin who had argued that 'too rapid contact with white culture and too sudden break with the 'past' must be prevented'.34 Cranswick could not, therefore, accept Elkin's support of the government other than to believe he was a 'tool of the government'.35

Elkin's theory that abrupt change and depopulation were linked was challenged by the success the Army had with Aborigines which was characterised by good diet, regular remuneration and dignity. Elkin believed that if these three conditions could be maintained 'it was probable the pace of change towards an equal place in white society could be vastly quickened'.36 But this does not get him off Cranswick's hook. It was not a position he argued over the GPP as his main focus was on the inevitability of the rocket range and the fact it was an 'Empire' matter.

His changed position was not reflected in his address to the Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Welfare Authorities in 1948 although he did write in 1944, that Aborigines 'must be prepared for life in contact with white society and culture'37 and it was of little significance if it occurred earlier rather than later. Such contact was inevitable and the construction of the rocket range, on balance, took precedence over Aboriginal welfare given that on this view their welfare was not seriously threatened.

In hindsight it is clear that each safeguard Elkin had insisted upon was vulnerable. The two patrol officers were to inform any Aborigines likely to be near the part of the range where rockets were likely to fall. This was complicated by the safeguard that Aborigines were not to be forcibly removed or transferred. The regulation of contact between Aborigines and Europeans was difficult if not impossible. Elkin had no doubts about the effectiveness of the safeguards and the protection afforded to Aborigines by those safeguards. He wrote in 1947 that,

Those of us who know the Aborigines in the central areas of Australia and their way of life know that it can be done.38

Nevertheless, his support was consistent with his actions in the past such as his efforts to stop publication of the Berndt's report and the removal of their findings from public forums.39 His disappointed supporters, the ABM, the NMC, Duguid and others, were correct to claim that he altered his position because of the contingencies and

1948, 55/1/12/6. (Elkin Papers, 55/1/12/6, Archives, Sydney University).
34 Elkin 1944:45.
36 Ibid.:168.
37 Elkin 1944:45.
38 Elkin 1947:103.
39 See my MA thesis, pp.46-48. Elkin argued to the Berndts that the report would have more influence on the AIA and on government opinion 'if it were treated privately'; he notated on a paper which Ronald Berndt delivered to the Anthropological Society of New South Wales in 1948 that if 'anyone asks what stations are these, say - the [Anthropology] Department doesn't want this to be a political matter while the [Northern Territory Pastoral] Award is in the offing' (R.M. and C.H. Berndt 1987:271). Almost thirty years later Elkin put forward a similar argument; he wrote that 'Mr Bingle would have maintained that a report on work in 1944-46 was for the eyes and use of the Firm alone' (Elkin to R.M. and C.H. Berndt, 30 July 1946).
requirements of government. He did not challenge the government, and the examples I have referred to substantiate this argument. Over the project his authority and influence were used to support the government's decision. Speeding up the 'inevitable detribalization' of the 1800 Aborigines estimated to be in the area was of small matter in contrast to the defence of the Empire.

In 1962 Elkin was still defending his decision; it seems that he had not reflected on the events after 1947 although it was evident that the government had clearly ignored safeguards which interfered with the continued testing of rockets and later, from 1953, atomic bombs. The future revealed that the Weapons Research Establishment, the successor to the Guided Projectiles Project, accorded Aborigines low priority and placed the 'affairs of the British Commonwealth' above 'those of a handful of natives'.

Elkin had worked behind the scenes from the mid-1930s to bring about change to Aboriginal affairs because he believed public protest was futile and bound to fail. He did not challenge the legitimacy of 'colonial' rule, he wanted only to ameliorate the conditions of Aborigines arguing that their future lay in their eventual assimilation and incorporation into mainstream 'white' society. As an authority on Aborigines he saw himself not only as a mediator between government and Aborigines but as a guardian of Aboriginal welfare although he had no mandate to assume such a role.

In a letter to Gillespie Douglas, president of the Victorian Aborigines' Uplift Society, he wrote in January 1947 that he devoted 'much energy to exposing and attempting to rectify injustices and ill-considered plans regarding Aborigines'. This demonstrates, again, Elkin's sense of his own correctness, and his belief that he alone knew what was best for Aborigines. He did not reflect on his actions and appeared to listen to others only if it fitted in with his ideas and plans.

In both his correspondence and published papers Elkin often inflated his importance. He did this in part to inform his readership that he was a man of substance, who was responsible for the improvement in Aboriginal welfare and policy. It is true to say, as Rowley claimed, that assimilation was at the time an enlightened policy based on the assumption that there 'are no proven inherent differences in capacity between the races of mankind', although its practice probably differed little from previous policies. Assimilation, however, denied the existence and validity of an Aboriginal culture in settled Australia.

Part of the explanation of Elkin's success as an authority was that governments could rely on him to be discreet, to work within the parameters of government policy and values.

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40 Wilson 1980.
41 James McClelland, Royal Commission, 1985:305.
42 Elkin 1944:90.
44 Rowley 1972.
45 Read 1982:17 writes that 'though the lifestyle, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs of the part-Aborigines may not have been quite the same as those of full descent, their culture offered a comparatively unified and fulfilling lifeway. It compromised many elements not usefully disentangled, which included a strong measure of traditional attitudes and customs, some European values, a reaction to European exclusion, a pride in Aboriginal identity...In Yass in 1930, Aborigines lived within a changed but sustaining culture...Aboriginal culture in Yass was changing no faster than European. Aborigines neither wished to become like white, nor were they quickly becoming like whites...Aboriginal resistance to the cultural demands of whites has run very deep'.
and most importantly they could rely on him not to challenge the existing order. Thus Elkin could be appointed to various government committees, such as the Guided Projectiles Project Committee, and provide support for government decisions; sometimes, as with the Guided Projectiles Project, he would collude with government.

Yet I think Elkin, after 1938, was always compromised because of his association, and public identification, with the formulation of policy and its implementation. This was particularly so in New South Wales where it was compounded by his membership, from 1941, of the Aborigines’ Welfare Board. His appointment to the Welfare Board closed the gap between anthropologist and administrator; earlier through his representation on humanitarian associations such as the Association for the Protection of Native Races and various mission boards, such as the Australian Board of Missions, he had fostered the importance of anthropology as a tool of change; now all these agencies were together, indivisible in engineering change for Aborigines. It was the nexus of anthropology, government and mission: Elkin oversaw them all.

His reluctance to publicly criticise government, his control of research money and areas of research by his chairmanship of the ANRC and the Department of Anthropology, and his membership of the AWB ensured the maintenance and continuance of his authority and influence. In turn he was supported by government agencies, particularly by senior public servants such as J.A. Carrodus, secretary of the Department of the Interior, and W.C. Wurth of the NSW Public Service Board.

In a letter to the Treasurer and Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, Elkin requested more funds for the Anthropology Department which was supported by the then Secretary of the Department of the Interior, McLaren, who observed that Elkin had ‘always been regarded as an unofficial consultant to the Department in matters effecting [Aboriginal welfare in the Northern Territory]’. This is illustrative of the continued relationship Elkin had with government authorities. For government, and its administrators, his greatest value was in the words of McLaren’s predecessor, J.A. Carrodus, that he was ‘not a purely academic anthropologist but was very realistic in his outlook’.

Acknowledgments:
I wish to thank Andrew Markus and Bain Attwood.

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46 At the end of his service, and the end of the AWB, in 1967, Elkin congratulated the Board and presumably himself on the good they had achieved.

47 McLaren to Driver, 2 September 1949, AA: CRS F1 1946/767.

48 Carrodus to Driver, 15 July 1946, AA: CRS F1 1946/767.
BOOK REVIEWS


Because of the place of Aboriginal Australians within the evolutionary discourses of western knowledges, feminist debates over the place and nature of women’s lives have always been important for Aboriginal women. The range of contributing authors contained within this volume serves to remind us that even within the overwhelmingly masculinist departments of anthropology and the related disciplines of musicology, prehistory and linguistics, there has been no shortage of distinguished women scholars working on the varied aspects of the lives of Aboriginal Australian women.

It is something of a mystery to have to account for the way in which academic women can be active in their scholarly research, yet at the same time, omitted from the histories of the disciplines and the bodies of knowledge which they help to generate. Peggy Brock’s volume indicates the ways in which academic interest in Aboriginal Australian women began long before Bell’s important work, Daughter of the dreaming (1983) and the importance of particular women in initiating the debates which later women were to take up. Brock’s volume is important, then, for the ways in which it helps to place our interest in its topic, the cultural knowledge of Aboriginal Australian women.

In this context, Catherine Bemdt’s introductory chapter, 'Retrospect, and prospect' in which she looks back over 50 years of dedicated and intensive fieldwork across Australia and then to the future, is particularly important. Not only does she outline the elements of the necessary interface between field-worker and the people she works with, but she provides a number of insights into the development of debates over the nature of Aboriginal women’s lives, debates yet to be resolved. Fay Gale’s account of her connections and work with Aboriginal Australians living on the mission at Pt. McLeay is also interesting in this context and her paper provides a useful summary to the volume.

Those debates are, within this volume, worked out through the study of a range of South Australian Aboriginal cultures. To the degree that they cohere, the papers provide a focus within a geographical area in which similarities and some important differences can be mapped to show the need for caution and specificity in developing generalisations. There is material on Pitjantjatjara, Pukatja, Antikirinja, Kukata, and the Ngarrenjeri of the south, and each of the papers presents arguments concerning the scope, nature and significance of what the editor has referred to as women’s ‘cultural knowledge’. Of recurring concern is the difficulty of maintaining and transferring this knowledge under the conditions in which so many Aboriginal women live.

Several of the authors, (Helen Payne and Catherine Ellis, for example), address issues that arise from relating cultural texts to cultural sites and practices. Such texts can be musical, verbal or performative, and these papers indicate the ways in which elements of women’s culture familiar to non-Aboriginal observers interweave to form a complex and many-dimensional cultural praxis so rich that its diversity is difficult to grasp. Jen Gibson’s paper sets out the range of activities in which the Aboriginal women of Oodnadatta have a critical and constructive role and responsibilities while Jane M. Jacobs, working around Port Augusta, uses women’s knowledge of ceremonial ritual, family and contact history to explore issues relating to the positioning of Aboriginal women within the knowledges developed around them by inquisitive academics. Gibson also provides a discussion of the
place of women's knowledge within the developments of national parks and the inevitable tourism which accompanies them.

The density of women's rites and knowledge is well illustrated in Luise Hercus's accounts of the late Topsy McLean and Maudie Naylon, both born at the end of the nineteenth century in the central Simpson Desert and both influential. Hercus's article, notable for its ethnographic content, will be of value to all students of Aboriginal life.

While the range of issues tackled by the volume's authors varies, each of the contributors addresses that of the 'status' of Aboriginal women and there are several useful discussions of the ways and circumstances under which women may exercise power and be 'women of power'. The overall conception of the volume is such that it falls within a long tradition of western narratives on Aboriginal society and the themes emerging throughout the text are those of loss, retrieval and what James Clifford might refer to as 'salvage' ethnography. Each of the authors places herself within her text and sets out her relations with the women being written about. Growing from debates about women's status and roles, the discussions of power sometimes encounter the conceptual difficulties that are found within the scholarly predecessors of the volume. It is here that the ethnographic detail provided by Hercus and Ellis and Barwick is valuable for they provide ways of scrutinising the theoretical framework within which the volume is set - they provide the possibility of reflexivity and critique. Feminist debate developed outside anthropology has, of course, moved on from the discussions of women's status which characterised the seventies, and rather than making it easier to work with women, have made it perhaps more problematic. These papers push that earlier framework to its limits, and illustrate very well the advantages and difficulties inherent in its use. This is an interesting volume with a place in the history of Australian Aboriginal studies, and will provoke much discussion.

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This is yet another useful book in the Allen & Unwin series on Aboriginal history and race relations, produced in paperback format with John Iremonger's encouragement. With his departure from that publishing house, it is to be hoped that this attractive library continues to grow.

Governing savages is the striking title on both the cover and title page. It is rather irritating for an intending purchaser to have to read the more informative small print on the credits page, in order to learn that the real subject concerns 'the Commonwealth and Aborigines 1911-1939'.

