Aboriginal History

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Reviews

*Fighting Words, Writing about Race* by Raymond Evans 120

*Massacre Myth* by Rod Moran 124

*Djabugay Country: An Aboriginal History of Tropical North Queensland* by Timothy Bottoms 128

*Aboriginal Women by Degrees: Their Stories of the Journey Towards Academic Achievement* edited by Mary Ann Bin-Salik 130

*Geebungs and Snake Whistles: Koori People and Plants of Wreck Bay* by the Wreck Bay Community and Cath Renwick 131

*Continent of Hunter Gatherers: New Perspectives in Australian Prehistory* by Harry Lourandos 132

*That's My Country Belonging to Me: Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria* by Ian D. Clark 135

*Is That You, Ruthie?* by Ruth Hegarty 137

*Hard Yards* by Melissa Lucashenko 137

*Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century* edited by Margarette Lincoln 139

*Yumba Days* by Herb Wharton 140

*Encounter at Nagalarramba* by Roslyn Poignant with Axel Poignant 143

*The Civilised Surveyor: Thomas Mitchell and the Australian Aborigines* by DWA Baker 145

*Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry* by Dawn May 148
Introduction

As the front cover indicates, this volume of *Aboriginal History* celebrates the life and work of Isobel Mary White, popularly known as 'Sally'. Maggie Brady's preface explains why the journal's editorial board chose to produce a commemorative edition in Sally's honour. This introduction supplements the preface by thanking those who have played a key role in compiling this 'Sally White' edition.

On behalf of the editorial board I therefore thank the joint volume editors, Luise Hercus and Grace Koch, for their fine work in drawing together a varied set of articles reflecting on Sally White's life, career in anthropology and her special interests in Aboriginal studies. Maggie Brady deserves special mention for her excellent preface in addition to her article, and also help with identifying people in photographs. Luise Hercus has once again collected an informative set of book reviews in her capacity as reviews editor. Dick Barwick has again done a superb job with our front cover as has Tikka Wilson with the typesetting and production management. The task of copy editing was greatly eased by Bernadette Hince, who took on this duty at short notice and worked expeditiously to complete it. I am personally grateful to Peter Read, who chairs the editorial board, for giving the production team much appreciated leadership and together we thank his fellow board members for their continuing support and advice. Finally, all the authors of articles, book reviews and notes deserve much of the credit for making this volume a worthy tribute to Sally White. Each of them has helped ensure that this volume not only commemorates her life and work but will be an important resource for everyone interested in Aboriginal studies.

In conclusion, a sad omission from this volume is the article Isabel McBryde is preparing on Sally White's work in South Australia. Because of various unforeseen circumstances the article was not ready for this volume at the time of going to press. We are therefore holding it over for a later volume.

Ian Howie-Willis
Managing Editor
Preface

This edition of *Aboriginal History* is dedicated to Isobel White (whom we all knew as Sally White), who died in August 1998 after a long and interesting life. We shall miss her humour and kindness as well as her steady contributions to Aboriginal studies over many years.

Sally was born in 1912 in Harrow, now a suburb of London. Like many members of her family she went to King Edward’s High School, and between 1930 and 1933 she studied economics at Girton College, Cambridge. In her second year there, she was invited to attend Maynard Keynes’ lectures, along with a select group. Her family were Labour party voters, and Sally herself was a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s. She had a scholarship to study for a master’s degree in Toronto; this was in 1934 at the height of the depression in Canada. In fact, as she confessed later, she spent most of her time there engaged in political activity, and editing the *Young Worker*, a communist newspaper. She left to return to the UK when her father was taken ill. Back in the UK she worked as a factory inspector for the Home Office. She met Michael White and they were married at Hampstead registry office in 1938. After the prolonged difficulties of the war years in the UK, Sally and Michael emigrated to the United States in 1947 with their two sons Nicholas and Jonathan. Their third child, Charlotte, was born in Austen, Texas, where the family spent five of the six years to 1953. Unfortunately because of pre-war left wing political involvements, it proved necessary for the family to leave the US abruptly in 1953. Michael obtained a job at CSIRO in Canberra with the assistance of Dr (later Sir) Otto Frankel. As the McCarthy era abated, the family returned to the US, to Missouri, but the attractions of Australia held sway, and Melbourne became their home from 1958 to 1977.

The brief residence in Missouri was important in that, after a decade of commitment to her family, Sally returned to academic pursuits. Relinquishing the economic field, she took some undergraduate courses in anthropology (‘My heart wasn’t in economics,’ she said). It was here that Sally first read the work of Mrs Daisy Bates — it was the only Australian book in the library. This was the beginning of a lifelong fascination with Daisy Bates. Back in Melbourne Sally became first a tutor, later a lecturer in anthropology at Monash. She joined a field trip in 1966 to northern South Australia (Oodnadatta, Maree and Port Augusta) with Cath Ellis and Luise Hercus, which was her first fieldwork experience with Aboriginal people.

In 1969 she first visited Yalata Lutheran Mission, a community of displaced Western Desert people who had been relocated to the edge of the Nullarbor Plain in 1952. She was with Margaret Kartomi the musicologist, and on later visits combined forces with Luise Hercus and Cath Ellis. Margaret Kartomi draws on material collected on that trip for her piece in this volume (‘Play songs by children and their educational implica-
tions'), which includes the eponymous *Witpikspa* (weetbix) song. Luise Hercus, Sally and others also made fieldtrips to the Lake Eyre Basin, and it is from here that Luise collected the linguistic material documented in "'Wire Yard': A song from near Lake Eyre'. As the article by Luise Hercus and Grace Koch observes, Mick McLean, who was the last of the Wangkangurru speakers to be born and brought up in the Simpson Desert, was particularly fond of Sally whom he referred to as 'Old Charlie' — the nearest he could get to pronouncing her name. Sally also made frequent visits to Walwa on the Upper Murray where her daughter Charlotte was working as a doctor. Barry Blake and Julie Reid in this volume provide an analysis of the available information on the Pallangan language spoken in this region. Another contribution, by Lynette Oates, documents the historical role of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in preserving knowledge of Aboriginal languages.

In August 1970, supported by a grant from what was then the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Sally began her substantive fieldwork at Yalata on a project to investigate Aboriginal women’s status in tradition life. This was published in 1978 in Fay Gale’s edited book on *Woman’s Role in Aboriginal Society*. She went to Yalata again in January 1971 and in 1974, with Michael dropping her off there while en route to Western Australia for his own entomological research. The contribution to this volume by CSIRO entomologist David Rentz (‘Travels with Sally’) provides some vignettes from these trips.

Sally was the first anthropologist to work at Yalata, although Ronald and Catherine Berndt had worked with members of the same group of desert people in the 1940s when these people were still living in and around Ooldea Soak on the Trans-Australian railway line. Sally believed that the Lutheran Evangelical Mission which ran the community was antagonistic to anthropologists. Nevertheless she gained access, and camped at what was known as 'Big Camp', usually with Polly Prater or Alice Cox, two important women who feature in *Fighters and Singers*. My contribution to this edition (‘The politics of space and mobility’) which was inspired by Sally’s work, traces the inception of the Big Camp idea at Yalata and highlights its political underpinnings. Women at Yalata were keen to share their knowledge with a female anthropologist and Sally witnessed several ceremonies during the periods of her fieldwork. She documented and published on a rainmaking ritual: ‘It always rained afterwards!’ she observed. Her work at this time included a publication on hunting and the use of dogs — a theme taken up by Betty Meehan, Rhys Jones and Annie Vincent in their ethnography of the use of dogs among the Anbarra. Kingsley Palmer’s article (this volume) ‘Favourite foods and the fight for country’ provides a further contribution to the ethnography of economic activities, which deals with the cash economy and artefact production, as well as hunting and foraging. Sally’s personal collection of Yalata artefacts included a small mulga carving of a wombat (found in the Nullarbor region), made by a Yalata man for whom they were a speciality. ‘A Hughie Windlass wombat’ she declared, ‘has wombatness, the essence of wombat’.

Monash University had sponsored a series of seminars on Aboriginal affairs in 1972 and 1973, which were collected and published as *Aborigines in the 70s*, a series which recognised the dramatic changes in Aboriginal policy brought about by the new Labor government. These changes included a new Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the appointment of the Woodward Commission, the inauguration of the National Abo-
original Consultative Council, and the incorporation of Aboriginal communities which meant the beginning of the end of mission and welfare control. Sally’s article in the collection of Monash seminars: ‘The Nundroo incident: the trial of an Aboriginal football team’, documents a landmark trial in which — probably for the first time — Aboriginal defendants from an Aboriginal community were fully legally represented and assisted by an interpreter, in court. The defendants were young Yalata men who had caused a (relatively minor) affray at the Nundroo roadhouse while returning slightly intoxicated from a football match. Local police carrying loaded firearms had arrived at the Aboriginal camp in the early hours of the following morning to arrest those involved. The Yalata men were defended by lawyers from a well-known firm of solicitors in Adelaide, Elliott Johnston and Co, and Sally appeared as an expert witness for the defence. By choosing to write this article, Sally once more honoured her socialist principles. In particular, she documented the racist provocation to which Yalata Aborigines had been subjected by the roadhouse proprietor both before and during the incident.

After Michael and Sally retired, in 1977 they moved from Melbourne to Canberra, where Sally became a visitor in the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University (ANU). She befriended Pearl Duncan who was studying anthropology at ANU, and who has contributed an article for this volume that Sally had always encouraged her to write: ‘British Justice’. Once in Canberra, Sally revived her longstanding interest in Mrs Daisy Bates, which had been nurtured over the years by anecdotes from Yalata people who had known Bates at Ooldea. Sally began to make use of the National Library collections which contain the ninety-nine folios of Daisy Bates’ papers, and embarked upon a systematic reading of these handwritten papers. This eventuated in the publication of Bates’ monumental work *The Native Tribes of Western Australia* which Sally edited (National Library of Australia 1985).

Throughout her life, Sally was a voracious and eclectic reader, and a feminist. During her last twenty years in Canberra she belonged to an extraordinarily active women’s reading group. Afternoon meetings (always with a cup of tea) were held weekly at a member’s house. The group proved to be a source of mutual support and friendship to its members, as well as providing the opportunity to read and discuss hundreds of books. Throughout her life, Sally’s academic contributions were balanced by a strong commitment to the roles of professor’s wife, mother to her three children, later grandmother to six grandchildren. Isabel McBryde, who has written movingly about Sally’s life, was a loyal friend to her and delivered the eulogy at her funeral in Canberra. Indeed each of the contributions to this volume of *Aboriginal History* is a small tribute to the life of this warm, witty and intelligent woman.

Maggie Brady
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
A tribute to Isobel Mary White

This tribute to Sally White by Isabel McBryde was first published in the obituaries section of *Aboriginal History*, volume 21. As this present volume commemorates the life and work of Sally White, it is fitting to reprint Professor McBryde’s tribute here.

* * *

Isobel White, or Sally, as we have all known her with such deep affection and respect, was for long a much valued member of the *Aboriginal History* editorial board. It was with deep sadness that we learnt of her death in August 1998.

Sally was a very special person within her family, ‘an important person’ to Charlotte, Nicholas and Jonathon and their families. The family was at the core of her life, throughout all its changes. Whether based in London, Texas, Missouri, Melbourne or Canberra, the love that sustained this core was unchanged.

Sally was important to all of us — in so many different ways. She had a remarkable breadth of understanding of, and sensitivity to, others, responding to our diverse lives and concerns. In these concerns she so often sustained us. Caring for people, she never drew back from that sustaining rôle, however demanding. Luise Hercus tells me that Sally once said to her: ‘I feel like a wailing wall’. That can perhaps raise a flash of guilt. How often did we impose on the kindness so freely offered?