This volume should prove a helpful text for Aboriginal Studies units at higher school or undergraduate level. Amongst its good points are the extent to which sources are quoted at length and references to those many sources in archives are carefully cited in footnotes. It is written clearly and contains well chosen illustrations with meaningful captions. Great insight into Northern Territory mores and social history is provided by the E.H. Wilson collection of photographs, of both white and black people during the thirties. They could be characters from the vivid pages of Xavier Herbert's Capricornia.
BOOK REVIEWS

Having pronounced it to be a well documented and attractively set out introductory text, which covers many subjects not previously treated at this critical level, it is necessary to comment on what the book is not. It consists really of a series of insightful short essays on diverse aspects of race relations, rather than a comprehensive history. No theme is treated at the level of detail which it merits, while the study ends without any concluding chapter which draws the threads together. The author's sense of anger and disgust provides the book with feeling, but I sense that the worst examples tend to be treated as the typical. There is little evidence here that there were any compassionate citizens domiciled in the Territory, which seems unlikely.

The device of treating themes around the careers of different officials or representative individuals is an interesting one, but it can prove misleading by employing specific cases to imply general rules of behaviour. For example, a very different account of 'the anthropologist' would result from the substitution of Donald Thomson or W.E.H. Stanner for A.P. Elkin. Both were little-mentioned, but prime actors in the Territory during the thirties. Surprisingly, 'Chief Protector' Baldwin Spencer, received little attention, though his policy merited attention; his character differed from that of Dr C.E. Cook, who features prominently. F.C. Urquhart, earlier scourge of Queensland's 'Kalkadoon' people, was more significant as Administrator than a single incidental mention. Given the number of colourful Territory missionaries, including Bishop Gsell, it is surprising that Markus sought examples outside the Territory and turned to Rev. J.R.B. Love and Rev. E.R. Gribble, contrasting types certainly, but domiciled in the Kimberley.

These examples are mentioned simply to emphasise that this is an impressionistic survey, not a comprehensive history. Not surprisingly, perhaps, selection favours those who were misguided, notoriously wrong or outright racist in their attitudes to Aborigines. (Judge Wells is a classic case of the man who has found the author he deserves; a detailed study would prove worth the attempt). I suspect that there were also sympathetic characters in the Territory who attempted to alleviate the harsh system, but few appear here.

Apart from Justice Wells, there are several figures sketched in this study who should be subject to major research. Dr Cook is a prime candidate. However, observations by Cook quoted earlier in the text suggest that he was shrewder and more critical than most of his generation on some matters, once he was separated from his genetic obsessions with 'breeding out the black'.

I agree that Vic Hall was 'a most unusual policeman' (p.20); his career requires evaluation, assisted by his publications. The role of T.G.H. Strehlow as a patrol officer during the thirties certainly warrants research. As a critic of A.P. Elkin's control of anthropology in Australia, I confess that this book assisted me to appreciate his positive role during pre-war years.

This is a book based upon the written documents. The definitive study will have to take these sources further and combine them with the rich oral evidence which is being collected. This makes a helpful introduction.

John Mulvaney
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A cultural revival is going on in New South Wales among the Aboriginal people. By recording the traditions and oral history of the Ingelba group Patsy Cohen and Margaret Somerville are contributing to this movement; they are helping strengthen Aboriginal identity.

The authors of *Ingelba and the five black matriarchs* are friends. They met when Patsy Cohen, who is Aboriginal, was doing a TAFE course designed by Margaret Somerville, who is white, to relate Aboriginal people's experiences and perception of the world. As Cohen, who conceived the idea for the book, had not yet completed the transition from orality to literacy, she asked Somerville to be her 'writer'. She explained that she was interested in learning more about Ingelba, an Aboriginal reserve, firstly because it was there at the age of nine that she established her Aboriginal identity. But she also wanted to record the stories of the five black matriarchs who lived there, because she wanted young Armidale Aborigines to know that most of them are descended from the five matriarchs - Granny Widders, Granny Wright, Granny Morris, Granny Maria and Granny Mackenzie. As a result of this conversation the authors decided that the three main concepts around which they would structure their project would be identity, place and kinship.

Patsy Cohen was born at Woolbrook in 1937. Her father was a white man. Her mother was an Aborigine. While her father was in the Middle East Cohen and her sister and brother were taken from their mother, charged with being neglected children, and made wards of the state. The two girls were sent to Bidura, an institution for state wards, and from there they were sent to a foster home. When that did not work out they went back to Bidura. This pattern was repeated many times. As Cohen 'was clawin at meself and stealin' she was given an I.Q. test, which showed she was subnormal. As her antisocial behaviour could now be explained to the satisfaction of the authorities she was sent to a home for retarded children. She was eventually returned to Bidura and later sent to Newcastle to the King Edward Home. By now she had been separated from her sister, and because she was so difficult she was sent to live with her Aboriginal grandparents at Ingelba.

In 1893 Ingelba, a site of 42.09 hectares, about 80 kilometres south of Armidale, was declared an Aboriginal reserve. When Cohen's grandparents were alive it was a thriving Aboriginal community, but it is now deserted. Nine year old Cohen, who had expected white grandparents, was dismayed when she found they were old and black. She told Somerville: 'I was frightened of them blacks 'cause it was the first time I had ever seen blackfellers.' The old shack in which they lived shocked her too. 'It was far from the North Shore homes that I was used to living in.' But after about two or three months she found herself enjoying the freedom of the large reserve and the closeness of the large extended family of seventeen. She knew this was where she belonged.

When Cohen was thirteen she had to leave Ingelba because her grandmother was very ill. She was sent to Lindwood Hall, an institution for older female state wards. There she was reunited with her sister, but the reunion was a sad occasion. Cohen now thought of herself as Aboriginal. But her sister, whose skin was a lot lighter than hers, said she did not want to have anything to do with her Aboriginal relatives. When she left Lindwood Hall Cohen returned to Ingelba, but when an officer of the Protection Board realised she was pregnant she was sent to a home for unmarried mothers. After this she went to Armidale,
married Jimmy Widders, and had five children. She later married Jack Cohen and they had a child.

As most of the information about Ingelba and the five matriarchs was not written down, but held in oral form by the local Aboriginal community, this information had to be collected. In order to do this the authors organised two major events and several smaller ones. Firstly, they went to the site of the old reserve with thirty people from the Armidale Aboriginal community, some of whom had lived there. The memories of these people spanned fifty years. Conversations were recorded while walking with those who remembered the landscape as it was when Cohen's grandparents were alive. Two years later the authors organised another collective activity for sixty people - a visit to the Woolbrook cemetery where many Ingelba people, including Cohen's relatives, are buried. As they tended the graves the informants talked about the deceased as if they were still alive, and their conversations were recorded.

Revisiting Ingelba made it possible for Cohen to reconstruct the life of her grandparents, particularly that of her grandmother, Clara Pacey, who was a remarkable woman. Cohen's grandmother's first husband was Walter Dixon. They had seven children. She later married Pop (Alf) Boney by whom she had another six children, two of whom died in infancy. She also looked after her brother-in-law's seven children when his wife died, as well as her grandchildren Cohen and her brother. She did all the cooking at night (one Christmas she cooked for forty-eight people) and every week she did a huge wash. Although she could not read or write she was a competent farmer and was highly respected by everyone in the neighbourhood. Cohen (p.37) recalls:

She had a great relationship with all the cockies round there. If she ever needed a bull or a ram she was always given one, or if it was a bad year for feed for the stock, she could always go and get feed off the cockies for her stock.

Cohen and Somerville have not only reconstructed a fascinating life story, but they have also shown that in changing from hunter-gatherers to farmers, this family, and there were many others, compressed a couple of thousand years of cultural evolution into a few generations. This is a remarkable achievement.

From the recorded conversations Cohen and Somerville obtained a considerable amount of information about the five matriarchs who lived at Ingelba five or six generations ago. These women owed their position to the fact that they were able to 'straddle two worlds'. Born to parents who were traditionally oriented they grew up in a period when the 'silence and secrecy started', when Aboriginal culture was looked down on by dominant whites. They were expected to 'change over from their old cultures to the European white man's ways. And they just sort of dressed up like white ladies and gentlemen' (p.109). Unlike the men, who were unable to retain their secret initiation ceremonies, the women kept their traditional childbearing and childrearing roles. Although they taught their granddaughters white ways they also passed on to them much of the traditional knowledge, skills and beliefs. The authors consider that the leadership of these women in 'cultural adaptation and their assurance of cultural continuity suggests that their role was always at least equal to their male partners', and they point out that 'conditions under white settlement often favoured their taking a leading role in cultural change' (p.111).

While conducting their research Cohen and Somerville obtained a great deal of valuable information about how women's knowledge is transmitted through the kinship networks which have replaced the traditional formal kinship systems. These days Aboriginal people relate to their past through their collective kin - the grannies, grandparents, uncles and aunts - some of whom they have only been told about, others whom they remember. In this context while granny and grandfather can denote a blood relationship, more importantly it
implies a relationship enjoyed by the whole community with the old person. All really old people become grandparents, and are regarded as the keepers of wisdom and Aboriginal lore. Younger adults are called uncles and aunts and they usually have 'practical obligations and rights in childcare, domestic arrangements and sharing resources.' These new kin networks provide 'a sense of group identity in place and sense of historical relationship to place' (p.52).

Women maintain these new kin networks through kin talk, which involves having a detailed knowledge base far more complex than a family tree and containing many details of human relationships.

These details included all sorts of information that was recorded by non Aboriginal people in written form, in births, deaths and marriage registers. There was also further information that needed to be remembered because of the specific circumstances of Aboriginal culture since contact (p.141).

No one knows everything but each person contributes something to the store of community kin knowledge.

For these people, as for most Aborigines, it is not only traditional knowledge which gives them a unique sense of identity, but also shared, often terrible experiences during the period of contact. These are as much a part of contemporary culture as the Dreaming.2

Women also preserve the memories of those long dead by collecting and looking after photographs, and handing on objects from one generation to another. While conducting their research Cohen and Somerville were able to examine the contents of a tin trunk kept by one of the five matriarchs, Granny Morris. It contained over sixty items all wrapped in cloth or enclosed in containers.

Modern Aboriginal women work hard maintaining kinship networks. They are involved in organising and catering for all festivals and funerals, they accept responsibility for keeping in touch with close relatives, seeing that resources such as transport are shared, and they teach the children of the next generation the skills and responsibilities they need to know.

Ingelba was not only surrounded by stations which provided work for the men, but it was also rich in natural resources, and so people stayed there and much cultural knowledge survived and was handed on. The interviews revealed for example: knowledge of the bora rings, of goonge or spirit stories, of the traditional doctor and traditional medicine, of birthing practices, of bush tucker, the notion of Ingelba as a spiritual place, the fact that a certain tree was used for making brooms, that hair trimmings had to be burnt, while at the same time weekly ceremonies conducted by missionaries and organised dances had replaced regular corroborees and tribal meetings. This information indicates a culture in extremely rapid transition, but not one that is dying. There is no hint here that these people have lost their culture, as many have suggested, rather that it has successfully adapted to changing conditions.

Howard Creamer has drawn attention to the fact that 'the nature of Aboriginal identity in New South Wales is seen by many as problematic and becoming more so ... The task of clarifying who is an Aboriginal is vital, not only for the acceptance of modern Aboriginal identity by the general public, but also for the provision of services by the government which relies on the indentification of Aboriginal people as a special group.'3 Ingelba and the five black matriarchs shows that although its authors live in the same town in similar types

3 Creamer 1988:45.
of houses, have families of much the same size, yet they have different cultural backgrounds.

Cohen and Somerville's research shows that the descendants of the five Ingelba matriarchs can claim a different identity to that of white Australians. If Cohen's and Somerville's book did nothing more than this it would be important, but it does much more. Though it would have been helpful if the book had been more clearly set in the context of national events, it still makes a significant contribution to Aboriginal history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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In the early 1970s, when Aborigines belatedly started to impinge upon the consciousness of academic historians in Australia, several collections of primary sources were published in quick succession. The best of these was Henry Reynolds's Aborigines and settlers, and in re-reading it today one is still struck by the remarkable breadth of his treatment of the history of relations between Aborigines and Europeans. It has now been out of print for several years, though, and hence another such collection is only to be welcomed. We need to ask, however, whether this is 'a new book', as the editor claims, or merely a revised edition of the 1972 volume.

From one perspective, the answer is in the affirmative: Dispossession is a substantially larger compilation with nearly twice as many documents on comparable subjects; most of the documents are new and little more than half the original sources are reproduced; there is a much wider range of documents, not only the printed and official sources which characterised the earlier collection but also a larger number of extracts from manuscript sources such as 'private' diaries and letters, as well as from newspapers; and the written word is now supplemented by many well chosen illustrations. As such, the breadth of historical evidence is much greater and the reader's understanding of European colonisation can only be deepened.

From another viewpoint, however, this new collection is all too familiar, reflecting the fact that Reynolds has not significantly revised his interpretation - this despite serious criticisms by other historians in recent years. Where his account does diverge from the earlier study, this by and large constitutes a narrowing in Reynolds's conception of the nature of the relationships between the colonisers and the colonised (and in my view this is the major weakness of Dispossession).

How can this be explained? One of the main differences between the two collections is the principle which has determined the selection and organisation of the material. Whereas
the argument of Aborigines and settlers was more or less implicit, here it is boldly propounded as the chapter headings suggest; for instance, 'White Australia: guilty or not?' instead of 'The morality of settlement', 'Missionaries: saviours or destroyers?' for 'The missionary impulse'. This is not just a matter of method, however, since it also reflects Reynolds's dichotomising representation of relations between Aborigines and Europeans as well as his penchant for examining the past in terms of its moral lessons for the future.\(^1\) As a result, much is necessarily omitted: accommodation between Aborigines and Europeans, a subject of indisputable importance (and one accorded a separate chapter in Aborigines and settlers), is effectively disregarded; the reader of Dispossession will, moreover, remain ignorant of the nature of inter-Aboriginal relations and will fail to appreciate regional differences in the relationships between the indigenes and the invaders, even though these matters were considered in the earlier collection and their importance has been emphasised in recent studies\(^2\); furthermore, the role of disease is neglected, despite Reynolds' acknowledgement in Aborigines and settlers that depopulation overshadowed all else in post-contact Aboriginal communities and that this view has since been reinforced by Noel Butlin's work\(^3\); lastly, Reynolds's examination of the question 'settlement or conquest', the only new section here, does not provide any of those sources that provide the basis of historical interpretations contrary to his own.\(^4\)

A further weakness of the collection lies in its eurocentric nature; perhaps this is unavoidable given the comparative dearth of Aboriginal written sources for the colonial era - the focus of this book - although Reynolds might have drawn on his own prodigious research in order to provide a sample of those sources he so imaginatively used in The other side of the frontier, thus showing the processes of cultural change and response from the perspectives of the indigenes. The Aborigines' political activities are accorded some consideration but only with regard to their radical demands for land and compensation; a chapter which could have been called 'Equality or difference' was required here to reveal that Aborigines - as Reynolds concedes but does not document - have also sought to overcome their oppression by battling for those 'civil rights' sanctioned by the dominant political order.\(^5\) This would need to be preceded by a chapter which laid bare the devastating impact of government policy and practice on Aborigines in the twentieth century, one which could draw upon the growing wealth of Aboriginal oral sources.

For at least one other reason, teachers and students of history will continue to rely on Aborigines and settlers rather than the later edition; compiled at a time when he and other young historians were challenging an older generation of scholars who believed 'there was nothing in it'\(^6\) Reynolds offered useful insights into the historiographical issues of contact history. Partly as a result of his pioneering work 'Aboriginal history' has become a respected field of study, and Reynolds now strives to reach an audience beyond the academy. This is undoubtedly much needed and more academic writers should follow Reynolds's example; yet in doing so they must be careful to remain true to the imperatives of rigorous scholarship.

\(^1\) See Curthoys 1983.
\(^2\) See, e.g., Reece 1987.
\(^3\) Butlin 1983.
\(^4\) See, e.g., Frost 1981.
\(^6\) See Reynolds 1990.
BOOK REVIEWS

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Bain Attwood
Monash University


This book admirably solves the problem of how to provide a *festschrift* for two of Australia's most eminent anthropologists.

Part One, a mere 63 pages, provides a brief sketch of the Berndts' lives and work. It comprises an overview by Raymond Firth, an appreciation by Claude Levi-Strauss, a biographical sketch by the editors and a select bibliography provided by the Berndts themselves. This is informative and useful, without being indulgent.

Part Two, a more substantial 185 pages, comprises ten essays focusing on 'Aboriginal autonomy' as experienced in relation to recent government policies of 'self-management' for Aborigines. Connections are made by several of the contributors between this theme and the work of the Berndts, but they are not laboured or forced. Part Two reads, as a consequence, much like many other edited volumes of essays which have attempted to focus on a single theme. That is, it is in some parts incisive and useful and in other parts fairly mundane and repetitive.

In the first chapter of Part Two, the editors provide a useful introduction to the concept of Aboriginal autonomy in policy and practice. They note that while the term 'autonomy' does not appear in government policy statements of the last decade or so, it is clearly related to the central policy terms of 'self-management' and 'self-determination'. Definitions both of autonomy and of these central policy terms, the editors argue, tend to be absolutes, when in 'social reality' autonomy is always 'constrained' (p.68). The editors note instances of some degree of Aboriginal autonomy occurring much earlier than the official policies of self-management and self-determination. They also note the significant constraints placed by governments of recent years on the exercise of Aboriginal self-management, usually in the name of a higher Australian 'common good'. White attitudes, the inadequately analysed heterogeneity of the Aboriginal population, conflicts over how the Aboriginal population as a whole is to be represented in its dealings with the nation-state, unresolved jurisdictional conflicts between Federal, State and Territory governments and unresolved questions relating to the form of local government for Aboriginal communities are all seen as contributing in
different ways to the constrained nature of Aboriginal autonomy. The editors note the recent re-organisation of the Federal government's Aboriginal affairs portfolio in an attempt to provide a 'new deal' for Aboriginal self-management and, while not being dismissive of this development, are also bound to acknowledge the more fundamental nature of the constraints on Aboriginal autonomy they have identified. All this usefully sets the scene for what is to come: i.e. another nine papers by former students or associates of the Bemdt's focusing with only two exceptions on recent attempts to exercise some degree of autonomy, however constrained, in specific remote Aboriginal communities in the western half of Australia.

One of the exceptions is a useful paper by Hans Dagmar considering in general terms the role of local 'Aboriginal interest associations' over recent years in 'representing Aboriginal interests to the outside world' and 're-organising and strengthening an internal Aboriginal social and political order' (p.101). This builds nicely on the editors' introduction and is similarly aware of the many constraints on such organisations in carrying out these roles. Within their communities, local Aboriginal interest associations face 'different levels of deprivation; different economic aspirations; different degrees of attachment to distinct Aboriginal patterns of thinking and behaviour; and different levels and forms of skills for organising the promotion of common interests'. Externally they face 'variations in levels of access to resources and the market; differences in competition from outsiders and non-Aboriginal businesses; differences in adequacy or organisational support on the part of government; and differences in legal and political structures with which the associations have to operate' (p.111). The other exception is a paper by David Turner focusing on the form of local government to be adopted in remote Aboriginal communities. Turner has been closely associated with the Northern Territory's 'Community Government' model and is clearly still a strong advocate of it. He sees it not only as the appropriate 'middle ground between separation and assimilation' for Aboriginal communities, but also as a potential way of re-structuring the universe of Australian state and local government structures along more 'pluralist democratic' lines. The latter claim is grandiose and far-fetched and, to my mind, somewhat discredits and casts doubt on the former. Turner's piece is, in the editors' words, 'thought-provoking', but to my mind it is too undisciplined and wide ranging to make much of a contribution.

The seven papers which focus on particular remote communities are also something of a mixed bag. The best and most tightly argued is, to my mind, Tonkinson's own piece focusing on the development of greater autonomy for Aboriginal women in relation to Aboriginal males at Jigalong from pre-contact times through the eras of the pastoral frontier and the mission to the present. He engages in critical debate with Bell's recent work which suggests that Aboriginal women's autonomy in relation to their men has lessened rather than increased from pre-contact times through the various periods of European settlement. He cites Catherine Bemdt's and others' work as supporting his view, and casts Bell as out on a limb. Erich Kolig's piece on the use of myth as a political weapon in struggles for community autonomy at Noonkanbah is also useful and tightly argued. Other contributions are useful in elaborating the struggle for a degree of local Aboriginal autonomy in a number of different contexts, though they tend in the end to be somewhat similar and repetitive. All tend to be cognisant of the constraints on exercising such autonomy which exist within a local community comprised both of Aborigines with very different aspirations and also white employees of Aboriginal community organisations with agendas partly of their own making. They also at times tend to blame government and dismiss the policy of self-management as something of a sham. This is not, to my mind, always adequate as analysis or justified by the facts they present. However, it does give some insight into the powerful nature of external constraints on Aboriginal exercises of community autonomy and these
other case studies are all worth reading, if only to gain an appreciation of that fact. Get a copy of the collection, read and consider for yourself. There is much here worth considering, and much that can be taken further.

Will Sanders
The Australian National University


This book tells of negotiations over the years from the early 1970s to the late 1980s between Aboriginal people of Lake Nash and the white management of that cattle station for their continued residence and control of places sacred to them, in particular the waterhole and its surrounds. It came across my desk no doubt because of the oral testimony it contains. Although certain chapters report Aboriginal viewpoints first hand, it is not an oral history. *We are staying* is instead a painstaking reconstruction blow by blow of attempts on the part of the Aboriginal community to negotiate with on the one hand an absentee landlord, the Texan cattle company that held the leasehold of the station, and on the other hand the on-site station management. The negotiations covered virtually a generation and taken together are an indictment of the white absentee (and frequently non-Australian) landlord system which prevails still in many parts of Australia's cattle and sheep station country. We know about the England based Vestey Company and its long running mismanagement of Victoria River Downs (to receive more spotlighting in a forthcoming book prepared by Deborah Bird Rose) and the group of companies involved in scandals at Gove and Mapoon. To this list should now be added the King Ranch syndicate based in Texas.

This is a long book meticulously researched from a variety of primary sources which included correspondence, minutes of meetings, notes (for example from telephone conversations), and personal (verbal communications), as well as a relatively short list of secondary sources: books, reports, essays and theses, newspaper articles, and transcripts and court actions. It would be heavy going for most students but is nonetheless a useful source book which should be on the library shelves of any Aboriginal studies centre.

The first five chapters are a prelude to the Lake Nash land claim. Chapter one sketches in the early history of the area and is co-authored with Paul Memmott (who was one of the editors for the autobiography of Elsie Roughsey 1984). This is followed by a chapter on the early establishment of the cattle station and three chapters on Aboriginal working conditions through World War Two to the landmark judgement of the Arbitration and Conciliation Commission on the granting of award wages to Aboriginal workers in the early 1960s and the Woodward Commission early in the 1970s. The rest of the book traces the shifting employer-employee relationships on the station from the 1960s to the late 1980s.

The story is one of evasion of responsibilities on the part of white managements towards their Aboriginal employees over the years. This included tactics of delay, ignoring correspondence written on behalf of the Aboriginal community, to misunderstandings and sometimes outright intimidation (though not face to face) on the part of one white station manager. Participants are named on both sides. One might expect at first that this bids fair for defamation actions against the authors on the part of Percy Crumblin, manager of the station through some of the worst times, and Arthur Bassingthwaighte the managing
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director of Swift Australian, the Queensland and Northern Territory Pastoral Company, and King Ranch Australia (p.61). But evidence of their obstructionism and sometimes sheer bloody mindedness is I think overwhelming. No doubt the publishers sought legal advice before they went to press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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DOING, SPEAKING AND WRITING

Aboriginal songs have been translated before, but the Dixon-Duwell collection is the first anthology of its kind. Even readers familiar with the work of Strehlow and Berndt will be struck by the quality of this new publication. Bob Dixon's Dyirbal songs, which open the collection, are stunning in their immediacy. We have an Aboriginal reaction to a white girl in a red dress, registered with all the unspoilt innocence of early contact - the dress metamorphosing into a dancing butterfly. There is a touchingly evocative meditation on woman as creature of two worlds, living with her husband's people through an act of male aggression, crossing borders, like the wandering scrub-hen and, like the hen and the rainforest fig, fruitful. (For border-crossing, feminists read 'transgressing'.) There is a moment of seduction and wonder as a traveller pauses at dawn to look over his shoulder at Goondi Hill through the (imagined/real) flapping wings of a mythical bird (one thinks of the prince in Stravinsky's Firebird). Examples multiply: the infatuated but sadly incapacitated drunk who stumbles wonderfully over Freudian logs under the luring, half-closed look of his wife's 'sister'; the dwarf who gets his own back on the sorcerer whose singing shrunk him; the bottled-up male who watches teeny-bopper girls bouncing in waves that burst, foam and spray - while he can't go in (a very painful poem); the metapoet who produces a fine song about the fact that he has a cold and can't sing (shades of Coleridge's Dejection: an Ode).