Sally was a remarkable person; it is appropriate to begin with her human qualities. We will all long remember her courage, her determination, above all her integrity and directness in relations with others. She cared intensely for people, concerned that justice and honesty should prevail in human dealings, both personal and collective. Social justice and equity were important principles that informed her decisions in relation to wider society and political action.

Born and brought up in England, Sally’s youth was spent first in Harrow, then later in Birmingham when her father took up an appointment as headmaster there. Brilliant at mathematics, Sally went straight on from school to read Economics at Cambridge. This was in Milton Keynes’ department. She completed the course in 1933, one of those women students accepted by the Cambridge academic establishment, though not to the extent of being actually awarded a degree. At the completion of her studies at Girton she was awarded a travelling scholarship for 1934–35 to undertake research in Canada on migrants and outworkers. At this time her concerns for society also prompted her to be politically active, both in England and in Canada. On her return from Canada she became an energetic member of the Fabian Society. Her professional work in these pre-war years was with both private firms and Government, as a factory inspector and personal assistant to senior management. In 1938 she married Michael White, brilliant young scientist. During the war both were engaged in government serv-
ice and spending much time in London experienced the years of intense bombing. At
the end of the war she was also caring for two small sons.

After the war Michael moved to appointments in the United States, where the
family spent in all ten years before he took up the Chair of Zoology in Melbourne. In
Melbourne Sally met with grace the demands on her time and energies as a professorial
wife, caring mother and grandmother. However, she also began a new career in Anthro-
pology. It has brought her international renown. How did this transformation of Cam-
bridge-trained economist, then wife and mother, to anthropologist occur?

While in Missouri and when the children had grown to school age, Sally took up
academic study again. Building on her concerns with social questions and society, she
chose anthropology. In Melbourne she maintained this interest, first through the
museum and the Victorian Anthropological Society, then from 1964 as a member of the
staff of the new Department of Anthropology at Monash University. Her students there
remember her as a dedicated, inspiring teacher. Rigorous and incisive in her own work,
she encouraged them to achieve the same standards. As adviser, supervisor and exami-
ner she soon earned Australia-wide recognition.

For her own research she chose to consider the roles of women in Aboriginal soci-
ety. This focused on desert groups, with major fieldwork in the late 1960s and 1970s
often in collaboration with linguist Luise Hercus and musicologists Catherine Ellis and
Helen Payne (see White 1970; Hercus and White 1973; White 1977; White 1979; White

She brought fresh insights to research from the breadth of her own intellectual
background and personal experience, as well as an independent creative stance. Her
work was innovative, exploring hitherto neglected areas that are now regarded as cen-
tral to the discipline. It resulted in a number of important published articles, and the
research papers on Central Desert women lodged with Monash University.

Fieldwork was a major part of her life in those two decades, often combined with
Michael's fieldwork on the Nullarbor and in Western Australia. At Yalata on the Nullar-
bor she worked over many years from 1969 with the women of that community, espe-
cially Alice Mangkatina (Alice Cox) and her family (see White 1985a). Of this she wrote:

What I looked forward to most as I approached Yalata on each of my visits was
Alice's beautiful welcoming smile (White et al. 1985, p. 214).

The women at Yalata shared their lives with her in ways very important to her, taking
her on bush trips and introducing her to significant places such as Pidinga. They often
called her kapali (grandmother).

This made her think of Daisy Bates (she says 'uncomfortably': Fighters and Singers,
1985a, p. 215). The comment brings to my mind her major work of the 1970s and 1980s,
the editing of Daisy Bates' Native Tribes of Western Australia. This book was the product
of meticulous historical and anthropological research. It brought to scholarly readership
Mrs Bates' serious anthropological recording of the societies of Western Australia. It is a
significant contribution to Australian anthropology, and to the history of anthropology
in Australia. Its editing, and analysis of the complexities of Daisy Bates' life and work
with Aboriginal groups engaged all those intellectual qualities we associate with Sally's
research. It shows so clearly her incisive, yet objective, non-judgemental and sensitive
command of analysis. It is a magnificent achievement. Appropriately it was launched in
December 1985 by her friend Ken Colbung, himself a Nyungar of southwestern Western Australia. He then chaired the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, a body of which Sally was long an active member.

From the early 1980s Sally was an active member of the editorial board of Aboriginal History. She was review editor for many years, and co-editor with Judith Wilson and Isabel McBryde of the two special volumes honouring Diane Barwick (vols 11 and 12). Her wide intellectual interests, acumen and extensive international experience and contacts made her a magnificent editor and board member. We all benefitted from her wisdom and her counsel offered in friendship. Her special expertise in ethnohistory, melding history and anthropology, is shown in the beautiful paper ‘The birth and death of a ceremony’, published in Aboriginal History (White 1980).

Sally’s commitment to Aboriginal anthropology has continued in recent years. When direct research was no longer possible, she remained involved through the editorial board of Aboriginal History. She still examined theses, and was always there in an advisory role for friends and colleagues.

Her research and writing from the 1960s are major contributions to Aboriginal studies, both empirically and theoretically. We think of significant books such as:

- the Daisy Bates volume, The native tribes of Western Australia (White 1985b)
- Fighters and Singers edited with Diane Barwick and Betty Meehan
- the school text book Before The Invasion, co-authored with Colin Bourke and Colin Johnson;
- the volumes of Aboriginal History for which she was co-editor and review editor.

There are also important articles, such as that on dogs (their roles in hunting and social relation with Aboriginal people) at Yalata (White 1972) and chapters in books edited by others such as Fay Gale’s Women in Aboriginal Society (White 1970); R.M. Berndt’s Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s (White 1977); Caroline Larrington’s Feminist Companion to Mythology (with Helen Payne: White and Payne 1992); and Julie Marcus’ First in their Field (1993). There is also her major research report on desert women lodged with Monash University.

For Sally her intellectual interests were matters of exploration, of ever seeking new understanding. They were driven by that perception and wisdom she brought to all her living, and was so generous in sharing. We have so much to thank her for, and to celebrate in her memory.

To her family, especially Charlotte, Nicholas and Jonathan we extend our deepest sympathy in their personal loss.

May I end by adapting the wording Sally, Diane and Betty chose in their dedication of Fighters and Singers, to Shirley Andrew.

To Sally,

Who knows about scholarship and learning and cares about people.

Isabel McBryde
Note
This tribute builds upon the eulogy I was honoured to be invited to present at the funeral service in Canberra on 28th August 1998. A similar tribute, but focusing on Sally’s contribution to Australian anthropology, will be included in a forthcoming issue of Canberra Anthropology, with the agreement of both Dr Peter Read, chairman of the Aboriginal History editorial board, and Dr Patrick Guinness, editor of Canberra Anthropology.

Isabel McBryde is Professor Emerita of Archaeology at the Australian National University, where she is currently a Visiting Fellow in History of the School of Humanities. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

References


The politics of space and mobility: controlling the Ooldea/Yalata Aborigines, 1952–1982

Maggie Brady

Abstract

In 1977 Isobel (Sally) White described the camp sites, spatial organisation and mobility of Pitjantjatjara-speaking people at Yalata, a community 1000 kilometres northwest of Adelaide, South Australia. She remarked on the unusual living arrangements of that community, in which the entire Aboriginal population was periodically relocated from one Big Camp to another somewhere on the Yalata reserve, 4650 square kilometres of land running east–west along the Eyre Highway. In this article, I show that the unusual arrangement she described did not arise spontaneously, but was one of several last-ditch strategies designed to force Yalata people to remain well south of the dangerous and prohibited area of the Maralinga atomic testing site. White observed and described this state of affairs without knowing its origins. She and the people with whom she lived up until the early 1970s could also not have imagined that resettlement in the spinifex country of the Great Victoria Desert would eventually take place, and that there would be a reclamation of the wide-ranging mobility the people once had.

In 1949 one hundred and thirty Aboriginal men, women and children from the United Aborigines’ Mission (UAM) station at Ooldea Soak became actors in the feature film ‘Bitter Springs’. Accompanied by their missionary carers, they travelled east by train from Ooldea, on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert in South Australia, to the film site at Warren’s Gorge, near Quorn. There, for the director Ralph Smart of Ealing Studios, they acted out a fictional dispossession of their land, a dispossession which was already taking place in real life.

‘Bitter Springs’ was billed as an action romance telling the story of a white Australian settler family who, accompanied by a flock of sheep and a trusty Aboriginal helper ‘Black Jack’, trek into unknown territory to take up land leased to them by the government for 80 pounds a year. ‘You need land to grow, new land’ announces Wally King (Chips Rafferty), the family head, as they set off to find a new home with reliable water. But things go wrong. They discover the perfect site, only to find the ‘Karigani’ tribe, played by the Ooldea people, ensconced at the desired waterhole of the film’s title. Cautious hospitality is offered by the ‘blacks’ at first, but the settlers outstay their welcome and when they build a hut hostilities break out. Into this tense situation comes a firm but friendly trooper (Michael Pate), with some Aboriginal companions; he is knowledgeable and somewhat sympathetic to the local ‘tribes’. He explains to the settlers that the springs have been a tribal home to the Aborigines for a thousand years,
that ‘the land’s sort of sacred to them’. Wally King observes that the trooper seems to be on the blacks’ ‘side’, but Pate responds by saying that his job is to protect both black and white. He does not suggest the settlers should withdraw, however. Instead he offers the headstrong King three options for dealing with the Aborigines: ‘You can shove ‘em off”, he says, ‘ease ‘em off, or you can find some way of taking them in with you’ — and through this advice he ultimately betrays the Aborigines. The story ends with the local tribesmen being ‘taken in’: working as shearsers for the settlers. Released in 1950, the film parallels the fate of its Aboriginal protagonists over the subsequent three decades.

In the years that followed, the Ooldea people were both ‘shoved’ and ‘eased’ off large tracts of the Great Victoria Desert, their home. The UAM station was closed, a portion of their land was appropriated for atomic test sites at Emu and Maralinga, and the people were excluded from the sites and walking routes of their country. They were relocated further south, where new missionary carers, Lutherans, took them in and monitored their previously free-ranging mobility.

Closing the mission

The mission station from which the film directors selected their Aboriginal cast was a tenuous outpost on the edge of a waterless stretch of the Great Victoria Desert. Aboriginal groups of the western desert bloc had been walking in and out of the Ooldea Mission since ration distribution first commenced there in 1933, and had used the permanent water of the Ooldea Soak for centuries before that.\(^1\) A few kilometres south of Ooldea, the Trans-Australian railway line, running east to Port Augusta and west to Perth, had also attracted Aboriginal people since its construction between 1912 and 1917. As a result of the impact of the railway line construction, Daisy Bates selected Ooldea as the location for her work among the ‘natives’, and camped there between 1919 and 1935. The UAM set up dormitories for Aboriginal boys and girls, ran a boys’ brigade and a school, conducted Christian services and distributed rations. During the UAM’s tenure of nearly twenty years, several hundred desert people came in out of the desert on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.\(^2\) Indeed, many of those who played the ‘wild blacks’ in ‘Bitter Springs’ had themselves only recently come from the spinifex country. These people were travellers of great distances over harsh country. The walking routes to Ooldea from the north and northwest were dotted with rock-holes, many of which could be dry on occasions. Ooldea itself, Tjintakara (west of Serpentine Lakes) and Wantu (north of Cook) were some of the few permanent waters. In later years people described that they drank from water roots to survive the last waterless leg of the journey to Ooldea. Ronald and Catherine Berndt noted in 1941 that there was movement out of Ooldea altogether and into the spinifex after good rains; on one occasion out of a population of approximately 200 people at the Soak, 120 left for the spinifex\(^3\). The railway was rapidly taken up by Aboriginal people as a means of transport. It provided passage (in open wagons) to and from Cundeelee in the west for ceremonial visits. From Cundeelee (Western Australia) people travelled north, to the Warburton region. Desert people also travelled east by train to Tarcoola to attend ceremonies in the

\(^1\) Bolam 1923; Bates 1938.
\(^2\) Brady 1987a.
\(^3\) Berndt and Berndt 1942a.
region between Bulgunnia station and Coober Pedy. Ironically, the existence of the rail-
way was to be a major reason for the selection of the atomic test site which came to be
known as Maralinga - a site which lies just north-west of Ooldea — and which was the
cause of their eventual exclusion from the land.

There had been failed attempts over several years to relocate the UAM mission to
a more hospitable spot, but the missionaries running the Ooldea outpost lost out alto-
gether when the establishment was forced to close down suddenly (as a result of inter-
nal politics within the UAM) in June 1952, and ‘their people’ were handed over to a
rival group, the Lutherans. At the closure of the mission, rations were distributed for
the last time and several large contingents of Ooldea people set off by train to live with
kin in Cundeelee, and in Ernabella. A new property for the Ooldea Aborigines had been
purchased, together with 7000 sheep, by the South Australian government in advance
of these developments (in March 1951), which was to be managed by the Lutheran
Evangelical Church. The property was part of Yalata Station, 140 km south of Ooldea on
the edge of the Nullarbor Plain, on country alien to desert people. Only a few dozen
Ooldea people remained after the large groups had left for elsewhere, and this small
group was hurriedly transported to Yalata (amid considerable confusion) by local
Lutherans. A large group of about one hundred people — who had already started the
journey to their chosen destination of Ernabella — was rounded up over the next few
weeks, and deposited at Yalata. This task was accomplished by the native patrol officer
employed by the Woomera authorities.

Curbing Aboriginal mobility — the role of MacDougall

Like the trooper in 'Bitter Springs', Water MacDougall, the native patrol officer who had
most to do with the Ooldea people, was caught between his sympathies for the Aborig-
ines and the exigencies of his job.

MacDougall was a middle-aged man who had spent three years as stock manager
at Ernabella, a Presbyterian mission in northern South Australia.4 The Commonwealth
authorities initially approached Syd Kyle-Little (a Northern Territory patrol officer with
experience of several long foot patrols in Arnhem Land5) for the job. In the end, Mac-
dougall was hired in November 1947. He was employed as a native patrol officer by the
Weapons Research Establishment (WRE)6 at Woomera (then engaged in a guided mis-
sile testing program) to control any interference with the ‘habits of Aborigines and any
areas of special interest to them’.7 To this extent his job was similar to that of the North-
ern Territory patrol officers appointed by the Commonwealth, who aimed to protect the
traditional lifestyle of Aboriginal people and counter the influences which were impel-
ling them to leave their country.8 He was also appointed as a Protector under the South
Australian Aborigines’ Act, so he reported to the Aborigines Protection Board as well as

6. The Long Range Weapons Establishment was formed in 1948, and was reorganised in 1955 to
produce the Weapons Research Establishment, with headquarters in Salisbury north of
Adelaide. For consistency I have referred throughout to WRE.
to the Woomera Superintendent. At times it was unclear exactly to whom he was responsible. Ultimately, though, it was

the wishes and policies of Government to which he [MacDougall] adhered, rather than to the wishes of Aborigines...[D]ifferences with his employers arose because he believed it should be possible to serve the interests of both Government and Aborigines, if only Government policy was consistent and principled. MacDougall objected when Government failed him in this, but he nevertheless proved himself ready on a number of occasions to interfere substantially and persistently in Aboriginal lifestyles and wishes when he believed Government policy and need so dictated.9,10

We know from his reports to the WRE that MacDougall became increasingly alarmed at his employers' earlier assumptions that there was only limited movement by Aborigines in the Woomera region, that people were largely 'detribalised', and that they were no longer living off the land or engaging in much ceremonial activity. His own work convinced him that these assumptions were incorrect, for he found that there was considerable movement between the Everard and Musgrave Ranges to the north and the Trans-Australian railway to the south, and that many groups still lived in the desert, walking into Ernabella and other locations on occasions to bring in dingo scalps in exchange for rations. He wrote exasperated and critical memos to his employers, who did not see fit even to provide him with a vehicle of his own for three years. He began to suggest ironically that perhaps he should use camels.11 On many occasions his advice was simply ignored.

MacDougall's main concern was safety. He was supposed to be protecting Aborigines from the incursions of the WRE, but in reality his job was to control the movement of the populations of Aboriginal people on the fringes of, and sometimes inside, the Woomera Rocket Range (between 1947 and 1952), and later the Maralinga/Emu atomic testing area, (used between 1953 and 1962). He was faced with several hundred highly mobile desert people, many of whom had limited interaction with white Australians, and who were still engaged in a vigorous ceremonial life spanning a vast area of South Australia and Western Australia. They had long used the railway to facilitate ceremonial visits. Historical research undertaken in the lead-up to the Royal Commission into the British Nuclear Tests in Australia12 enabled a clear picture to emerge of the strategies MacDougall developed in order to control Aboriginal movements. He used three interlocking techniques: the withholding of rations, the manipulation of Indigenous beliefs and direct interception of movement.

10. MacDougall was the cause of the famously callous statement made in March 1956 by Mr A. Butement, Chief Scientist of WRE, who referred to his 'lamentable lack of balance' for 'apparently placing the affairs of a handful of natives above those of the British Commonwealth of Nations'. MacDougall was particularly incensed at the siting of Giles Weather Station and the upgrading of an existing track to the Central Aboriginal Reserve in 1956. He said the land belonged to the tribe and was recognised as such by other tribes (Morton 1989: 85,87).
11. Eames and Collett 1985: 34.
12. This included research by Dr Heather Goodall and myself, much of which is incorporated into Eames and Collett, 1985.
Shoving them off — rations and interceptions

In the early 1950s ceremonial activity was strong, with frequent departures of large groups of people from Ooldea (until June 1952) and Yalata (after that time). These trips meant that groups of Aborigines were often gathered at railway sidings such as Watson, Ooldea and Tarcoola (adjoining the prohibited area), and were often on foot or in trucks in the Lake Phillipson area (near Coober Pedy). Woomera and Department of Supply papers document these movements, which took place throughout the Woomera rocket testing program, and the subsequent Maralinga atomic testing program. For example, three groups walked from Yalata to Ooldea siding in order to travel by train east and west (January 1954). One hundred and fifty people visited Ooldea Soak and 60 travelled to Coober Pedy (October–November 1954); 100 adults and children assembled at Ooldea siding awaiting the arrival of parties from Western Australia in order to travel to Tarcoola (August 1955); and in October 1955, 80 people were at Ooldea siding waiting for the train to Zanthus, Western Australia. In August 1956 a Lutheran pastor reported plans for 200 Yalata people to travel to Deakin siding (Western Australia) by train, in order to walk north to Warburton. The superintendent of the range insisted that these ‘itinerants’ should be controlled. MacDougall recommended that a checkpoint be constructed at the railhead and passes issued to those taking the train.

MacDougall knew that the provision of rations was an instrument of enticement for desert people. Ooldea Mission itself had been an attractive force since 1933, with visitors returning to the desert carrying bags of flour on their heads so that their relatives could ‘taste’ the new substance. The Berndts wrote in 1942 that the Ooldea people placed ‘great reliance on their government rations. They regard them as a full food supply and they refuse to supplement the diet with native foods, as this would be too much bother’. MacDougall recommended in 1950 that ration depots should be closed around the arc from Ooldea, through Bulgunnia Station to Mabel Creek. He wanted Ooldea closed and declared off-limits because of his concerns that it acted as a stepping-off point, particularly towards the northeast, into the weapons testing area. He later cut the ration issue at Coober Pedy, and in 1955 no rations were issued for people intending to travel north out of Yalata.

Easing them off by exploiting Indigenous fears

Among Aboriginal people who were cognizant of developments, there was undoubtedly fear of what was occurring at Maralinga which acted as a deterrent against utilising the old walking routes which linked the Ernabella region with Ooldea. These fears became manifest in the many stories and rumours which touched upon the bomb tests at the time, and which were later to be associated with the contamination of the land by

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13. These movements are all documented in patrol and other reports retrieved for the Royal Commission (Eames and Collett 1985: 42; 56–57).
15. Berndt and Berndt 1942a: 59. The derogatory tone of this observation is surprising considering the Berndts’ own fieldwork documented continued hunting and gathering among the people visiting or residing at Ooldea. The fact that rations there did not include meat gave people an additional impetus to hunt for red kangaroo and other prized meat. Certainly in later years the desire for hunted meat had not abated, cf. Palmer and Brady 1991.
radioactive waste. Radioactivity became known universally at Yalata as the ‘poison’. The southeastern portion of the Great Victoria Desert through which these groups travelled is believed by them to be inhabited by numerous *wanampi* (the desert term for a dangerous water serpent or rainbow snake). These mythological beings are believed to have travelled over and under the ground and created the landscape over wide swathes of the Great Victoria Desert, including some notable sites well-known to the Ooldea and Yalata people. The salt lake at Pidinga (Ifould Lake), between Yalata and Ooldea, is such a site. The Nullarbor is riddled with blowholes where more *wanampi* are reputed to live. Elderly people now living at Yalata express fear of these beings and describe placating them or firing large trees in order to frighten them with smoke. Unlike later patrol officers who attended courses at the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Mosman, Sydney, MacDougall had no anthropological training, although he probably had some facility with the Pitjantjatjara language. Nevertheless, he conceived of an innovative technique which utilised Indigenous beliefs as a means of frightening desert people away from the atomic testing area. He would have heard mythological stories of *wanampi* and of kurdaicha men while at Ernabella, and in a 1953 report he explained that ‘using their own beliefs and fears of invisible spirits and invisible avengers [will] convince them that the area is no safe place for them’. In many cases, *wanampi* stories have now become enmeshed with the warnings, rumours and half-understood facts of contamination associated with the Maralinga tests. MacDougall’s idea evidently bore fruit. Kanytji, one of the Aboriginal people living at Wallatinna, northeast of Emu (which was affected by the ‘black mist’ of contamination after the Totem 2 test of October 1953) described hearing a sound early in the morning, which was in fact the bomb:

He thought it was someone shooting. Then he thought it may have been the *wanambi*, the water serpent of the Dreamtime, making a noise as it created water holes. Pingkayi also heard two noises as did Kanginy who was inside the homestead at the time. Kanginy also associated the noise with *wanambi* [sic].

And at Yalata, contemporary stories associated with *wanampi* include the following:

One *piranpa* [white man] was travelling with camels. They only found the saddles. He never came back. *Wanampi* must have got him.

Wild horses disappeared at Puntja [a rock-hole north of Maralinga and in the contaminated area] — might be snake too.

Four soldiers in a Land Rover disappeared near *wanampi ngura* [camp of a mythological snake]. No one goes there now.

Two white people from overseas wanted to go and have a look at Maralinga. They told them: ‘Don’t touch anything. Don’t break sticks’. But they said ‘I can’t die’ and they broke sticks and their arms went numb. And they said ‘we want to go home to our families because we might die’. And they went back overseas and they died.