For contrast, and for something closer to the spirit of Berndt's translations, we have the measured lyricism and dignity of Margaret Clunies Ross's Arnhem Land mortuary songs. 'Mortuary' might give some the wrong impression: these songs overflow with life. The author of Finnegans Wake would have given his writing hand for those eels whose softly-farting 'sh sh' provokes the macrowinds of the monsoon; or for the belching, forging cockatoo; or for the masses of dark honey oozing from the hollow tree which houses life and death; or the grimly-dancing funereal crow; or the brilliantly observed bitterns, brolgas and so on.

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The sheer variety of this anthology is impressive. In addition to the often highly personal Dyirbal songs from Queensland, whose effect is lively and (to European eyes) impressionist, and to the Anbarra songs from Blyth River which function as units within larger cycles, rather like Berndt's sequences, there is a Walpiri narrative, as well as Wangkangurru material from the Simpson Desert: part-comic narrative, an austerely beautiful lament and intense occasional pieces, cheerfully regarded sub specie aeternitatis as 'rubbish' songs. All these are clearly intended for widely different, sometimes more, sometimes less formal social situations.

The two editors and the four recorder-translators (Stephen Wild and Luise Hercus for the Walpiri and Wangkangurru songs respectively) supply the Aboriginal-language text alongside the translation (which is right and proper), as well as maps, notes on the Aboriginal singers, introductions of various kinds and signposts for further reading. Such necessary aids are all too brief, though one can see why they were kept to a minimum. Inevitably the reader is brought up against the fundamental problematic of translation, not merely 'into English' but into 'textual' form. I was fortunate enough to witness performances of the Djambidj songs in Canberra, both at the Goethe Institute in 1979 and the Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1982. But anyone can imagine the immense leap involved in transition from (more or less) improvised singing, something after the manner of jazz, to the printed page. A brief comparison between the versions of the Djambidj songs given in the booklet accompanying the Clunies Ross and Wild LP disc and the 'same' songs as they appear in this anthology shows how elastic must be one's notion of the 'text' in this case. Add to this the usual difficulties of translating poetic material (metrically specific in the case of Dyirbal) and of translation period. Not surprisingly the 'intention' of the song (using the term in the Husserlian sense) is rarely transparent to the reader, who needs to be told about its content. But, with a minimum of signs, we find our way: translation, which is impossible, actually works and works superbly.

Mention of translation raises the related issue of interpretation, which focuses attention on the tantalising intellectual question: what exactly is it that is being translated into a 'text'? This is a hermeneutic question, one of understanding constructing its own object. Certainly the originals of these song-texts are not texts at all, they become textual in the very process of being understood, interpreted - translated. The framework of this anthology is part anthropological, part literary, since those are the categories most readily available to the editors. The category of the pre-textual original is quite different, however, and it is very far from being constituted by textualisation and translation per se. The honey-ant man who sings his elaborate song of seduction, pointing his string cross at his beloved, does so not to express his desire but to satisfy it, that is, precisely to seduce. The song is, in the language of the theologians, 'efficacious', it has an ex opere operato power, doing what it says. The gloriously impatient Dyirbal husband who (like Arthur Boyd's 'Bridegroom waiting for bride to grow up') can't bear the suspense of a child-wife is not just singing about his impatience, he is shortening the wait. The furious black man who sings his hate for his white master while holding the reins of the master's horse is not telling anything, he is doing. (I am reminded of the picture of a falling white rider at the Giant Horse Gallery, Cape York: a possible case of sorcery-art.) The Lake Eyre 'Heat Song' brings about the withering wind it calls up. The Pulawani increase-song, sung as a dirge for a dead sister, movingly gives voice to sorrow, but presumably also functions as a loving spell, to preserve the life of the dead even as it calls into being a renewal of nature, dry to wet, seed to tree. Such a sacramental dimension is surely alluded to in the Clunies Ross rendering of a Morning Star song line as 'true bone, true substance of bornumbirr (verum corpus: substance/accident)'. This is the context in which we have to understand the appeal to
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mimesis, including the specific element of mimicry in the Arnhem Land songs about animals and birds. To imitate is not merely to mirror, as in the European post-Platonic tradition, but to become. If we may misquote Marx: singing is a matter not of representing the world but of changing it. In short the pre-textual object of interpretation in this case is activity.

How to translate 'action' into 'text' - with all that is implied in that historical transition; the hermeneutic difficulty faced by the Dixon-Duwell anthology becomes an existential one for Aboriginal people themselves. In Paperbark, the first anthology of black writing, edited by Davis, Muecke, Mundrooroo and Shoemaker, the definition of self-identity in a time of change is no mere editorial problem but a fundamental issue for every contributor, from David Unaipon to Gary Foley. It is a question of the nature and role of Aboriginality - which takes the further form of a question about the nature and role of writing for black Australians. Not surprisingly, this generates profound, though stimulating, ambivalence. It surfaces in the editors' introduction, which pays homage to oral traditions while concentrating on writing; which sees a 'paradox' in Aboriginal use of European genres; which stresses collectivity of authorship yet feels bound (rightly) to publish Unaipon as an individual, under his own name; which denigrates 'pretentions to literary grandeur' yet promotes its 'well-established writers'. The title 'Paperbark', we are told, is itself ambiguous. Does it indicate creativity or a shroud, a joining of old and new (bark/paper), as in the attractive story of Oodgeroo's name, or a capitulation and loss of identity; can the European 'text' be used against itself, allowing black words living space on that white page?

There are no easy answers to these questions, which inform the various texts of this collection and which arise in varied contexts of binary opposition: speech/writing/, fact/fiction, politics/literature, individual/collective. The two Unaipon stories, both delightful though one is a serious account of the Narroondarie myth, the other a tragicomic children's tale, designedly combine Christian and Aboriginal theology, Biblical and colloquial English, European (indeed bourgeois) moral codes and Aboriginal law. Something even more complicated is worked out in William Ferguson's 'Nanya', the story of a desert tribe founded on an act of transgression against black law. The result is primitive animalism, society without sexual prohibitions and language: pure Lacanian Freud and a defence of civilisation - with all its discontents. 'Nanya' is also interesting because it is something handed down, having multiple authors. Other texts in the anthology are of this kind: Lydia George's story of the dugong, Ngitji Ngitji's possum story, or Snowy Hill's powerful account of black suffering on a Western Australian station. On the other hand, for all their concern with a common heritage of oppression, stories like Waller's or Mudrooroo's or Davis' or Morgan's present themselves unambiguously as authorially individual. Moreover they present themselves as 'literary'. Weller's crafted texts, gently romantic in spite of their harsh subject matter, Mudrooroo's highly self-conscious story of alienation, another 'wildcat' loner: these are very much at the opposite pole to Paddy Roe's (brilliantly witty) account of his first visit to Perth or Banjo Worrumarra's Kimberley story of resistance, both of which represent 'speech' at its most vivid and straightforward, as distinct from 'writing' with its complications and ambiguities. One stage further in this direction and we return to the idea of song as activity (there are in fact two examples of that in the book, both translations).

In terms of the fact/fiction polarity, however, the complementary opposite of the 'literary' texts in this anthology is the text that exactly parallels, say, a story of black urban youth by Mudrooroo or Weller - and yet is true, i.e. factual. One can only congratulate the editors for including, for example, Bropho's saga (half Tingari, half Jimmy Dean) of teenage

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car-theft across the expanse of Western Australia, or Ruby Langford's moving plea for her
jailed son - or the son's story-from-prison (boxes-within-boxes) for his daughter. In some
stories ('Mission Truck'), the passage from fiction to fact occurs within the one text.
Elsewhere the anthology focuses on historical fact, including varied documents: an 1841
children's letter to Governor Gawler; a 1966 community letter of protest and frustration
from Nepabunna Mission; a 1925 letter relating to an incident in which a black woman
thrashed a white man (wonderful!); Rob Riley's letter requesting Land Rights in the Land of
the Great Fair Go; Pat Dodson's request for 'dignity', 'land', 'life'; excerpts from addresses to

There is more in Paperbark: autobiography (Everett's splendid 'Waterdogs', for
example); song (from Country and western cliche to the very lovely 'Brown Skin Baby');
fable (by Hyllus Maris); play and film script (by Gerry Bostock); even an excerpt from Bran
Nue Dae, the first black rock opera in this country. The overall effect is of unstoppable
verve and creativity in the most oppressed of all Australian groups. Whatever else Paperbark
does, it establishes that black speech/writing constitutes its own 'independent paradigm',
complex, ambiguous, dissociating itself from white paradigms even as it rejoins them,
heterogeneous and one, affirming a positive communal identity against the historical odds.
The precise nature of the paradigm remains obscure. What 'is' black writing, black speech?
What 'is' Aboriginality? The answer must be: the contents of a book like this one. What I
earlier termed the object of interpretation is here impossible to fix simply because it is in
motion. It is not even possible to recuperate this object by means of the anti-essentialist
back door (a sleight-of-hand which would assimilate Aboriginality to Foucault and Derrida).
If anything emerges from Paperbark (not merely through editorial preference), it is that
black writing overwhelmingly chooses the realist mimetic mode, that Post-Structuralist
bête noire. Stubbornly, Black defines itself in its own terms.

Because black and white also mutually define each other, because, as Galarrwuy
Yanupingu put it in 1988, we are all Australians, Paperbark and The honey-ant men's love
song should be read by all Australians.

Livio Dobrez
Bond University

Take this child - 1nt Kahlil Compound to the Retta Dixon Children's Home. By Barbara
photographs, references. $14.95 p.b.

The forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families is the subject of this book
which examines in detail the effects of former policy and legislation on the lives of
Northern Territory 'part-Aborigines'. Although the term part-Aborigine is offensive to
Aboriginal people, previous government policy sharply differentiated between lighter and
darker skinned Aboriginal people.

Incarcerated in government 'half-caste' homes or within missionary homes in Darwin,
the ramifications of the separation of these lighter skinned children from their families and
culture are just beginning to be made public.

Take this child follows generations of children from the mission through the
government home to the missionary home. It begins by outlining the motives of the
missionary Retta Dixon after whom the children's home was named, before moving on to
an examination of the forever changing 'good ideas' that became government policy. The intentions of the missionary and government were similar. Both aimed at promulgating assimilation based on the mistaken belief that Aboriginal people were an inferior race who had to be gradually, ever so slowly drawn up to the standards of white people.

Interspersed between explanations of policy are graphically recounted personal histories of child removal from the point-of-view of the victims - the mother whose baby was taken while still at the breast, - the mother who, in vain, attempted to prevent her child being taken by coating his skin with ashes to make him darker, - the child forever remembering the screams of her mother chasing the truck that was taking the children away, sometimes forever, and the young girl regurgitating water to feed a baby accustomed to breastmilk.

The Retta Dixon Home for part-Aboriginal children in Darwin is the central focus of the book. The reasons behind its establishment and prolonged existence are studied in detail. Full background of events and of people, particularly missionaries and politicians, are provided. From the plethora of rhetoric from the Legislative Council, well-chosen extracts of policy statements create a vivid image of the rigidly closed minds and tunnel vision of the white officials and politicians from the days of the Aborigines Act of 1911 through the depression and war years until the end of the 1970s. These extracts encapsulate the views of a society unable to see beyond its own self-interest, one so steeped in ignorance about Aboriginal people that policy-makers, at the stroke of a pen, could deny whole groups of indigenous people basic human rights.

Take this child was the motto of the Aborigines Inland Mission, a zealously religious organisation which ran the Retta Dixon Home. Although unqualified to care for children, (only minimal training was introduced in 1956), the A.I.M.'s motto became government policy and despite government recognition that the missionaries running the Home were often unsuitable and incompetent, the Home continued until 1980. The book recounts from personal oral histories the physical and psychological maltreatment of the children and the reader can experience the devastation of the child cut adrift from family and a supportive community, taught to fear his/her own relatives and to believe that to be black was a sin. Children who ran away were placed in reformatory institutions often as far away as Melbourne or Sydney.

The 1953 Welfare Act prevented children being removed without their mothers' consent but after so long, many mothers and the children themselves believed they were state wards and the missionaries did not disabuse them. So removal continued often under the guise of education and training and from the 1950s on, fostering and adoption of children to families in southern states was common.