17. MacDougall, Detailed survey of the Jangkuntjara Tribe, Report to WRE, April/May 1953.
18. A 1956 patrol report noted that a Cundeelee man returned from Yalata (i.e. at the time of the tests) and had several injections which he believed were to protect him from the effects of a Maralinga bomb (Eastern Goldfields District Office report September 1956, in Aboriginal Collection 1985).
Taking them in — Big Camp

After the closure of Ooldea in June 1952 and the subsequent move to Yalata, it became clear to the missionaries and to MacDougall himself that the people did not want to stay there, on the powdery grey soil of the Nullarbor edge. They were homesick for Ooldea, they preferred the red sand and spinifex of the desert, and wanted to keep moving. MacDougall was partly responsible for the move south, having been enthusiastic in 1950 when it was suggested that the Yalata pastoral property be purchased as a new location for the Ooldea people. In 1954 (with the Maralinga site already chosen and named) and utilising his knowledge of Aboriginal Law, he had tried to bring about an emotional and spiritual 'closure' of associations with Ooldea by making sure that all ritual paraphernalia secreted in the surrounding bush had been retrieved, taking several older men with him on a special 'clean-up' trip. They visited several initiation sites and an increase site. The ritual objects had been left there, in hiding, since the relocation to Yalata 18 months earlier. While he conceded that Aboriginal interest in the sites around Ooldea was 'more than sentimental', MacDougall simultaneously believed that this 'interest' could be redeposited onto new ceremonial grounds at Yalata, and had searched for suitable locations there. His report that 'all active tribal interest' in the Ooldea region was at an end made the way clear in February 1954 for the old Ooldea reserve to be revoked, so that it could be used for any desired purpose by WRE.21 By this time, preparations at Maralinga were well under way.22 The Lutheran missionaries

21. It is worth noting here that MacDougall's view was that the Ooldea people were already 'detribalised', describing the people along the Trans-Australian line as 'useless outcasts', in contrast with the 'shy' and 'primitive' Aborigines he encountered on patrols much further north (Eames and Collett 1985: 70.)

22. The Prime Minister had agreed on 25 October 1953 to hand over Maralinga for the testing program (Eames and Collett 1985: 54.)
were instructed to monitor closely Aboriginal movements in and around Yalata and report on their planned excursions.

Despite this supposed end to their ‘tribal interest’, the ex-Ooldea people demonstrated their displeasure at their new home by voting with their feet. They made persistent attempts to travel north, back to Ooldea and more familiar territory. Several Aboriginal parties escaped from Yalata and had to be retrieved by the Lutherans (Hans Gaden, pers. comm.). During the summer of 1954–1955 the Lutherans reported that many of the four hundred ‘Yalata’ Aborigines moved ‘to outlying districts’. The determined efforts by the people to return to the Ooldea region, to the north — indeed anywhere other than the Yalata property on which they had been settled — caused consternation in WRE and the Aborigines Protection Board. On 4 November 1955 MacDougall noted in a memo to the Woomera Superintendent that the Aborigines Protection Board secretary wanted to visit Yalata in order to ‘see first hand what is required to force these people to remain on their new country’. With respect to the problematic tendency of the ex-Ooldea people to wander north into danger, he came up with a plan which seemed to fit with Aboriginal inclinations, and which would keep them occupied on the Yalata property and away from Ooldea. His plan would satisfy the traditional desire of these Western Desert people to be on the move, while simultaneously conforming to the instructions of his employers. He proposed a form of rotational camping sites within a defined boundary, and wrote to the Woomera superintendent:

The Yalata property was thoroughly investigated as country suitable for semi tribal natives ... Several old shed tanks were visited and it was decided to establish them as periodical ration depots thus ... lessening the tendency to travel north towards their old hunting grounds (Aboriginal Collation 1985: 555).

The suggestion was put into practice. Over the next few years, the newly arrived desert people camped in small family groups housed in wilija (humpies of branches and tarpaulins) loosely ranged around one of several ‘shed’ water tanks (simply a large sloping corrugated iron roof which collects rainwater into one or two water tanks below24). They were supplied with rations delivered by the missionaries. The arrangement came to be known as Big Camp (Pitj. ngura pulka). Not only did the Big Camp idea suit the Woomera authorities, at the time constructing the new atomic proving ground at Maralinga, it suited the Aborigines’ new carers, the Lutheran missionaries, who were anxious to maintain control over the movement and location of their charges. They were also anxious to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate with WRE, whose personnel visited in military vehicles and helicopters to check on the movements of Aboriginal people.25 Once the procedure had been established by MacDougall, the location of camp sites and timing of the moves were decided ‘in consultation with’ the Lutheran superintendent of the mission. It allowed the Aboriginal people some freedom — albeit

24. These tanks included Ooldea Tank, Monburu Tank, Tallawan Tank, Middle Yard Tank, Nanwarra, Chinalumba. Shed tanks were a common means of collecting water on the far west coast of South Australia (Faull 1988). They have been re instituted as a means of providing significant water catchment for Aboriginal people now living in, and travelling through, the southern portion of the Great Victoria Desert. A number have been built in the Oak Valley region since 1986.
restricted to the new country — which was designed to satisfy their thirst to be mobile. They were penned in, not by fences, but by the need for water supplies, their dependence on European rations, and the surveillance of the missionaries. In a final ironic twist the missionaries, like the settler family in ‘Bitter Springs’, tried to use Aboriginal labour for shearing sheep which grazed the eastern area of the property, near Colona.26. The Ooldea people had finally been ‘taken in’.

Isobel White was the first anthropologist to camp out with families at Big Camp. She visited Yalata first in 1969 and pitched her tent at Big Camp, usually with Alice Cox and her family.27 The Lutherans were not keen to have her there at all, particularly when they knew she was from Monash University (which had a reputation for radical student politics in the late 1960s).28 She made porridge every morning to share among those at her camp. In 1977 White wrote that Yalata was an unusual settlement, in that the whole camp moves several times a year to a new part of the reserve, which may be as far as 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the Yalata Lutheran Mission, but more often 6 to 20 kilometres away. This unique situation comes about through the active co-operation of the mission superintendent and his staff (some of whom are Aboriginal), who undertake the considerable task of organising

28. Sally White, pers. comm. The mission authorities would have been even more nervous had they known that Mrs White had been a member of the Communist Party. Many Lutherans of the time believed that Aborigines were ‘communists’ in that they had no individual property ownership (Brauer 1956: 175).
transport between camp and mission, because they see the advantages of using a large part of the reserve instead of only a small fraction of it.\textsuperscript{29} White was unaware that the original notion of Big Camp was a ploy to keep people south of the railway line.

\textbf{Moving camp}

Big Camp was usually located several kilometres — sometimes up to 30 — away from the Yalata settlement where the non-Aboriginal Lutheran and other staff lived in houses. The camp was invariably located at different sites north of the Eyre Highway, towards the desert and away from the coast. It moved several times a year to a new location, with the aid of community trucks and private vehicles. A mobile clinic and a mobile store were stationed centrally, opened for business three times each week and moved with the camp to new locations. There was even a ‘walkabout school’: ‘Every time the camp shifted, it was necessary to pack up desks and teaching equipment, bathing and cooking facilities and move on to the next spot usually about 20 miles away. This happened about once ever four months’.\textsuperscript{30} Along with the water truck, these facilities aided the plan to keep people together, and to prevent them from straying north. Once the services at Yalata became more developed in the 1960s, children were picked up from Big Camp each day by the school bus and taken to school in Yalata. Often only elderly people and their dogs remained at camp during the day.

\textsuperscript{29} White 1977: 101.
\textsuperscript{30} Hampel 1977: 41.
Living at Big Camp makes the observer acutely aware of its constant flux. White documented the requirements for a new camp site (on a used track, with trees for shade and firewood, and not having been used previously), and the composition of the hearth groups which made up Big Camp. She hypothesised that the movement itself was, in effect, a health promotion activity, noting that adjustments to physical and social distance had long been a form of stress management, and that moving camp improved physical, mental and social health. All these factors undoubtedly influenced the moves, but in the 1960s the decision to relocate was not made independently by Aboriginal people. The relocation of Big Camp which then occurred ‘several times’ a year was under the control of the Lutheran superintendent, who was in charge of the various supply trucks. In contrast, between 1978 and 1982 (during my own fieldwork) moves became much more frequent. Together with major shifts of Big Camp, individual hearth groups engaged in smaller ‘creeping’ relocation and reorientation of their camps which were continuous. People lived for the most part in easily-constructed wiltja which can be quickly demolished or were simply abandoned still standing. They can be reoriented when the wind swings around (weather fronts approaching from the Great Australian Bight cause dramatic changes in wind direction and temperature at Yalata). Abandoned wiltja were still considered to be the property of the former inhabitants, who would return to search for implements lost in the sand, or for a forgotten pot. In hot weather, hearth groups simply slept out next to a windbreak (yuu). Several factors may have influenced this increased mobility: the people themselves had more independence with the diminution of control by a superintendent (as Aboriginal self-management policies came into operation). There was the advent of more Aboriginal-owned vehicles, and the provision of smaller transportable water tanks which could be relocated at will using tray-back vehicles. I estimated that the hearth group with which I lived (1981-82) moved at least 20 times over a twelve-month period, that is approximately every 18 days.

This constant mobility is remarkably similar to how people lived in and around Ooldea Soak up until 1952. When Ronald and Catherine Berndt camped with people there in 1941, the camps moved so frequently that the anthropologists had trouble keeping up. The Berndts counted thirteen moves over a six-month period — a move approximately every two weeks. The distances involved ranged from a few metres to up to three kilometres away. The reasons for moving camp documented by the Berndts included lack of firewood, sanitation, too many people, ceremonies, death and stress.31 Forty years later, access to cars enabled the Yalata people with whom I camped much greater freedom: the distances involved in their relocations ranged from two to thirty kilometres. But the reasons for moving were much the same as before, and I was told we moved because of lack of firewood, too much dust, wind or noise, too many drunks, too many kids, because of mice in the camp (on one occasion), to enable access to artefact wood, and because of a death or ceremonies. An additional but unspoken reason for moving seemed to be that people simply enjoyed it. Moving camp punctuated an otherwise mundane existence with a series of decisive tasks and a change of scene. Deciding on the move, selecting the new site, loading up the paraphernalia of the camp and rearranging it all again, burning the new site if there were snakes around, breaking

branches for new wiltja, were all tasks that needed attention. Jean Briggs once observed of the peripatetic Inuit group with whom she lived, that rearranging the environment in this way is a form of play. I am inclined to agree with her.

White’s 1977 article on mobility at Yalata briefly addresses the issue of housing, which was then not available for the population en masse. Two or three families had houses in the Yalata township during White’s fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s, but people did not really live in them; they were referred to as ‘wet weather houses’, only being used on those occasions. She notes the advantages of wiltja: they do not require cleaning, they are flexible in size and orientation, they enable a change of neighbours, and they allow for relocation to an entirely new environmental space. Above all, they allow individuals to see and hear what everyone else is doing: to witness, to be there when things happen. White calls this ‘first hand living’. Houses, she wrote, have none of these attributes. Nevertheless, the majority of Yalata families now have access to a house in the township, as a result of a determined housing program over the last 15 years.

When Sally White described the spatial arrangements of the Yalata Big Camp in 1977, neither she nor the people of whom she wrote had any idea that one day there would be a new settlement, 400 km away in the Great Victoria Desert. Since 1982 Big Camp has ceased to exist. People moved closer into Yalata after a series of truck and other breakdowns that interrupted the servicing of Big Camp. Simultaneously people took up with alacrity the freedom to move which was made possible by social and political change in the 1980s. At the first real opportunity (a sympathetic community adviser) and in conjunction with discussions over their freehold title to the Maralinga Lands, people from Yalata established a camp that became an outstation, and is now rapidly growing into a township on the Maralinga Lands. This move both symbolised and enacted their rights to this land. The outstation is located between two salt lakes, Lake Dey Dey and Lake Maurice, both sites with mythological stories associated with them. Some parts of Dey Dey are restricted so that only initiated men may have access. From 1982 substantial numbers of people began to camp and visit the outstation which was known simply as ‘Dey Dey’. Two years later, Dey Dey as the name for the outstation was abandoned by mutual agreement, having been declared a milmilpa (forbidden) term for a camp. A new decisively secular name, ‘Oak Valley’, was found for the outstation. Oak Valley has a core of permanent residents and a continuous stream of visitors from Yalata and elsewhere who stay for periods of a couple of days to months at a time. The descendents of the Ooldea people can now travel from Oak Valley to the west and then north to Warburton, on a new road they cut through the desert. They can receive ceremonial and other visitors by the same route. In a sense, people have reconstituted the social and cultural space they once had. As one man said, ‘Big Camp has moved to Oak Valley’.