This powerful, well-researched and well-documented investigation is an excellent addition to Aboriginal history as a whole and will also appeal to a much larger audience as the topic is becoming more widely known. The book provides a great deal of statistical data, perhaps too much for the reader to grasp the individual impact of each one. In this sense the work could become a reference for the events of each mission or home. Also the continuity of the storyline is somewhat disturbed by the tendency to jump backward and forward in time leaving the reader struggling to remember which particular person and policy was in place at the time. Familiarity with Northern Territory locations and with historical points-of-reference is also assumed; however despite this, the picture created is clear and delivered with telling impact.

The oral history accounts are gripping and poignant as seen in the case where a woman, removed as a child along with her baby cousin, returns to her mission home and is confronted by her aunt looking for her baby given into the care of the older child 40 years
That mother still waits for her baby to return and we, the readers, join the mother in longing to know what happened to that baby.

*Take this child* sets out to investigate the impact of state and national policies on one distinct location however all over the country similar scenes were occurring. This book provides a beginning, a place to start in investigation, in understanding and in learning from the consequences of past policies. There are however other lessons to be learnt from the survivors of places like the Retta Dixon Home and hopefully Barbara Cummings' effort will inspire others to share with us some of what they have learnt.

Back in the present, the book does not make comfortable reading for the complacent but challenges the reader to examine his/her own attitudes. While it is unacceptable today to express a belief in racial superiority and discrimination, how much have people's underlying attitudes really changed? As an Aboriginal person who has experienced both personally and through family and community, the impact of separation on the lives of our people, for me this book represents evidence, yet again, of the depth of the tragedy that was child removal, the inappropriateness of one culture legislating for another and the indomitable strength that is Aboriginality.

The book concludes with a summation of the feelings of ex-Retta Dixon Home inmates. The bonds forged in childhood remain between the children themselves and the preceding generations also institutionalised at the Home. They, and others like us, nationwide, will 'remain vigilant to ensure that this part of our history is never repeated' (p.136).

Louise Harding
Link-up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation, Sydney


Nils Holmer is well-known in the field of Australian linguistics, particularly for his salvage work on languages of north-eastern NSW.¹ In the early seventies he worked with Aboriginal people in many Queensland townships and settlements, notably Cherbourg and Woorabinda. The present volume gives his findings from that fieldwork. The following languages are represented (in Holmer's orthography) and are documented in separate sections: Mer, Saibai, Gugu Bujun and related languages, Gangulida, Kantyu and Koko Yalandji, Bundjil and Wanyi, Garwa, Punthamara. The format of each section consists of notes on phonology and morphology, followed by a short vocabulary.

The work does not pretend to be anything other than simply 'notes'. These notes however are fieldnotes: they do not involve library work and have not been checked against any other information available at the time of the fieldwork or since then. Uncertainties remain even over the basic question as to which languages are being documented. Thus we are told (p.36) that two people had some knowledge of a language, presumably the one 'related to Gugu Bujun'

neither of them was sure of its name (probably *wagaman*, the Chilligo or Everton language).

¹ Holmer 1966 and 1967.
Similarly (p.105) in the section on Bundjil and Wanyi we are told about the two people on whose information the whole section is based:

Since it is likely that both informants have supplied data from various Queensland languages (and perhaps some others as well) we shall present the material in one sketch and in one mixed vocabulary, marking entries supposed to be Wanyi by the signature \emph{Wan}.

This scarcely inspires confidence and rightly so: I have not been able to find a single Wanyi word among the items labelled \emph{Wan}.

Most of the languages covered in Holmer's notes have been studied subsequently and major works have been devoted to them; for instance Sandra Keen's work on Yukulta\(^2\) (Holmer's Gangulida), and the monograph on Kalali (Wangkumara) by McDonald and Wurm.\(^3\) None of these publications have been taken into account: they are not even mentioned by Holmer. The present book is written as if in a vacuum, and not even place-names have been checked. Common Australian words such as \emph{djina} 'foot' (p. 108) are called 'Queensland words', although Capell's list of such words was published in 1956. The section on Punthamara and Kalali is more complete than the others, and here we can see some of Holmer's perspicacity as a linguist. Even with the limited data at his disposal he was aware of the fact that here was a very special kind of classifying system. Although considerable subsequent work has been done on this language group Holmer's materials are useful.

It remains nevertheless open to doubt whether there is justification for an uncritical edition of any scholar's fieldnotes.

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\textit{Loose leaves} presents a portrait of the missionary Pastor W.G.F. Poland who participated in a social experiment often repeated in Australian history - the resettlement and re-education of an Aboriginal group. The people in this case were the Guugu Yimidhirr speakers of Cape Bedford, north of Cooktown in North Queensland. Drawing upon his seventeen years of experience as a missionary among these Aborigines, Poland wrote a series of recollections

\(^2\) Keen 1983.

\(^3\) McDonald and Wurm 1979.
that have been translated by Herma Roehrs to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of his landing in Australia. The translation is highly readable, the style fluent and the subject matter very interesting for both lay and professional readers. Poland originally wrote these recollections to inform, entertain and obtain assistance for his evangelical work from German mission supporters. He also hoped that the reminiscences would be a memento for his children of their earliest years.

During the period 1888 to 1909 Poland worked with another missionary, G.H. Schwarz, to care for his charges 'in the desert' and this description of the Cape Bedford Mission seems to have been an apt metaphor. Arriving in Cooktown from Germany in 1888, Poland's first impression was that he had landed in a hot and harsh environment the inhabitants of which were spiritually barren. The missionaries were like gardeners in both a physical and spiritual sense. They not only attempted to cultivate crops under difficult climatic conditions on infertile land, but also strove to systematically erode the culture of the Guugu Yimidhirr and replace it with a set of Lutheran doctrines. These efforts slowly and steadily became more successful but the work was difficult and progress was slow. Poland was often frustrated in his teaching and sometimes despaired of success. Time has shown that his work was not in vain. Descendants of the early converts and their families today reside as members of Hope Vale Mission, near Cooktown. Without missionary intervention it is highly unlikely that the Guugu Yimidhirr would have survived as a cultural group. If Poland could be resurrected for a visit to Hope Vale, he would undoubtedly feel that his efforts had been blessed.

Loose leaves consists of three booklets, each of a varying number of chapters, organised in a loose chronological order. The first booklet's chapters describe daily life, the problems of communicating with an Aboriginal group, adjusting to a new climate and landscape, the frustrations of a missionary's work, and aspects of Poland's family life. The second and third booklets elaborate on these themes and topics. There are descriptions of the difficulties of travelling between the mission station and Cooktown, dangers of bush living, the problems of growing crops and becoming self-sufficient in food, the rigours and joys of daily mission life, and case studies of Aboriginal converts. All three booklets contain humorous and interesting anecdotes of mission life.

Three Appendices add to the book's interest. The first two are official Government reports which complement Poland's accounts of the hardships of mission life. The third Appendix gives some additional personal information about this compassionate and adventurous man.

These recollections reveal the gradual erosion of the Guugu Yimidhirr traditional culture, epitomised by the increasing numbers of converts and the declining number of traditional initiations. Poland must have attained a good grasp of the Aboriginal vernacular and regularly preached and taught in it. Over forty hymns were translated for Aboriginal use, as well as selected sections of the Bible.

Poland's descriptions illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of his work, his sincerity and also the pathos of the Aboriginal situation a hundred years ago. For example, when a group of Aborigines, driven by need to offer to work in the mission gardens, comes into camp, he takes the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. Because he comes empty-handed, with no tobacco, they continue what they were doing or go back to sleep so that he has to talk loudly to attract their attention. They enter into disputes with him about his Christian teaching, but soon get bored and disperse to chase a goanna. The missionary's talk comes to an abrupt end (pp.36-9).

This episode presents some of the central themes of this book: the reluctance with which adult Aborigines met Poland's evangelising and the manner of the European pastor in
addressing his audience. At the same time it reveals the tolerance of the people in dealing with Poland's direct threats and criticisms. It exposes Poland's absolute belief in his own spiritual and intellectual superiority and the righteousness of his work. It also shows the no-win situation of the Aborigines - forced by circumstances beyond their control to ask the missionaries for help and receiving it at a cost. Poland's recollections show how adults were considered a lost cause and how therefore the missionaries devoted much of their energies to 'rescuing' and educating children by isolating them from their families in dormitories. Some of these children eventually became the foundation members of the current Lutheran mission of Hope Vale.

*Loose leave* is a set of recollections based on memories of conversations and experiences, diaries and letters. There is a ring of authenticity in the anecdotes and descriptions. Poland's remembrances can be seen as a series of vignettes of what it was like to be a Lutheran missionary working in such a place. Whilst contemporary readers may find Pastor Poland's attitudes and conduct distasteful, notably how he considered the Aborigines to be inherently inferior and treated them accordingly, it must be remembered that he was a 'child of his times'. Unlike many of his white contemporaries who had contact with Aborigines, from his stories he appears to have been compassionate, caring and sincere. The extent of his love for his charges and of their love for him is evident in the moving account of his leave-taking from the Hope Valley settlement before he went with his family on furlough to Germany.

The book has value for historians because it adds to our knowledge and understanding of Australian, and particularly of Aboriginal history. For the church historian, it fills a gap in the knowledge of early missionary ventures. It presents a most interesting picture of one of the pioneers in Aboriginal resettlement and education.

For anthropologists, the reminiscences are both tantalising and disappointing. In various chapters there is mention of aspects of traditional Aboriginal life including death and initiation ceremonies, sorcery, hunting and food gathering, male-female relationships. Most of this Guugu Yimidhirr culture is but briefly or incompletely described and often in a derogatory manner. Although Poland was in a situation where he could have obtained interesting information about Aboriginal culture, unfortunately he was so constrained by his work habits and background that he was neither interested in, nor receptive of, much ethnographical information that came his way. Poland believed that the Aborigines were in the grip of the 'dark' forces of sorcery and Satan, and that his form of Christianity would save the Aboriginal souls. He had no appreciation of Aboriginal history, customs and beliefs and lost a unique opportunity to gain insight into the rich spiritual life of the Aboriginal adults at Cape Bedford. His teachings and educational practices were undoubtedly one of the major forces that resulted in the eventual loss of much of the traditional cultural heritage of the descendants of these Aborigines.

*Loose leaves* is also an important book for the present-day descendants of Hope Valley and Elim. They will cherish its rare photographs, many of which are of their ancestors. The Guugu Yimidhirr Aborigines owe their present-day ethnic identity and cultural development largely to the work of the pioneering missionaries, Schwarz and Poland. Without the intervention of these two men, the Guugu Yimidhirr as a tribal entity probably would have disappeared altogether. It was fortunate for them that the mission was established on their tribal lands and, most importantly, that the missionaries strongly believed in the use of the Aboriginal language in the education of their charges. Initially all teaching - secular and religious - was carried out in the local vernacular. This by itself was a prime factor in maintaining ethnic identity. While much of Guugu Yimidhirr traditional culture disappeared as a result of the missionary intervention, this group has survived with a strong, albeit
newly defined, cultural tradition. *Loose leaves* documents the early stages of this process and, as such, gives the Hope Vale people insight into the soul of one of the founding fathers.

Fiona Terwiel
Canberra


Many books on how to conduct family research and compile family trees have appeared in the last decade. This is one of the best. It is aimed largely at those Aborigines in urban and rural Australia whose families have lived within the parameters of white society, but it is also a good introduction for persons of non-Aboriginal descent who might feel the urge to find out more about their forbears. Indeed its greatest asset, apart from the design motif, is its easy conversational style which suggests, quite properly, that anyone can engage successfully in genealogical research without special academic qualifications. The book will benefit particularly those persons of mixed race descent whose parents or themselves were separated from their families and brought up in institutions.

Because it is essentially a practical book very little attention is given to the broader field of Aboriginal genealogy. About the only acknowledgment of traditional genealogical values is a quotation from Michael Anderson's 'Aboriginal philosophy of the land' (p.xiii):

> When a child is born into the world it is related to every other human being that lives. It finds itself in a constellation of belonging. Aborigines have one of the world's most extensive kinship organisations which interconnects, through religion, with all the world of living and inanimate things. Death cannot deprive a child of a mother or father or an uncle or an aunt or a brother or a sister.

There is a strange irony in the fact that this book encourages a search for individual ancestry whereas the ultimate aim of traditional Aboriginal society appears to have been the reintegration of the living family into the social fabric of the past represented by the land. Each generation relives the same totemic drama, names recur in recognisable frequency, and the individual ancestors are absorbed into the anonymity of the tribal totemic lineage. While Westerners might worry about the individuality of each of ego's 2496 ancestors in 12 generations or in a direct line of patrilineal descent; Aboriginal elders recognised the inconsistency of having individual family histories when everyone shared the tribal history. It is rather like saying that everyone of English descent is likely to be descended from the entire population of England at a given period so a national history of England is more relevant to one's identity than the history of one line of descent.

There is, however, a sense of immediacy about the title of the book, *Lookin for your mob*. Those who are meant to use it are in the business of establishing an identity in what has largely become a 'white feller's nation'. They will be interested in re-establishing links with particular kinship groups and their ancestral lands to reinforce that identity. The book provides many listings of institutions including several pages devoted to the numerous Aboriginal missions. Those who might be daunted by such lists should take courage from
Iris Clayton's excellent foreword. In her four final paragraphs she provides a resume of her own family research. This record of practical experience is an excellent introduction to the subject and shows how rewarding it is to persevere even though at times one feels like 'chucking it in'.

The book is a visual delight, largely owing to Fiona Kerinaua's artwork and its adaptation throughout the text. Even if one is not tracing Aboriginal ancestors this book deserves a place in good Australian home libraries.

Niel Gunson
The Australian National University


The book is a collection of fifteen articles by Australian and French contributors, presented at a symposium on the French perceptions of Aborigines. Its aim, as set by the editor in the foreword, is twofold: 'draw attention to the extent of the French contribution to Aboriginal ethnography, both historically and in the present, and ... bring together studies of French ways of seeing and responding to the Australian Aborigine' (p.5). It is divided into four sections: the first two sections (10 articles) cover reports of contacts made with the Aborigines of Tasmania and Australia by several French expeditions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the third section (four articles) is devoted to the representations of Aborigines in French literature in the 19th century, and the fourth section (three articles) treats of Aboriginal societies in contemporary French social theory.

As the contributors include members from various disciplines (history, anthropology, French studies and literature) in the academic world and outside (museum staff and others whose qualifications are not specified), the treatment is rather uneven. The result is a book which approaches the subject from a broad range of perspectives but never goes deeply into the many questions which are raised throughout.

The first section provides a historical account of the French expeditions to Australia and Tasmania over a period of seventy years, from the Marion du Fresne expedition to Tasmania in 1776 (Plomley) to that of Baudin in 1800 (Horner), Barrallier to the Blue Mountains in 1802 (Smith); and Dumont d'Urville, also in Tasmania, in 1840 (Rosenman). Most of the material is presented in the form of clippings from the original texts with some commentaries of a general nature to place the texts within a historical perspective. The second section takes up the same themes - indeed, given the similarities in the contents of the articles, it is not clear why they should be divided into two sections. As a result the articles in the second section appear simply to repeat what was said in the first section, and the book would have benefited from having those two sections condensed into a single, shorter one.

This is all the more so for the third section, devoted to literary perceptions of the Aborigines in French 19th century fictional and non-fictional literature; it is really only an extension of the first two sections, whereas modern French anthropological perceptions occupy only three articles in the final section. As an anthropologist whose fields of study are Indonesia and Madagascar, my evaluation of the book is naturally slanted toward
anthropological issues since, as Glowczewsky rightly remarks, 'the fields which constituted classical anthropology - kinship, mythology, or totemism - developed out of Australian data' (p.220). As such, I cannot help wondering why there is such a disproportionately small number of articles treating contemporary French sociological perceptions of the Aborigines in the book.

One reason which comes to mind is that the Aborigines are a sensitive political issue which must be handled with care, and do not make the kind of topic readily amenable to international debate, especially with a country such as France whose position in the Pacific was seriously contested in Australia at the time of the symposium. In a political climate such as this, there is safety in concentrating upon data from the past centuries. The second reason, as Glowczewski's article makes clear, is that, until quite recently, few French anthropologists had any practical knowledge of the Aborigines from the field, although, paradoxically, the Aborigines have long provided the stuff upon which French social theory is based.

One important point made by the book is that the French perceptions of Aborigines followed an evolution which corresponded to a shift in philosophical paradigms from the pre-Revolution ideal of the noble savage of Rousseau, i.e. natural man in all his splendour, untouched and unspoilt by civilisation, to the post-Revolution views of Comte and Saint-Simon, of the historical evolution of man marked out by increasingly complex stages in social organisation, with at the apex, modern scientific European societies. The first emphasises that the most noble dimension in man is a natural attribute intrinsic to the human make-up which is gradually destroyed by society, where the second makes natural man a brute whose history lies in the future as he is gradually humanised (the word is not too strong) by contact with members of the scientific societies.

It is clear from the book that the Aborigines failed to live up to the French expectations. Unlike more attractive cultures like the Tahitians who were brought to the attention of the Europeans by Bougainville, the Aborigines seem to have suffered from their lack of appeal to the European travellers. As soon as the contacts go beyond mere sighting and exchanges of signs, their image deteriorates. They are described as black, dirty, covered with mud, soot and tattoos, with spindly legs and a prominent belly. Instead of being gentle, generous and grateful as one would expect them to be, they turn out to be vindictive, brutal and dishonest. To make matters worse their integration into white society proves to be disastrous. The nineteenth century humanists are thus forced to face the sad prospect of their inevitable extinction in the near future (Horner, Rosenman, Grant). For the French, whose initial enthusiasm was grounded upon aesthetic and philosophical ideals, this disenchantment led to an intellectualisation of the Aboriginal culture which allowed them to retain an interest in the culture without being confronted with it. This was possible only because the Aborigines remain culturally, historically and spatially remote from the French, in contrast with the British whose interactions with the Aborigines were conducted at the more pragmatic level of trying to cohabit on an inhospitable land, and having to deal with the perceived inability of the Aborigines to become integrated in the emerging Australian society.

Paradoxically it is this distancing which enables the French to retain much of the concept of 'primitiveness' which was attached to the Aborigines from the early contacts onward; however it is no longer associated with individual behaviour, but with cosmology (Durkheim, The elementary forms of religious life), patterns of classifications (Durkheim and Mauss, Primitive classification), kinship (Lévi-Strauss, The elementary structures of kinship) or modes of production (Testart, Le communisme primitif). Individuals cease to exist in favour of systems. No longer the ideal model of the noble savage, the Aborigines
are turned into the blueprint of social organisation in human societies. Interestingly enough, in Madagascar where I am working at present and where the French initial idealistic view of the Malagasy survives in the strongly emotive commitment of France toward that country, a theoretical study of enduring substance on the systems of kinship or modes of classification of the Malagasy remains to be done. One would have wished this phenomenon to be explored further in the book, beyond a passing reference in the last two articles (Lucich, Glowczewski), as it touches upon a major dilemma in the discipline of anthropology.

All in all the book is easy to read and informative, and it is designed to appeal to the reader with an active interest in Aborigines rather than to the expert who may find it wanting in analytical comments. Its general tone is mild enough not to upset any sensitivity and, being firmly anchored in past perceptions, it is able to detach itself from the ideological dimension which usually pervades a topic as political as this. Unavoidably, this lack of commitment to any particular conviction leads to a rather bland text which draws no conclusions and leaves the reader wanting an additional chapter at the end where all the issues barely touched upon throughout the book, could be developed and discussed in a satisfying manner.

Arlette Filloux
Madagascar


Jeanette Hoorn has done an excellent job of writing the accompanying text for the drawings of Joseph Lycett depicting the life and land use of the Aborigines of Sydney circa 1820-22. Her emphasis is on Lycett's drawings as ethnographic text, and in her discussion of the scenes she refers to the descriptions of Aboriginal society by L.E. Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society, who established an Aboriginal mission in the Lake Macquarie district in 1825.

The interpretation of social activity depicted in artwork (or photography) is a minefield for the unwary. In this instance, separated by both historical time and culture from the subjects of Lycett's work, Hoorn is to be commended for her use of Threlkeld's diaries. He interacted on a daily basis with the Aborigines of the region Lycett was familiar with, and he had the necessary intellectual curiosity, sensitivity, cross-cultural perspective (he had extensive experience in Polynesia) and literacy to describe them.

Indeed, it is in this area that Hoorn, in her anxiety to stress the Aboriginal assertive occupancy, defence and utilisation of their land, perhaps reads a little too much into Plate 4 'A distant view of Sydney and the harbour, Captain Piper's Naval Villa at Eliza point on the left, in the foreground a family of Aborigines', the first drawing she discusses. The predominant artistic practice at the time these drawings were executed was to relegate the Aborigines to the woodlands, along with the native flora and fauna.

This also became a tradition in historical writings, persisting until recent years when the active resistance of Aboriginals to colonisation began to receive attention from historians and others. Hoorn describes the central figure in a scene of a domestic group returning from a food-gathering quest" '... [he] faces the spectator head-on with his arm
drawn across his chest, ready to defend himself and his companions, he [Lycett] shows them as people in control of the land and ready to defend their use of it. Maybe. But the buildings in the background (across Sydney Cove to Point Piper and Circular Quay) indicate that the time of defence of the land is well past, at least in the Sydney region, and the man is simply carrying his hunting or fishing spears. Nevertheless, Aborigines did assert and defend their rights to their land and continue to do so vigorously, and Hoorn is absolutely correct in the point she wishes to make.

Lycett's drawings are remarkably similar in subject matter to those of a later amateur artist R.A. Ffarington, although much better executed. Both sets of Aboriginal scenes are very rich in ethnographic content, and help to bring alive the often scattered and scant written descriptions of Aboriginal lifestyle of the period. Executed on the east and west coasts of Australia respectively, they highlight the similarities in Aboriginal cultural forms generally in the round of seasonal food-gathering activity and ceremonial life, for example the various hunting and gathering activities such as spearing game and fishing, and the stylistic form of the corroboree. They also show regional variations, for example in body decoration, details of burial and mortuary rites, and artefacts. Additionally, they are testimony to European intrusion into the land as boats anchor, trees are felled and roads made, buildings are erected, and, in the case of Lycett Plate 16 'Aborigines with spears attacking Europeans in a rowing boat', the intruders are attacked.

Hoorn briefly places Lycett in context as a convicted forger, deported to New South Wales in 1813 and as a ticket-of-leave employed by the police, then convicted a second time in 1815 and sent to Newcastle gaol where he worked for the regional commandant. She defends his apparent lack of originality in his artwork and his eclectic borrowing of styles on the grounds that the nature of his work for the government meant he was often required to copy from drawings provided by others. Fair enough, Lycett had well developed drafting skills as the landscape backdrops to his figure drawings illustrate, and it was not until he was released from gaol and appears in the colonial muster 1819-1822 that he was his own master. He then faced the vexatious task of supporting himself as an artist and so remained unliberated from the stylistic demands of his patrons. Hoorn also observes (p.7) that Lycett was no skilled figure painter, a point amply illustrated. Plate 11 'Group of Aborigines with shields and spears' contains ten drawings of the one figure with slight variations, while in Plate 10 'A family of Aborigines taking shelter during a storm' the figures are executed in quite a different stylistic manner.

In his Aboriginal subject matter Lycett could take advantage of their otherness to express his own. His drawings have a freshness and spontaneity which is generally very appealing. His naive style is direct and conveys a sense of authenticity which is lacking in many representations of Aborigines where formal art training severely obscures the eye of the artist. The engravings from Collins 1802 (p.12) and J. Heaveside Clarke's 'Throwing the spear' 1813 (p.17) are cases in point, the artistic merits of the works notwithstanding. The Collins example is actually an engraving by F. Powell, probably from a sketch by Thomas Watling who portrayed Aborigines in naturalistic settings and poses as he observed them, in contrast to this example.

In Plate 14 'Aboriginals spearing fish ... ' Lycett approaches the 'typical' ethnographic painting, analogous to the typical landscape in which various elements (flora and fauna) are...
Aborigines are engaged in various forms of fishing - spearing fish in the sea from a rocky outcrop using four-pronged fishing spears, spearing marine life in a stream, diving for crayfish, roasting fish, interacting socially while fishing, cooking and eating seafood on the beach, and keeping a lookout on the headland. This same point can be made for Plate 6 'Contest with spears'.

Lycett intended his drawings to illustrate facets of Aboriginal life in the colony of New South Wales, his social scenes are intriguing and his landscapes convey a sense of the Australian countryside. Jeanette Hoorn has aided admirably his task by providing written descriptive context.

Lois Tilbrook
Sydney


Since the early 1960s, when assimilation lost favour among Australian activists, the Aboriginal hope was always to gain self-government in their communities without white men's heavy interference, and to run an agenda in accord with their Aboriginality.