34. Dey-Dey is an anglicised form of the Pitjantjatjara tii-tii (magpie lark), a mythological character associated with the salt lake.
35. In four censuses of the population in 1987–8, a colleague and I counted 286 different individuals who were living in or visiting Oak Valley at any one time (Palmer and Brady 1991).
It is not unlikely that the trooper of 'Bitter Springs' was a character modeled on Walter MacDougall, native patrol officer. The film was made two years after MacDougall's appointment, and was filmed in the outback not far south of Woomera itself. Unlike the Northern Territory, there were no other individuals operating as cultural brokers in this way in South Australia at the time. Like the trooper, MacDougall was a man who attempted his own rapprochement between the realities of white incursion and the uncomfortable situation in which Aboriginal people found themselves as a result. He also betrayed the Aborigines to some extent — an unpleasant necessity for reasons of safety — by participating in their exclusion from the southern portions of the desert, encouraging their relocation on alien territory, and inventing his own form of culturally appropriate compromise for their future. In the event, the inception and continuation of Big Camp suited people. As Sally White described, Big Camp allowed the ex-Ooldea people a certain freedom of movement, a means of dealing with interpersonal stress, and enabled them to create an Aboriginal domain away from the white staff of the settlement. In later years, the deeply embedded and unquenched desire for movement was enacted in the decision to resettle on the Maralinga Lands.

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Tests in Australia.
Pallanganmiddang: a language of the Upper Murray\(^1\)

Barry J. Blake and Julie Reid

Editor's note

Sally White's daughter Charlotte worked as a doctor in Walwa (Vic.) on the Upper Murray for many years, and Sally was naturally a frequent visitor there. She became very attached to this part of the country and often lamented the absence of Aboriginal people from this beautiful area.

In this paper Barry Blake and Julie Reid analyse all the available information on the language.

Introduction

Pallanganmiddang is a language of northeastern Victoria. As with other Victorian languages it appears that there are no longer any people who still speak the language. Unfortunately the records of this language are meagre. As far as we know, there are only four sources:

A vocabulary of 46 words with the title *Pallanganmiddah* from Thomas Mitchell, *Tangambalanga*, in Smyth (1878, vol. 2: 67). Tangambalanga was south of Wodonga near the Kiewa River.\(^2\) A century ago it was a government-run camp at which survivors of European incursions congregated from various districts.

A vocabulary of 109 words labelled No. 213: *Upper Murray* in Curr (1886, vol. 3: 562–3). These are attributed to Mitchell (no initial), but it is clear that this is the same T. W. Mitchell MLA who contributed to Smyth.

A vocabulary of 341 words in the papers of G. A. Robinson bearing the label *Paller an mitter (Language of Mul ler min ner alias Joe)* (G. A. Robinson papers MLA A 7086, vol. 65, part 3, pp 53–60).

A vocabulary of 63 words labelled *Wangaratta (Victoria)* from W.L. Murdock, Wangaratta, Victoria, published in *The Science of Man*, 22 December 1900, pp 188–9. They are said to have been 'collected by a gentleman from an intelligent Black of the Wangaratta tribe some 25 years ago'. This list shares 70% (16 out of 23) of its

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1. We thank R.M.W. (Bob) Dixon for supplying us with a set of sources, Heather Bowe for supplying a further source plus a summary of references to the Pallanganmiddang language and people, and Harold Koch for his comments on the draft. Words from the sources are transcribed in italics. Reconstructed phonetic forms are in bold.

2. Tangambalanga is recorded with the meaning 'crayfish' in the Barwidgee dialect of Dhudhuroa. 'Crayfish' refers to a freshwater crustacean.
words with the three sources listed above and shows very little resemblance to any other source, so we have accepted it as being representative of Pallanganmiddang.3 These sources between them provide a vocabulary of over 300 words, but there is no grammatical information except for a few phrases and what can be gleaned from entries in the word lists. The purpose of this paper is to present all the information from the four sources, to try to work out the likely pronunciation, and to put the language into some kind of comparative perspective.

Name

A number of language/tribe names in the area end in a form spelt -matong, -middang, -mirttong, -mathang and -mittung, and R.H. Mathews (1909) records both Jinningmiddha and Dyinningmiddiha for a group who spoke Dhudhuoroa. Presumably Mitchell’s Pallanganmiddah and Robinson’s Pal-ler an mitter end in this same -midha and there may have been a variant with a final -ng. Alternation between forms with a final -ng and forms without is a feature of Victorian languages. In a letter to R.M.W. Dixon (28 May 1974) T.W. Mitchell — a grandson of the T.W. Mitchell who contributed to Smyth and Curr — reports that the name ‘is more correctly spelt Pallanganmiddang’, and we use the spelling with the final -ng in this paper and in our other publications.

Location

Robinson states that ‘Pal ler an mit ter belong to the Noer.rar called Little River where Mr Huon station’ (30 September 1844) and ‘Country of the Bul ler an mit ter extend from W Bank of Hume to Ovens River N to Punderambo and then up towards the mountains’ (MLA 7086, vol. 65, part 3, p 13). The Little River was subsequently renamed the Kiewa River and Huon’s property included the area of the present town of Wodonga (Fels 1997: 31). The Hume River is the Murray River. Curr (1886) places List No 213 to the east of Albury and Wodonga in the map contained in volume 4, and Smyth places Pallungan Middah close to Wodonga and east–southeast. Howitt includes a Balaung Karar on his map of the area west–southwest of Wodonga (1904:827). It is likely that Balaung equates with Pallang and it may be that Pallanganmiddang extended from east–southeast of Wodonga through Tangambalanga to an area west–southwest of Wodonga.

To the north across the Murray were the southern dialects of the far flung Wiradjuri language. Smyth shows the Emu-Mudjug dialect of Wiradjuri on the south side of the Murray immediately to the west of Pallanganmiddang. Further west near Echuca was the territory of the Yota-Yota. It is unclear whether the Yota-Yota were the immediate neighbours of the Pallanganmiddang since it difficult to determine how far the territory of speakers of northern dialects of the Central Victorian Language extended. This language is represented by Thagungwurrung on the map. To the east of the Pallanganmiddang territory lay Dhudhuoroa. Clan or language labels for the area are shown on the map with the names from the sources in capitals.

3. To be more precise the Wangaratta list shares 9 out of 12 words with the Mitchell lists and 14 out of 23 with the Robinson list. Whereas most lists of Aboriginal words contain a high proportion of nouns, the Wangaratta list is unusual in having few nouns, hence the small number of words that can be compared.
Tindale devotes a paragraph of his encyclopaedic work *Aboriginal tribes of Australia* to the Djilamatang and mentions that they were exterminated by other Aboriginal groups 'in post-European times' (1974: 203f). He places them in the northeast corner of Victoria, 'west of Mount Kosciusko on the upper headwaters of the Murray River', but the words he quotes as belonging to this group are in fact Pallanganmiddang. The words are, as Tindale gives them, *waamanga* 'no' and ['djere'] 'man'. There is no language material that we can relate directly to Djilamatang, but from the location we might surmise that that group spoke Dhudhuroa or something similar.

**Relationship to neighbouring languages**

The two lists supplied by Mitchell share 90% for the 25 items in which they overlap. The Robinson list shares about 70% with the Mitchell lists. The Wangaratta list shares 75% with the Mitchell lists and 61% with Robinson's list. When we compare these sources with sources for neighbouring languages, we find the percentage of shared vocabulary is very low:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhudhuroa</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yota-Yota</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyth (vol.2:68) Emu Mudjug</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curr 190 Albury (dialect of Wiradjuri)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curr 190 Howlong (dialect of Wiradjuri)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curr 212 Snowy River (Gippsland)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curr 211 Omeo (Ngarigu)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Ngarigu (Hercus 1986)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only exception is a list in Mathew's *Eaglehawk and Crow* (1899) entitled 'Barwidgee, Upper Murray'. This source shares 70% (26.5 out of 38) with R.H. Mathew's Dhudhuroa material and clearly belongs with that language, but it shares 39% (19.5 out of 50) with Pallanganmiddang whereas Mathews' Dhudhuroa shares only 21% (16.5 out of 80). Barwidgee was a station just to the northeast of Myrtleford and this source may represent a dialect of Dhudhuroa whose territory bordered on that of Pallanganmiddang, or it may be that the Barwidgee list conflates two languages. It contains some words not native to northeast Victoria, such as *gibba* 'stone', *gunya* 'camp' and *brolga* 'native companion', which were spread in Pidgin and in English generally. This suggests it is not overly reliable.

It seems likely that Pallanganmiddang represents a language quite distinct from those of its neighbours. It does, however, contain many roots familiar from other Australian languages such as *nha-* 'to see' and *yan-* 'to go'.

**Phonology**

**Consonants**

The inventory of consonant phonemes was probably the same as in other languages of southeastern Australia. A maximum inventory is displayed in Table 1. There is fluctuation between *p* and *b*, *t* and *d*, and *k* and *g* in the sources, suggesting there was no distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants. We have transcribed the original consonant where there is no discrepancy in the sources. Where both voiced and voiceless consonants appear in the original notation, we have made an arbitrary choice. There was probably no phonemic distinction between dentals and palatales since a few
words are recorded with spellings such as t and d, which suggest a dental or alveolar, along with spellings such as j or g suggesting a palatal stop. These have been spelled with tj or dj:

foot /tjerra/  
teererr t, gerra c

man /djerr/  
teerre r, gerree m, jere c

However, we cannot be certain that there was no phonemic distinction between dentals and palatals, so where the spellings indicate a dental, we have retained this. The word for 'cold', for instance, was recorded by Robinson as butherwuther and by Mitchell (in Curr) as bouwatha. We have transcribed the former as bathawatha and the latter as bwatha.

It is hard to find definite evidence for retroflexes but carrda for 'crayfish' suggests karda. There was probably a distinction between a flapped or trilled rhotic (rr) and a glide-type rhotic, possibly retroflex (r), but no such distinction is ever made in older sources. We transcribe all intervocalic rhotics as rr. In the table below sound-types not directly attested are shown in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>p/b</td>
<td>t/d</td>
<td>rt/rd</td>
<td>th/dh</td>
<td>tj/dj</td>
<td>k/g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(nh)</td>
<td>ny</td>
<td>ng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>(rl)</td>
<td>(lh)</td>
<td>(ly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhotic</td>
<td>rr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glide</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Consonants (initial and intervocalic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Medial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p/b</td>
<td>pada ‘big’</td>
<td>kabiga ‘baby’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t/d</td>
<td>taka ‘hit’*</td>
<td>madega ‘old man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rt/rd</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>karda ‘crayfish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th/dh</td>
<td>thirriwa ‘nails’</td>
<td>bathawatha ‘cold’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tj/dj</td>
<td>djuyu ‘snake’</td>
<td>budju ‘kangaroo’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k/g</td>
<td>kima ‘kangaroo rat’</td>
<td>bugu ‘bowels’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>merri ‘ground’</td>
<td>marrimuna ‘lazy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>narra ‘wild dog’</td>
<td>mani ‘camp’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rn</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nh</td>
<td>nhagadi ‘see’*</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ny</td>
<td>nyuma ‘rain’**</td>
<td>noganya ‘give’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>ngaa ‘nose’</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ngalawiya ‘wood duck’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rr</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>karri ‘wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>yarra ‘beard’</td>
<td>payorro ‘magpie’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>warra ‘water’</td>
<td>wawa ‘brother’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Alveolar initial in taka likely in view of Hercus’ recording of daguna in Wergaia (Hercus 1986: 201); dental initial in nhagadi likely on the basis of various cognates.