There is a despondent conclusion in Peter Read's biography of Charles Perkins, a very complex character who was the Secretary to the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs until November 1988. This is that despite all Perkins's effort, after his dramatic suspension from his position, after long and vehement arguments in Parliament, and after the creation of the ATSIC structure by unsympathetic politicians, he lost his chance of wresting power for Aboriginal groups from mining councils and government intrusion.

Perkins was born near Alice Springs in 1936, a son of the remarkable achiever Hetti Perkins, organiser of meals and shelter for the town's outcast children. She was descended (on her mother's side) from eastern Arrentwe people. In 1941 an Anglican missionary, Father Percy Smith, fearing the wartime military presence there, removed some promising Aboriginal lads, including young Perkins, to suburban Adelaide, where his hostel confined the boys in Edwardian gentility and authority but provided much love. The institution became despotic when it lost Father Smith. The rebellious Perkins endured an unhappy apprenticeship until his strong talent for soccer took him to England, and brought him self-regard. On returning to Adelaide, he picked up 'assimilation' politics.

Peter Read concentrates on his political activity, first in social work among Sydney Aborigines, following his graduation from Sydney University in 1966. Read's account of the 1965 'Freedom ride', when Perkins led university students on a bus tour investigating some intolerant country towns, is vividly written. The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA), a citizens' welfare association, had been set up in South Sydney in 1964 by the Reverend Ted Noffs, for Aborigines migrating to the city. Perkins was its most vigorous Manager, encouraging young blacks like 'Chicka' Dixon onto the staff, and encouraging other employers to do likewise. But the dedicated Myrtle Cocks had prepared the ground for the FAA prior to Noffs, and persistent agitation from another association (the Aboriginal-
Australian Fellowship) had ended legal discrimination in 1963, thus paving the way. Read also has not mentioned the pioneer educational work of Tranby College.

Having visited many reserves in New South Wales, Perkins joined the federal Office of Aboriginal Affairs in 1968 with a clear notion of the innate strength of the Aboriginal community. He had supported the 1967 Referendum campaign of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) by providing the Foundation building as the venue for its Sunday meetings but Read has by-passed the successful Referendum. He asserts (on page 122) that the FCAATSI Aboriginal and Islander delegates had met in closed session for the first time in 1968, but (Sir) Doug Nicholls had begun a tradition for such closed sessions in 1960. The Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (which, throughout, Read calls the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship) closed down in 1969 because its campaigns had succeeded in abolishing official racial segregation within New South Wales.

Although, as Read says, the FACCTSI was deeply divided in 1970 by the attempt to alter its Constitution to allow only Aborigines voting and executive rights, the division was not upon racial lines. FCAATSI believed in integration, not assimilation. The World Council of Churches' financial grants were shared with the breakaway National Tribal Council, enabling FCAATSI to hold annual conferences in isolated Townsville and Alice Springs.

Perkins was above all one who demanded Aboriginal control of Aboriginal agendas. Read does not investigate how it was that FCAATSI, Aboriginal-run from 1973, was wound up in 1978 despite its new name and nationalist style.

It is sometimes difficult to follow the sequence of events, because Read, in order to contain the discussion of a subject touching different times of Perkins's career, will step from one year back to another, or forward to 1988 (when he interviewed Perkins). Due to the slow progress in Aboriginal politics it is possible that this method is acceptable, but readers not aware of the history will be puzzled.

The strength of the book is where Read establishes Perkins's motivations and purposes during his long term (1973-1988) as a 'hands-on' manager of Federal affairs. He would openly condemn perceived ministerial ignorance or perfidy, but he also had a knack for restraining inflamed Aboriginal meetings. His own good relations with different Ministers (like Holding and Chaney) were better than the media ever disclosed. After the Aboriginal Development Commission was launched with Perkins as chairman, Read shows that, by buying properties to diminish racial discrimination, whatever the probable economic risk, the ADC was ahead of the Department in acting for genuine Aboriginal social needs.

Jack Homer
Canberra


Goonininup is the Aboriginal name of the area until recently occupied by the Swan Brewery, the river frontage at the base of Mount Eliza, only about two kilometres from the centre of Perth. It is a level piece of ground with a freshwater spring on the north bend of
the Narrows looking across to South Perth, west down the Swan River towards Fremantle and the Ocean and east up Perth Water and to the upper reaches of the river. While Europeans see it as an unrivalled site for prestige development, the Aborigines claim it as a place of myth and history where the Waugal, the great ancestral snake, 'crawling his way to the sea, created the Swan River' (p.44).

This brief well-documented, well-illustrated survey fulfills its author's claim to be a 'compilation of recorded information about the Swan Brewery area from the time of early European exploration and settlement until 1987, that is, prior to the major dispute over the future of the Swan Brewery' (p.6). Since 1829 it has been in turn a small shipyard, a market garden, a 'feeding depot' for Aborigines, a 'Native Institution', a flour mill, a convict depot, a tannery, an ice plant and a brewery. A road linking Perth and Fremantle was built through it in 1853: this is now a paved highway carrying heavy traffic. The Swan Brewery occupied the site from 1888 until early in the 1980s (the report under review does not seem to record the date on which the company ceased its operations there). The illustrations include a distant view of the site and a close-up photograph from the early 1900s, but a recent close-up is lacking.

In 1980 Aboriginal organisations laid claim to the site with plans for an Aboriginal Commemorative Centre. There followed much controversy, but since this report was written a decision has been made by government in favour of the Aborigines.

Isobel White
The Australian National University


This little book consists of a collection of autobiographical fragments, written by students and ex-students from Walgett school, collected by the teacher, Cilka Zagar, who inspired the writing. What she and the children have to say is both touching and depressing, and the comments from a number of adult people in the town reflect quite different readings of the book.

Cilka Zagar's loving and productive relationship with the Aboriginal people of Walgett could be of great interest to teachers in racially divided communities. Her disciplinary practice consisted of getting the children to write about themselves. She says: '... they know that I want to know and that I really love them. They so often told me not to be so ignorant and to listen. So I learned to listen and they are still telling me'.

That theme of listening is one frequently heard from Aboriginal people and these young people's view of their lives may be a good beginning for the outsiders who are working in similar communities. The lives are represented in varied ways. Perhaps the most striking thing is the extent to which alcohol and racism, and even the experience of gaol, is part of everyday life. Some are angry at others for drunkenness and trouble; others describe their experiences of drinking, stealing and 'having a good time'. The stories are naive and in some ways could be those of young people anywhere expressing frustration at the limitations of their environment. Several say the town is still 'home sweet home'. The frequent references to difficulties with school and employment have as a backdrop a sense of community and
kin which emphasises that Aboriginal identity is a major and conscious aspect of these young Aborigines' lives.

The book is attractively produced and illustrated.

Gillian Cowlishaw
Sydney


The title of Gordon Reid's book stems from a remark made by Inspector Paul Foelsche, head of the Northern Territory Policy Force from 1870 to 1904. In 1874 Aborigines killed a telegraph official at the Roper River and Foelsche wrote to his friend John Lewis that he was despatching a party to recover the body and 'to have a Picnic with the Natives'. Foelsche's irony and subsequent vague reports of white punitive action on the Roper are not untypical in the theme of Reid's tale, summarised in the book's sub-title, 'Aboriginal-European relations in the Northern Territory to 1910', for, sadly, frontier violence generated elsewhere in Australia was repeated during the process of northern settlement. The book begins with a brief summary of South Australian experience before that colony's first attempt at Northern Territory settlement in 1864. British experience at the military settlements of Fort Dundas, Fort Wellington and Victoria, Port Essington, plus Aboriginal encounters with A.G. Gregory and John McDouall Stuart are covered with equal brevity. So are the Escape Cliffs fiasco and Aboriginal encounters with Overland Telegraph personnel and early droving parties. Chapters on the police and pastoral industry form the core of the book with Foelsche as a focal point. Mission activity, and the results of the belated South Australian humanitarian response complete the story.

Reid readily concedes that the book is 'written from the top', that is from mainly official records and without an Aboriginal perspective - but that is the major problem with all studies relating to Aborigines which are beyond the range of oral history. Much of the work is not original; the sections on Aboriginal-white relations in Central Australia rely heavily on M.C. Hartwig's excellent doctoral thesis, studies by Hassell and Gibbs provide the South Australian background prior to 1864, theses by Schmiechen and O'Kelly the mission side, and Elder's study of C.J. Dashwood much of the material on the humanitarian response. Reid's conclusions about the failure of South Australian Aboriginal policy - if inaction can be dignified by that name - and the reasons for the survival of Aboriginal culture in the north are not new either.

But the book is still a considerable achievement, partly for its depiction of Foelsche, who deserves to rank highly with the modern proponents of 'multi-skilling'. Administrator, policeman, amateur dentist, photographer, firearms expert, said to be 'the best lawyer outside the South Australian Bar', he also had a deep interest in Aboriginal culture coupled, says Reid, with a detachment that allowed him to sanction its destruction. However, the book's most notable achievement is to bring together widely scattered sources of information to form the first concise account of Aboriginal-white relations during the forty-seven years of South Australian rule in the Northern Territory.

Reid's style is fluent and lively, apart from a certain tedium in the later chapters, probably induced by excessive reliance upon official reports. In this work is seen the current state of knowledge; it will also show to those with particular interest in the subject how far we have yet to go in gaining a close understanding of black-white interaction. Still
unpublished studies in that area by Tony Austin and of the Northern Territory policy by Bill McLaren will help. Much more needs to be done - but it can safely be said that Reid's book is a valuable milestone along the way.

Alan Powell
The Northern Territory University


This volume has been seven years in the making, its gestation having spanned that of its publisher, the Northern Territory University (and gone past the bicentenary goal). All 216 subjects are dead, and most flourished before 1945, although there is much coverage of post-WWII events. The entries are set out in the style of the Australian dictionary of biography (ADB), whose files were drawn on for this volume. Unlike the ADB, the contributors are unpaid volunteers.

A praiseworthy feature of the volume is the inclusion of the biographies of numerous Aborigines, generally ones known through their association with ethnographers, missionaries, explorers or the police (as tracker or prisoner). Thus Aboriginal men comprise all but one of the Aboriginal entries in the volume: the only woman among the score of Aboriginal entries is Memorimbo (Rash Poll) of Port Essington.

The Aboriginal biographies are mostly of men of the 'Top End' and Roper River. These are by John Harris (Billiamook and Umballa, Gajiyuma, Mariac, Medlone, Memorimbo, Mira, Miranda), Keith Cole (Gabarla, James Japanma, Lazarus Lamilami), Bruce Shaw (Major, Nemarlu), Robyn Maynard (Kwalba, Spider Ngapunun, Yirawala) and one by E.W. Pretty (Tuckiar). John Harris also contributed the entry for James Noble, a Queensland Aboriginal missionary. The children of an Aboriginal mother and white father who have entries are Reuben John Cooper (by Anne Briggs), and Harold Hamilton and Timothy Hampton (both by Keith Cole). R.G. Kimber wrote the only entries on central Australian Aborigines apart from Kwalba (Arrarbi, Elikilyika, Minyana Jakamarra), and these, like Kimber's other contributions, are among the most detailed, and show what can be made of limited and scattered sources. Note that the Aboriginal entries are due to a small number of writers and are of high standard.

Given the nature of pre-1945 Northern Territory life, there is some Aboriginal involvement in most lives included, and much of interest to make the volume a necessary reference for any student of Northern Territory history. The frontier nature of the area and period covered, on the fringes of literacy and of official records, has hampered the contributors. In addition, the small size of the non-Aboriginal Territory population of the period presumably led to kinds of selectivity which the editors have had to accept. This can be seen in the unevenness of the articles, especially of non-Aboriginal subjects. The non-Aboriginal subjects are mostly 'Territorians': people who, as Xavier Herbert quipped, were usually born elsewhere. Actually, more than half the subjects were born in a southern state (NSW, Victoria, SA or Tasmania), and only seven were born in the Territory (mostly Top End Chinese).

A number of biographies have been authored by family members. These 'family' entries may be the ones which the editor refers to when he notes a departure from ADB practice:
we have rejected the established custom of editorially-imposed unity in favour of allowing the maximum permissible expression of personality, attitude - and even idiosyncracy [sic] - to come through in the writings of each author; 'colour' is not incompatible with historical worth (p.v).

Indeed there is much colour, detail and interest in some of these family articles and they are a welcome part of the volume. Unsurprisingly most conform to the maxim 'Speak no ill of the dead' and it is a pity that the editors have allowed contributors to make no mention of discreditable but important episodes, such as the criminal charges brought against C.G.H. Stott (1933/34) and against W.W. Braiding (1945), both relating to alleged assaults on Aboriginal people.