** Only one token
There are very few word-final consonants to be found in the sources. The following is a complete list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elder Brother</th>
<th>Wugug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cord</td>
<td>Worungun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laugh</td>
<td>Karrin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Bab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake</td>
<td>Tueyon, Ju-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger, Toe</td>
<td>Youllon, Ulo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Track of a Foot | Bunjun (compare Punjoo (R) [bandju] ‘road’)

The form wugug is suspicious since wowwer is also recorded and wugug is found in some sources for the Western Victorian Language. Note too that three of the words recorded with final -n also occur without -n. The form bab ‘mother’ invites comparison with mamga ‘father’ and suggests that these may have been a form bab-ga (for -ga see below). As noted above, the final -ng in Pallanganmiddang appears to be optional. It is likely that Pallanganmiddang did not allow final consonants.

Consonant clusters

There appear to be homorganic nasal-stop clusters.

- mb: Bamba ‘a fly’
- nd: Purranda ‘bad’
- rnd: ?
- ndh: Berrontha ‘crow’
- ndj: Pandju ‘road’
- ngg: Pungga ‘stone’

There are also some heterorganic clusters. At least some of these are across morpheme boundaries as with -mg- in mam-ga ‘father’.

- nb: Winbinbi ‘sun’
- ngb: Narrangba ‘You’re a bad boy.’
- md: Wimda ‘spear’
- mg: Mamga ‘father’
- lg: Belgamba ‘shield’
- nrr: Mobenrru ‘bushman’
- nm: Tonmana ‘gammon’, ‘tell a lie’

Vowels

Pallanganmiddang may have had only three vowels (i, u and a) as is the case in many Australian languages, but all five vowel letters are used in the sources and where the only token or all the tokens record e or o we have transcribed these letters. Variant spellings such as koro and kurru for ‘blood’ suggest that there may not have been a distinction between u and o.

There may have been a distinction between long and short vowels. Robinson’s karmborro ‘group’ suggests a phonetically long vowel in the first syllable, but -ar- may just have been a way of indicating the vowel of calm as opposed to that of cam.
It seems that in Pallanganmiddang a monosyllabic word with no final consonant regularly contained a long vowel, as is the case in Australian languages generally:

- mii: eye
- ngaa: nose

### Sound correspondences

In his notes, R.M.W. Dixon notes that there seems to be some evidence of systematic correspondences between Pallanganmiddang and neighbouring languages. We have put together the following list of examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Pallanganmiddang</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ear</td>
<td>marramba</td>
<td>marlamboa (Dhudhuoroa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tongue</td>
<td>dharra</td>
<td>dhalayn (widespread)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>warra</td>
<td>wala (Yota-Yota)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wallung rain (Ngarigu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eaglehawk</td>
<td>warrimu</td>
<td>wanumarru (Dhudhuoroa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excrement</td>
<td>gurra</td>
<td>guna (widespread)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>djirra</td>
<td>djina (widespread)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>buwa</td>
<td>buka (Yota-Yota)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>bowa, bawa</td>
<td>baka (Yota-Yota)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Grammar

There is no grammatical information available on Pallanganmiddang. Some of the entries in the vocabulary lists are short sentences and others, particularly in the Wangaratta list, seem to be so, but it is difficult to extract much grammatical information from these entries and others that appear to contain inflections.

### Pronouns

The pronouns are not well documented. The following are recorded for ‘you’:

- innar (R), ninna (M) [given as T], neibee (M)

(see vocabulary for key to R, M, etc.). Assuming that ninna is to be identified with innar, we can posit a form ngina, since an initial velar nasal often goes unheard. Ngina is recorded for Yota-Yota and several other Victorian languages including Ledji-Ledji.

Robinson records itebe for ‘I’. This could represent something like ngaytbi and it may be that Mitchell’s neibee is in fact a first person form. Neibee seems to match the last two syllables in the following:

- hungry: bang(g)owonabi bungowanabei (M) (compare Ba bungunow)
- thirsty: waurnmanadjianabi wowrunmunjewarbe (W)
- drink: kanimanabi kuneemanabei (M)

---

4. Further information on sound changes in Victorian languages is to be found in Blake and Reid 1998a.
It is fairly clear that we can segment the first example into banggowo and nabi in light of the form recorded in Barwidgee. The second example can probably be segmented into waurranmandija nabi, and the last example into kani-ma nabi. These examples may mean ‘I’m hungry’, ‘I’m thirsty’ and ‘I drink’, forms likely to be given in an elicitation session. If this is so, then it may be that there is a form ngabi for ‘I’, which can be equated with Robinson’s form. Some other forms may include -nabi. See, for instance, the entries in the vocabulary for ‘quarrel’ and ‘walk’.

Murdock’s Wangaratta list contains nyeende-nanga-durrah for ‘me’ and nyeende for ‘my’. This suggests a form nyindi, but an initial velar nasal is normal for first person forms. It is also possible that nyindi is misglossed and is in fact a second person form, though the second person singular normally has a first syllable ngin- in southeastern Australia. A sound change from a velar nasal (ng) to a palatal (ny) before the high, front vowel (i) is plausible, but so is notation of a velar nasal as ny.

Robinson records wurwunder [wawanda] for ‘hungry’ and Murdock records wow-andowan. Since wan is T in the Central Victorian Language and some dialects of the Western Victorian Language, one could speculate that Murdock has recorded ‘I’m hungry’. In the languages where it occurs, wan is part of a series wan ‘I’, warr ‘you’, etc., where each form consists of a common base wa- to which pronominal suffixes are attached. It would not be surprising to find two series of pronouns, free forms like ngabi and ngina and bound forms like wan.

**Suffixes**

A probable suffix -ntha can be seen in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td>minyi-wayantha</td>
<td>mingyewyoutha (W) [compare waya-gu ‘speak’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>bobinthha</td>
<td>bobinthha (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>tagalitha</td>
<td>tugarleetuntha (W) [compare tagathi, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lame (in leg)</td>
<td>tang(g)rrintha</td>
<td>turrintha (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulky</td>
<td>puthanda</td>
<td>poothander (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second person subject bound pronoun -ntha occurs in Dhudhuroa.

**-gu**

A suffix -gu appears on verbs:

- **yaee yennego (R)** | **yayi yani-gu** | ‘come’
- **yugg eunnego (W)** | **yaki yani-gu** | ‘come’
- **yae e yandego (R)** | **yayi yan-di-gu** | ‘fetch it’
- **tutargoo (W)** | **tuta-gu** | ‘catch’
- **tugergo (R)** | **taka-gu** | ‘kill’
- **minedergo (R)** | **maynde-gu?** | ‘take it’

This could be the plural imperative marker -gu found in the Central Victorian Language. Another possibility is that -gu is the near ubiquitous dative-purposive -gu marking a purposive/infinitive form of the verb. The imperative possibility seems more likely.

**-thi**

Numerous verb forms contain a suffix -ti or -thi.
There appears to be a suffix -na. Clear tokens and likely tokens can be found on words certain to be verbs and on words certain to be nouns and on some words where the part-of-speech status of the Pallanganmiddang word is unclear. There may have been two suffixes, homophonous at least to the ears of the early recordists.
Other possible examples can be found under the entries for ‘belly’, ‘cry’, ‘dive’, ‘fly’, Bogong’, ‘frightened’, ‘lazy’ and ‘sick’.

-ga

A suffix -ga appears on some human nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Compare</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yuwarriga</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>yuwarru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>djerriga</td>
<td>‘old woman’</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>djerrri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamga</td>
<td>‘father’</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>mama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may also be present in gabiga ‘baby’, marraga ‘children’, madega ‘old man’, tayiga ‘elder sister’ and possibly in karrner ‘uncle’.

-di causative

A comparison of the following suggests a causative suffix.

\[
yae\ e\ yannego\ (R)\quad yayi\ yani-gu\quad \text{‘come’}\\
yae\ e\ yandego\ (R)\quad yayi\ yan-di-gu\quad \text{‘fetch it’}
\]

Vocabulary

The following list contains all sources. Those from Robinson are marked (R), those from Murdock’s Wangaratta list are marked (W), those from Thomas Mitchell’s list in Smyth are marked (T) and those from Mitchell in Curr are marked (M). Some forms in the Barwiągee list that appear to match Pallanganmiddang forms have been included and marked as (B). A broad phonetic form has been given wherever possible, but in some instances we have declined to attempt a phonetic reconstruction. Abbreviations used in cross-references to other languages are Ba Barwidgee (dialect of Dhudhuroa), Bung Bunganditj, CV Central Victorian Language, Dhu Dhudhuroa, Gipps Gippsland language, WV Western Victorian Language, Warr Warrnambool language, YY Yota-Yota. A survey of Victorian languages, which shows the relationship between these languages, appears in Blake and Reid (1998b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Phonetic</th>
<th>Sources and notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>active</td>
<td>babana</td>
<td>barbunnah (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ankle</td>
<td>towa, tawa</td>
<td>tower (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td>mini-wayantha</td>
<td>minyeewyyntha (W) [see ‘speak’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arm, small of</td>
<td>pedandji</td>
<td>pedunje (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt</td>
<td>pandja(a)ng(g)o</td>
<td>punjarngo (R) [see ‘wife’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>kabiga</td>
<td>keether (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back (body)</td>
<td>kitha</td>
<td>poorander (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>purranda</td>
<td>muddinga (M) [YY &amp; Yabula mathi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandicoot</td>
<td>torra</td>
<td>torar (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bark</td>
<td>waarri</td>
<td>waaree (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beard</td>
<td>yarra(na)</td>
<td>yarener (R), yerra (M) [yarra- is widespread in NSW and Victoria]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beat</td>
<td>taga-</td>
<td>tuckuner (R) [see ‘kill’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belly</td>
<td>muluna, murrung(g)a</td>
<td>mooloona (T), murunga-yiah (W) [see ‘bellyful’ and ‘full’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bellyful</td>
<td>pada murna</td>
<td>padder murner ['big stomach'; see ‘belly’, ‘big’ and ‘full’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>pada</td>
<td>udder (R), budda (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bird</td>
<td>marrega</td>
<td>murregah (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>kurru</td>
<td>koro (R), koroo (T), kurru (M) [similar forms are widespread;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blunt</td>
<td>munthang(g)a</td>
<td>kurrk is common in western Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bone</td>
<td>kaiila</td>
<td>moonthunga (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boomerang</td>
<td>wan.ga</td>
<td>kieela (T), keela (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bowels</td>
<td>bugu</td>
<td>kether (R) [see 'back']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brains</td>
<td>marrende ndye</td>
<td>marendunge, marndunye (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread</td>
<td>tanandje</td>
<td>tun nunje (R) [see 'food']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breasts</td>
<td>birri</td>
<td>berree (M) [Wir birri, Woi birring]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td>wawa</td>
<td>wowwer (R) [WV wawi, Yabula wawa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brother, elder</td>
<td>waang(g)a</td>
<td>waanga (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brogga</td>
<td>bobintha</td>
<td>[see 'native companion']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>bobintha</td>
<td>bobintha (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bush</td>
<td>wagaga</td>
<td>woggarger (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bushman</td>
<td>mobenru</td>
<td>mobenroo (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buttock</td>
<td>turru</td>
<td>tooro (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by and by</td>
<td>yudarra</td>
<td>udarra (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>call</td>
<td>karring(g)arru</td>
<td>karingaroo [see 'shout']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camp</td>
<td>mani</td>
<td>manne (R), mae (M), munnee (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camping place</td>
<td>bando</td>
<td>[Yota-Yota mani]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canoe</td>
<td>matha, mautha</td>
<td>muther (R), moutha (M) [Dhu mautha, Yota-Yota matha]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carry</td>
<td>yang(g)uthu-karra</td>
<td>yungoodthoo-carrar (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catch</td>
<td>tuta-</td>
<td>tutangoo (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chest</td>
<td>yia-birri-mang(g)i</td>
<td>yeshberrimungee (w) [see 'breast']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chief</td>
<td>pon.gambia</td>
<td>pone gam beer (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>yuwarru</td>
<td>uarro, narro (R) [Ba yuwarru 'boy'; see yuwarru 'young man']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>marraga</td>
<td>murraga (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chin</td>
<td>kida</td>
<td>keeder (R) [but see 'bone' and 'back']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climb tree</td>
<td>wanyithi</td>
<td>wonyerde (R), wunyidthee (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cloud</td>
<td>yuwatha</td>
<td>uwuther (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cockatoo</td>
<td>kiya</td>
<td>keer (R), keaa 'white c' (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cold</td>
<td>bawathatha</td>
<td>butherwuther (R),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bouwatha (M), bowultha (W)   [see 'winter']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>yaiyiyan-i-</td>
<td>yae e yannego (R), yugg eunego (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come on</td>
<td>yakiyani-</td>
<td>yackeeaneegee (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cook</td>
<td>karring(g)adi</td>
<td>karingaddie (R), koveboomurree (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cord</td>
<td>warrung(g)an</td>
<td>worungun (R) [see 'doctor']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corroboree</td>
<td></td>
<td>koerdo (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crayfish</td>
<td>karda</td>
<td>carrda (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creek</td>
<td>ngarr</td>
<td>arr (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crow</td>
<td>berrontha</td>
<td>parroder (R), berontha (T), berrutha (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cry</td>
<td>kudji-</td>
<td>kojin ner (R), kooodjeedarley (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dance</td>
<td>pada-</td>
<td>paderde (R), buddidarley (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark</td>
<td>kayiwarra</td>
<td>kiewarra (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>yuwarriaga</td>
<td>yuarriaga (T) [see yuwarri 'child', 'young man']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>(dandi)kunda</td>
<td>dandigunda (M), koonda (T) [see 'sun']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dead</td>
<td>barrassa, barrona</td>
<td>parrnener (R), burrura (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die</td>
<td>barrijarra</td>
<td>burrijarra (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dive</td>
<td>nogina?, noddjina?</td>
<td>noginner (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divorce</td>
<td>warrogambia</td>
<td>kurbahivunyidthee (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>warrogumbeer</td>
<td>yanego (W) [= 'go']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>bawa</td>
<td>bor (R), boa (M) [Yota-Yota baka]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Pallangamiddang</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog, wild</td>
<td>narra</td>
<td>dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>nanthubamithi</td>
<td>nanthibermidthee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
<td>pogadi</td>
<td>pogerde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kurnuma</td>
<td>kuneemanabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dry</td>
<td>tuyumadhi warra</td>
<td>tooyoolumarthe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duck</td>
<td>duma</td>
<td>tomar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duck, wood</td>
<td>ngalawinya</td>
<td>mullawur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eagle (hawk)</td>
<td>warrimu</td>
<td>warrimmoo (T), warm (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ear</td>
<td>marramba</td>
<td>marumbar (R), murramba (M), mirimbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td>merri</td>
<td>merre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>tagadhi</td>
<td>tumerde (R), tugarleentunthah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(W) [thaka- common in Vic; also occurs elsewhere in eastern Australia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egg</td>
<td>buwa, boya</td>
<td>booa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elbow</td>
<td>karrarra</td>
<td>currazer (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emu</td>
<td>marra, marriya</td>
<td>murreer (R), murrreer (R), murreer (R), murreer (R), murreer (R), murreer (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excrement</td>
<td>gurra</td>
<td>gurra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>mii</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>kananbi</td>
<td>kunnumbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fat</td>
<td>padarra</td>
<td>pudderar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>mama, mamga</td>
<td>mungger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(T) [mama is widespread in Vic. and found elsewhere]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fetch it</td>
<td>yayi yandi-</td>
<td>yae e yandego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight</td>
<td>towadad-bi</td>
<td>towardadbee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finger</td>
<td>yulo(n)</td>
<td>youllon (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fingers</td>
<td></td>
<td>murrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>karra</td>
<td>kurraw (T), kurra (M), kurarr, curreer (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>karrewa</td>
<td>currewreer, kurrewer (R), kurewa (M), kurriwah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fishing net</td>
<td>djarra</td>
<td>tyerrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>pamba</td>
<td>pemba (M), bamber (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly, blowfly</td>
<td>guwadha</td>
<td>quorthar</td>
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<tr>
<td>fly, boogong</td>
<td>koronna</td>
<td>koroner (R) [= bogong moth?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foal</td>
<td></td>
<td>elagge</td>
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<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>tana</td>
<td>tunna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>tjirra</td>
<td>teyrrah (T), teerrer (R), gerra (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[widespread tjina]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>wonyunga narungee naroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frightened</td>
<td></td>
<td>gammener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frost</td>
<td></td>
<td>udder</td>
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<td>full</td>
<td>mumang-djitaming</td>
<td>moormungjeetermingah</td>
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<tr>
<td>fungi</td>
<td>manggamanggi</td>
<td>munggermunggi</td>
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<tr>
<td>gammon</td>
<td>tonmana</td>
<td>tornmurer (R) [see ‘lie’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give</td>
<td>noganya, nogu-marri-mimbarra</td>
<td>nogunyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td></td>
<td>nogureranngerwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go first</td>
<td></td>
<td>en er bad er made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go last</td>
<td></td>
<td>i bear ro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>kayangi (-dji?)</td>
<td>umermebar, momibar (R), kieyangee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grass</td>
<td>kambarru</td>
<td>kamburrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>G-language</td>
<td>T-language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>greedy</td>
<td>ilang(g)a</td>
<td>merri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ground</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>gamborro</td>
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<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>korrowa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand</td>
<td>marra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand, left</td>
<td>kanggomogo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand, right</td>
<td>yarrarriya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>buwa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health</td>
<td>wanang(g)a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart</td>
<td>panberra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hill</td>
<td>padarra?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hip</td>
<td>kerrro</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>hit</td>
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<tr>
<td>hot</td>
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<tr>
<td>hungry</td>
<td>wawanda</td>
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<td>hunt</td>
<td>darrimadadi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hut</td>
<td>warri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ice</td>
<td>woloda</td>
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<tr>
<td>island</td>
<td>duwaya</td>
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<tr>
<td>jump</td>
<td>popadi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kangaroo</td>
<td>budju</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>kangaroo, big</td>
<td>marrawirra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kill</td>
<td>taga-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kip (=?)</td>
<td>dumeguna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knee</td>
<td>yuwa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koala (‘monkey’)</td>
<td>norroga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kookaburra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lagoon</td>
<td>yuwa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lame (in leg)</td>
<td>tang(g)rrintha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laugh</td>
<td>karrin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughing jackass</td>
<td>(ng)anbabuwa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lazy</td>
<td>marrimuna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leg, calf</td>
<td>korramba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lie [tell a lie]</td>
<td>tonmama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td>pali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lightning</td>
<td>narra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little</td>
<td>payumuna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ng)ambaganya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little way</td>
<td>pula, puwala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liver</td>
<td>woda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long way</td>
<td>wurrarragurabri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose the way</td>
<td>payorro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make noise</td>
<td>djerri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man, black, good lookingparreng(g)urra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man, black, wild norrandja?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Marra** is found in scattered languages including Gabi (southeast Queensland).
man, blackfellow, dirtymorrang(g)urru
man, gentleman
man, old
man, poor
man, white
man, young
me
mob
moon
mopoke
mosquito
mother
mountain
mouth
my
murde[r]
nails
native companion
neck
never
night
no
nose
occiput
one
pain
parrot, green
pelican
penis
plain
plenty
poet
possum
pot, small
push
quarrel
quiet
rain
ready to fight
reed
reed necklace
river
road
run
run away
runaway
sea
see
sew
shake hands

morrangoorru
marerder (R) [see next entry]
muddegar (R), muddega (M)
pooerrergando (R)
paaeainbir (R), waruntha (M)
morogar (R)
ewaru (M) [see ‘child’, ‘daughter’ & ‘son’]
itbe (R), nyeende-nanga-durrah (W)
[see ‘my’; see pronouns]
nane de jeerre (R) [see ‘man’]
yowerrr (R), yow-warra (T), huerra (M)
[Yota-Yota yurri]
bingami (T)
peder (R) [Yota-Yota betha]
mollula (M)
piger, piejer (R), bigah (T)
[cf. Dhu baba; baba widespread in Victoria]
pobboorer (R), bubbura (B) [purrp widespread in Victoria]
detrah (T), diara (M)
nyeende (W) [see ‘me’]
ayggo (R)
terrewer (R) [Central Vic. thirrip]
berranga (M) [Dhu birrangganba]
wor-ro (R)
woonunga (W) [see ‘no’]
tooma (T), tunna (M)
wonrunger (R), waananga (M)
kinde (R)
korede, korde (R), guddee (M)
yeah (W)
tordo (R)
kawodzi (R), karwadde (M)
nownikwer (R)
marengo (R)
noorro (R)
yuungurr (M)
kybade mole (R)
noromer, noromer (R), neuma (M), noorooma (B)
paywoodalle (R)
mooddeong (R)
tauma
towmer (R)
kiorro (R), kiewra (T) [see ‘sea’]
punjoo (R) [see ‘track’]
pyer merde (R)
norborg in niner (R)
udunno (R)
gunarrooboonoona (W)
kiewra (T) [see ‘river’]
nagadee (M), nahga (B) [na- or nha is found over most of Aust.; nhaka- common in eastern Australia]
eburgo (W)
minedowenye muther (R)
sharp budjang(g)a
shield birr(e)ganbo
short

shoulder kandjiya
shout karring(g)arru
sick balana, bulana
sick (as to head) yambi buwa
sing kado
kibi-thi
sister, elder tayiga
sit down karra-
skin wada
sky tetha
sleep ngurrangurra
slow kandi
smoke t j u
snake djuyu(n)
snake, black kiyang(g)o
snake, brown pairraba
snow binarru
soil merri
son yuwarru
sore eye
speak waya-
spear wimda
spear, jagged gamu(a)
spear, reed mathang(g)u
spear, war wonda
squirrel
stand up tanade, tandathi
star djimba
steal
stick tawa
stomach murrang(g)a
stone punnga
stone charm
stump wadamanggi
sulky puthanda
summer tirra
sun winbinbi
sunrise kunbu
sunset momang(g)a
swan mayiwa
sweet yakathi
swim yakathi
take it maynda-
talk ngombarri, yawati