From the Aboriginal lives included it is notable that some of the nineteenth century Aborigines travelled extensively beyond the Territory with their European associates. For instance, the two Larakia men Billiamook and Umballa who 'were among the first Aboriginal people to welcome Goyder and his survey team to Port Darwin in 1869' went by ship to Adelaide the next year. 'On their return to Darwin, they caused considerable surprise by disembarking in the uniform of the Adelaide Volunteers.' And Medlone, who was 'about four years old in 1839 when the Port Essington garrison was established', along with two other young boys, was stranded for a time in Hong Kong in 1847.

It is easy to cite persons omitted from such a collection, and of course the editors' choices cannot follow a non-existent objective scale of worthiness for inclusion. And one could accept the editors' policy that the spread of entries should provide a broad reflection of life in the Territory rather than focussing on eminent public figures.

Nevertheless, there is cause for comment in the roll call of this volume, highlighted by some later and repetitive entries and the inclusion of some quite marginal subjects. For instance, there is a biography of Baudin of almost two pages, his only connection being his naming of features of the coastline without setting foot on it; and of Alexander Forrest, who at least was on Northern Territory soil (remembered in a cairn on the Stuart Highway, not mentioned).

The meaning of the cut-off date of 1945 for Volume One is not explained in the preface, and accordingly there is no clear division between this volume and the next. We assume that T.G.H. Strehlow is held over to the next volume, yet his Northern Territory years were all pre-1945 and after that he was only a visitor. On the other hand Lamilami (c1908-1977) is included though the years that earn him a place are post-war. Likewise Yirawala (c1890-1976) could be thought of as flourishing in the 1960s and 1970s, when he was making his reputation as a bark painter.

As the editors say,

A special effort has been made to record the lives of migrant groups, women and Aborigines, those people whose contribution to Territory society has been great but often poorly documented.

Accordingly, they felt that it was better to publish what could be found on such people, no matter how incomplete, than to leave them unrecorded.

The emphasis away from 'public figures' may explain but not excuse the absence of Justice T.A. Wells (mentioned under Tuckiar, whom he sentenced), or even Herbert Basedow (mentioned in the Mackay entry). But it would have been good to see articles for such figures as Bill Harley, C.H. Chapman of The Granites and the Centralian Advocate, the Policeman writer Vic Hall, Frank ('Frances of Central Australia') McGarry, or explorer-prospector Alan A. Davidson. Given the preponderance of CMS mission workers included,
it is strange not to find important and interesting Methodists like James Watson, T.T. Webb and the unlucky Len Kentish (who had his head chopped off by the Japanese).

If limitations of space were the concern, and 'eminent public figures' to be played down, the editors would have done well to omit some of the more than thirty articles from the ADB (simply giving a list of such omissions).

A notable Aboriginal omission is Albert Namatjira, featured however in the Rex Battarbee entry. There is no shortage of material now on 'The Man from Arltunga' Walter Smith, but there is no summary here of Kimber's biography. Bill Liddle of Angas Downs would have been an interesting inclusion with his several wives and children who have played important parts in the life of the Centre. Top End omissions, definitely pre-1945, include Durmugam (Smiler), with some material from archives to add to Stanner's biography; Harry Makarola (Mahkarolla), mainstay of the Milingimbi mission, and a key figure in the 'Caledon Bay affair' and trial - and with Lloyd Warner's 23 page biography of this man, his chief informant! The 'Caledon Bay affair' figures 'King' Wunggu and his sons are also absent, along with 'Slippery' Binjarpuma, a notorious figure in north east Arnhem Land in the 1930s and 1940s, and Thomson's right hand man Sergeant Reiwala. Other Aborigines who might have been included are the likes of Mariana, the 'King' of Bathurst Island, who would be well worth including as the first successfully to press a 'land rights' claim against the Commonwealth in the late 1930s!; Warumungu men King Dick (Cubadgee) and Willoberta Jack, or 'King' Charlie and Zulu (whose dealings over the Tennant Creek reserve with W.E.H. Stanner and geologist Woolnough are not mentioned in their entries).

The unevenness extends into some of the articles. The column on A.P. Elkin makes his links with the Northern Territory seem more tenuous than they were. Similarly the Chewings is taken with minor amendment from the ADB, with no amplification of his Northern Territory life.

As in the ADB, each entry closes with a useful list of sources. These vary quite a lot: some are merely 'Family information', while others, including most of those of Aboriginal subjects, are detailed. Some additional references that have been overlooked include the following: there is a photograph of Billiamook in the Foelsche collection, and several of his original drawings in the J.G. Knight collection, both in the SA Museum; the Stanner papers at AIATSIS; the Stott ethnographic collection is at the SA Museum. Lindsay Crawford 'a bachelor throughout his life' is mentioned in the reminiscences of his centenarian daughter Nellie Flynn; this, by the way, is not the only omission of mention of well-known Aboriginal descendants of a European subject.

Errors and omissions are inescapable in a work of this kind and even the ADB, with its numerous paid staff, publishes lengthening lists of errata. We hope that the NTDB would follow the same practice, and have sent a list of corrections and additions to them. Here we comment on a few of the articles on subjects relevant to Aborigines:

. We are not told that A.M. Blain (MHR) used Parliament in 1940 to slander the Hermannsburg missionaries and T.G.H. Strehlow as Nazis.
. Ellen Kettle says that C.E.A. Cook failed to implement certain parts of the 1928 Bleepley Report and furthermore that 'the government had long been concerned over the failure'. There is no evidence for the alleged concern of the government, and Donald Thomson was surely not 'recommending more support for the church missions' - this is one point on which Cook and Thomson saw eye to eye.

1 'Nineteen-nine years of living history', Northern Territory Digest, August/September 1980:14-16.
Mounted Constable Murray, we are told by Carment, 'was born during the 1890s in Victoria' (sc. 9 February 1884) and 'died in Adelaide during the 1960s, survived by his wife'. The vagueness here is exceptional: most entries pay attention to the basics of birth, death and marriage. The Barrow Creek constable position never 'carried with it the title of Chief Protector of Aborigines', and there is no mention of Murray's later postings to Harts Range and Roper River; or of the Anderson & Hitchcock exhumations (from the 'Kookaburra' site) or the Willoberta Jack affair, both 1929 events being fairly well documented.

Gordon Sweeney did not recommend 'a new mission near the mouth of the Liverpool River', but more mission patrols to the area - by Aboriginal workers.

The NTU Press have produced the volume well, but there could have been a bit more attention to detail in final editing. The only photographs are the portraits in a collage around the cover, but there is no key to them: for instance, on the front is a good portrait of C.L.A. Abbott, and on the back of Miss Pink. Unlike the ADB, the pages lack a running header, which makes locating entries a bit slower. The editors have attempted to supply a 'qv' to direct the reader from one article to another, but the policy has not been applied uniformly. Several Aborigines are cross-referenced under variant spellings of their names, but not Lamilami (Merwulidji), and a number of contributors use idiosyncratic spellings for names from Aboriginal languages.

For all its shortcomings, this volume is an essential reference for those interested in Territory history.

Acknowledgement
We are grateful to Neil Andrews, Willis Crocker, Philip Jones, R.G. Kimber, Jane Simpson and Michael Walsh for discussion of the book under review.

David Nash
ANU, AIATSIS

Jeremy Long
Sydney


This book represents the final report of a three year Research Fellowship in Aboriginal Language maintenance at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. It deals initially with the statistics of language loss, showing how of some 250 languages that existed at the time of first contact, at least 160 have already become extinct and only 20 are in a relatively healthy state. Subsequent chapters deal with the following:
The importance of keeping language strong,
Attitudes and policies on Aboriginal languages,
What is being done to keep languages strong,
Recurrent problems in keeping language strong,
Key issues in Aboriginal language maintenance,
The language loss process.

The book remains a report both in style and content, summarising the state of affairs and suggesting measures to arrest the decline of the languages. There are occasional brief
quotations from Aboriginal people about their experiences, for instance being forced to speak English in dormitories, but on the whole details and personal aspects are absent. It would have had considerable impact if for instance we had been given the history of just one of the many failed language revival projects, following it through from the initial enthusiasm and euphoria, through various vicissitudes, such as the departure of the enthusiastic people and local jealousies, through to inertia and final collapse. From such a study it would become clear that shortages of funds, lack of support staff and similar matters stressed by the author (p.85), important as they might be, are not as vital as the human factor: the main difficulties with such projects are usually unforeseen and even unforseeable. The excellent Wangkumara program at Bourke for instance collapsed mainly because the skilled speaker, on whose knowledge and support the project depended, had to leave town as the cotton gin affected his health. In several other locations programs declined because of local rivalries. In one town the headmaster was instrumental in starting a language revival program, but then felt threatened by the influx of outside finance and radical young staff over whom he had no control, and who he felt disrupted his school. In another much smaller township the community was totally split over the language issue. Such cases show that solutions are indeed even more difficult than is implied by the report.

An aspect of language that is not discussed in this work is nevertheless worthy of being included: language is important not only as a code of communication as Schmidt stresses, but also as a vehicle for traditional literature. As the language declines, the esoteric knowledge of the details of traditional literature, the ancient songs and the detail of the mythology are lost, and these more than anything else give identity to people and their land. A language package cannot save them directly, but can do so indirectly, through inspiring growing pride in Aboriginal traditions.

There is occasional reference in this book to Batchelor College, and some mention of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, but it would have been valuable if we had been given more detail about their important achievements, as well as further information on some of the excellent specific language courses that are now available. The present book is useful as a summary of the status of Aboriginal Languages in the late eighties. It contains valuable recommendations which need to be implemented.

Luise Hercus
The Australian National University

BOOK NOTES


Aboriginal Studies Press has produced another beautiful picture book, with appeal to adults and children, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The first one, The story of the falling star, reviewed previously, was from New South Wales. This one is from Western Australia and tells about the constellation Europeans call the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. Greek mythology tells how the Pleiades took refuge in the sky from the unwelcome attentions of a lecherous man; the Aboriginal legend is similar.
BOOK REVIEWS


Graeme Dixon is the first winner of the David Unaipon Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island writers. His poetry is vigorous and disturbing, whether he is writing about prison life, ill-treatment of Aborigines by Europeans, temporary forgetfulness induced by alcohol, or of the homesickness suffered by Aboriginal city-dwellers for a faraway birthplace.


This book is the record of an exhibition of photographs at the Museum of Victoria on show from 4 September 1989. The earliest exhibits were photographs taken in the 1870s, the most recent in the 1980s. They reveal women of strong character from girlhood to old age.


This useful textbook answers many questions that the beginning student might ask about Aboriginal languages, for example whether they are 'primitive', i.e. simple, or complex, and how many there were in 1788. It is a pity that such a useful little book carries such a high price.


This number consists of one article by the late Eric Michaels himself, the other nine are in his memory and there is a partial guide to his written work, much of it concerning Australian Aborigines and television. The last three articles, by Deborah Bird Rose, Tim Rowse and Robert Hodge are about Aborigines and television and Michaels' unique vision of the relation between the two.

Isobel White
The Australian National University

Editors' note

Owing to lack of space some book reviews have been held over until the next volume.

Thanks
Sally - Isobel White
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Typescripts must be double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Submit two hard copies and keep one. 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 footnote references (e.g. Saunders 1976:27). 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. Once manuscripts are accepted, authors may wish to submit final versions on computer disks using only Microsoft Word (Version 3.02 or 4) for Macintosh computers.

Authors should follow the usage of *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, 4th edn (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988).

1 Rowley 1971:107; see also Barwick 1981.
2 Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
3 Fison and Howitt 1880:96.
4 See Cox 1821.
6 Bemdt and Bemdt 1965:xiv.
7 Colonial Secretary - In Letters (CSIL), 30/1722.
8 L.E. Threlkeld to A. M’Leay, 15 July 1831, CSIL, re Land 120, 315527 (in 45/514)

Bibliography entries:

Details of authors' names must be given as on title page; do not abbreviate. Journal titles and descriptions of documents and other archival material must be given in full.


Colonial Secretary - In Letters (CSIL), 1830, 1831. Archives Office of New South Wales, Sydney.

Cox, G. Journal kept by Mr George Cox on his late tour to the Northward and Eastward of Bathurst etc. 1821. MS. Mitchell Library, Sydney.


Saunders, Reg. 'Parabar the shark', *Aboriginal and Islander Identity* 2(10), 1976:27-8.