budjunga (W)
perregano (R), belgamba (M), birregambo (B)
omebarrme (R) [see ‘talk’, possibly confused with ‘shout’]
kun gier (R)
karringaroo (W) [see ‘call’]
bullanner (R)
leumbebooah (W) [see ‘head’]
kardo (R)
kibidthee (W)
tiga (M), tiger ‘sister’ (R), tiega ‘sister’(T)
karde (R), curradabee (M)
warder (R), wada (M) [YY wada, Ngarigu (Curr 197) watnana]
taytheo, tayther (R) [Yorta tatala]
youivilla (T)
norungore, norangorer (R), murrongurra (M), wunyahnarbee (W), onyanarbee ‘sleepy’ (W), warrungooora ‘asleep’ (W)
[Dhu ngurra-ngurraya]
too (R), theu (M), dyun (B), toombaba (B)
[Dhu dhumbaba, YY thonga, Gippsland thun; the root thu- is common in Queensland and coastal NSW]
tueyon (T), ju-u (M) [Dhu djudjua ‘snake’ ‘black snake’]
kairngo (R) [Dhu gianggu ‘brown snake’]
pyrerbar (R)
pinnarro (R)
merre (T) [see ‘earth’, ‘ground’, Bung mirrit, Warr mirring]
yuairo (T) [See also ‘man, young’, ‘child’, ‘daughter’]
poue yener (R)
wiargoo (W) [see ‘answer’]
wimdar (R)
karmoor (R)
curre gun beer (R), muthungu (M)
wonda (M) [see ‘tree’]
parrone beer (R) [see ‘possum’]
tare nede (R), tandardthee (W)
jiemba (T), teimba (M), jameber (R)
[Dhu djimboa]
parerobiner (R), bairlthibee (W)
tauwa (T) [see ‘wood’]
murunger (R), ianaru (M) [see ‘belly’]
poongah (T), bunga (M) [YY punja]
poengger (R) [= ‘stone’?] wadermunggi (R)
poongah (T), bunga (M) [YY punja]
poengger (R) = ‘stone’?
wadermunggi (R)
tare nede (R), tandardthee (W)
thu-
is common in Queensland and coastal NSW]
yare kudde (R), yahgadthee (W)
ymwer (R), miewa (M) [Dhu maliwa, YY malya]
kieyangee (M) [see ‘good’]
yare kudde (R), yahgadthee (W)
minderger (R)
omebarrro (R), yowardee (W)
tall teeth (ng)angarru moieniner (R)
ten poarra unguru (M)
testicle puyunggarra?? poengarer (R) [see ‘egg’]
that noga nogar (R)
thigh manda, munda? moneder (R), munda (M)
things wearo (R) [see ‘speak’]
think kanyenarragathi, kanyenarragardthee (W)
thirsty dadumagathi duddumagathee (M)
this waurranmandjianabi wowrunmunjeetunabare (W)
this morning you (R)
three pularrudu pularooto (R)
throw puligodi poligudddee (M) [= 2 + 1]
throwing stick yun.gathi unegardthee (W)
thunder mandarra munderrer (R), mundara (M) [widespread
inc. WV mardarra]
tired marrimuna murrimooner (R), murrinemarbee (W)
[see ‘lazy’]
today yanduga yarenduger (R), yanduga (M) [see ‘tonight’]
toe yulo(n) youllon (T), ulo (R) [see ‘finger’]
tomahawk n(g)andi arnde (R), nunde (M) [Ngarrigu (Curr 211)
ngamba YY ngana]
tomorrow yuluth.lu uluthlu (M)
tongue tharra turrer (R), tierah (T), turra (M) [widespread
root thalayn]
tonight yanduga yarnduger (R) [see ‘today’]
too little yarnduger (R) [see ‘today’]
toothache taw a kub-bergar (R)
track of a foot tawa towwer (R)
tree wonda umigar (R), won dah (T)
tree, box bandjan bunjun (M)
tree, gum piarrerra tareengo (R) [Dhu dharringgu ‘grey box’]
tree, manna tandigala tando (R), tandigaller (R)
tree, she-oak diyu-o tehoo-o (R)
tree, stringy bark dhadha tarder (R) [Dhu dhadha]
tree, wattle morroenggar (R)
two pulithap, pulido pulido (R), polithup (M) [pul- is widespread]
uncle kang(g)a karnger (R)
veins wayinu winu (R)
vener(e)al pugo? ejener (R)
walk yan- poorgo (R)
wash tagurra warrimadali noaerrar (R), yannabee (M)
water warra yungigarlee (W [yangabailla ‘come’ (B)]
water hole bago, matha targoora wurrimadarely (W) [see ‘water’]
where tiauwerra worrer, warren (R), warra (M) [YY wala,
abyte, marther (R)
where wand[h]a tehowwerrer (R) [see ‘water’]
where wand[h]aya wondac (R), wonda (M) [Interrogative/ indefi
nite root wanh is widespread in eastern
Australia]
whistle uambinethah (W)
wife pandjarrerrego punjarerrego (R) [see ‘aunt’]
wild cat nurruma nooroomer (R)
wind karri carre (R), kurre (T), karrie (M)
windpipe pang(g)ang(g)e pungarrne (R)
winter bawatha pow wuther (R) [see ‘cold’]
woman, black  djerri  tcharere, charere (R), jaire (M), giree (T)  
[see ‘man’]
woman, old  djerriga  jerregar (R), gerriga (M)
woman, young  nawadaga  nowwadergar (R)
  nowwerer (R)
wood  tawa  tower (R), tau-wa (T), tawa (M)  [see ‘stick’]
woomera  banega  baneger (R)
  toneyarerge (R)
wrist  tonyarragi?  yow (R), yeo (M)  [similar forms widespread in eastern Australia], barngee (W)
  parmungge (R), pamungee (M)
yes  yow (R), yeo (M)  innar (R), neibee (M)  [ninna (M) given as ‘T’]

yesterday  pamanggi
yonder  (ng)ina

**Sentence examples**

* e lager torn borro (R)  ‘don’t you tell a fibs’
  yae e yannego (R)  yayi yani-gu  ‘come’
  yugg-eunnego (W)  yaki yani-gu  ‘come’
  yackeaneegee (M)  yaki yanigi/dji?  ‘come on’
  yae e yandego (R)  yayi yan-di-gu  ‘fetch it’
  i ner bad er made (R)  ngina bada made  ‘go first’
  i bear ro (R)  ‘go last’
  narng ge gageer now (R)  ‘here they come’
  won nimgerareener (R)  ‘don’t understand’
  kugin man ner oor ro (R)  ‘I’ll break your neck’
  minedowenyi muther (R)  ‘shake hands’
  won dow erni nuthe (R)  ‘what’s your name’
  wonda jere (M)  wand[h]a djerri  ‘where are the blacks’
  wuarme bithere (R)  ‘where you come from’
  narrungber (R)  ‘you’re a bad boy’
  me bourah togoorahmurri (W)  ‘I did hunt emus’
  tare eni mo (R)  ‘black man make rain’

**Barry Blake**, Professor of Linguistics at the La Trobe University, Melbourne, has worked on many Aboriginal languages. **Julie Reid** is also a linguist who has worked on Aboriginal languages.

**References**


British Justice

Pearl Duncan

Preamble
I was very pleased to be asked to contribute to a special edition of *Aboriginal History* in honour of my dear friend and mentor, Isobel (Sally) White. Sally befriended me when I first went to Canberra as a member of the National Aboriginal Education Committee and later when I studied anthropology at the Australian National University.

We kept in touch over the years and whenever I visited Canberra she always provided a bed for me. I was a grateful recipient of her kind hospitality and her unstinting generosity in sharing with me her great wealth of knowledge, her wisdom and her extensive anthropological library.

Sally often prevailed upon me to write an article for *Aboriginal History*. I always promised to consider it but somehow it was always difficult to find the time. In reality my full-time university jobs, thesis research and writing and my membership of various committees made huge demands on my time and energy.

I remember once saying to Sally, 'But what shall I write about given the limited time that I have to spare?' She replied, 'Pick something easy and familiar such as your mother. Why not write about her?' I had told Sally many anecdotes about my mother. So here it is Sally! I have finally written about my mother who was a great influence in my life.

My mother
My mother, who was descended from New England people, was a very strong, forthright woman who did not 'kowtow' to anyone; neither did she suffer fools gladly. She always spoke her mind without fear or favour, having strong views about most things, especially her rights as a human being.

My mother was reared by her maternal grandparents. Her mother, always sickly and delicate, had a baby every twelve months. Some of these babies died, but, surprisingly, eleven of them grew into adulthood. It is not surprising, however, that my mother's mother died in childbirth by the early age of 37. Before her untimely death, my mother and one of her sisters were fostered by their grandparents. This was to relieve the pressure of feeding two extra mouths at home.

Her elderly great-grandfather, Henry Harrison, who was an Englishman from Warwickshire, also lived with my mother’s maternal grandparents. Having committed a minor offence by today’s standards, he had been transported to Australia as a convict.
He lived to the great age of 96, and when he died, he was the last convict in that area. His obituary was written in the local newspaper of the time. Great-grandfather Harrison appears to have been a very patriotic Englishman who never forgot his homeland and entertained my mother with stories, songs and poems of England. He impressed upon my mother that the British Empire was the greatest empire in the world.

When I was a child, my mother often remarked to me that the sun never went down on the British Empire. She taught me the poems and songs that her great-grandfather had taught her. One of the poems, if I remember correctly, said ‘Only an old bit of bunting, only an old coloured rag, but many have died for its honour and laid down their lives for the flag’. I attended school during the years of World War II when there was a lot of patriotism around. I was good at recitation and was often the star performer in front of the class. The teacher and the pupils always prevailed upon me to say the above-mentioned poem. I always stood willingly at attention as I proudly and willingly obliged.

Henry Harrison was a devout member of the Church of England, known now as the Anglican Church of Australia. He said his daily offices of Matins and Evensong and read his Bible every day. My mother often wondered if he had received some theological training sometime during his life in England. Unfortunately we will never know because my mother would not have known what sort of questions to ask him when she sat at his knee as a small child. In any case, my mother was brought up in the faith of the Church of England to which she devotedly remained faithful for all of her life. My last duty to her as a loving daughter was to ensure that she received the last rites of the Anglican Church before she departed this life.

My mother excelled at school. She passed the qualifying certificate (QC), which was a very impressive examination at that time. It enabled one to become a pupil teacher, who would then serve an apprenticeship under the supervision of a headmaster. After a year at teacher’s training college, the pupil teacher could then become a fully qualified teacher who could be in charge of a class.

Unfortunately my mother had to leave school at age 14 to earn her living by entering domestic service, which was the only option left for an Aboriginal girl at that time. Domestic service was virtually slave labour in those days. Live-in domestics worked from dawn to dark, beginning their day’s work by lighting the kitchen fire and then serving morning tea on trays to all members of the household. This would be the wake-up call for the men of the household, who would be off to do farm work and then return to a hearty cooked breakfast at about 7:30 a.m. This was a hard day’s work before the day had really begun, but there followed morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner at night, along with the laundry and general housework. There was no respite until the household was served supper and the kitchen left spotless; then and only then was the rest of the evening free for personal chores. When my mother returned to domestic service after she and my father separated, this brief time in the evening was when she sat up late sewing clothes for us. We were then in the care of her eldest sister, our aunt Min.

It is mind-boggling to think that people like my mother were simply beasts of burden enduring all kinds of indignities for the sake of providing for their children. Remember, there were no labour-saving devices, no conveniences or single parent pen-
sions. It was all back-breaking, relentless hard yakka and there was no light at the end of the tunnel. If any good came out of the hard work and dreadful deprivation it was that my mother became an excellent cook and proficient in all domestic work, including sewing and knitting. But I find it poignant that she also assumed middle-class attitudes.

Our mother took over our upbringing after an absence of about four years. She did domestic work around town for various people and returned home every night. The work was not easier. The employers made sure that they got more than their money's worth out of her.

She was very strict about our upbringing. We were taught to be well-mannered and polite and to be careful of the friends with whom we associated, especially white kids. She was always suspicious of them until she was satisfied that they were all right. In those days it was common to think that if whites mixed with Aborigines there must be something amiss or unacceptable in their characters.

We could not read anything that she thought was unsuitable. I often received a long lecture if she caught me reading *True Romances*, a magazine that my young aunts had passed on to me. She argued that I would get the wrong idea of life and 'real life' was not like the one *True Romances* portrayed. It was not unusual for her to throw this type of literature into the fire. Also, she would not allow us to read about murder or violence in the newspapers. The only ones we had access to were those that were wrapped around our groceries or the ones passed on to my mother by the people she had worked for, many days after they had read them.

We had to be truthful and stand up for our rights if we were wrongfully accused. Unfortunately this happened often. Honesty was the best policy. Stealing was forbidden and respect for other people's property was instilled into us at an early age.

My mother liked to emulate the well-educated, well-bred whites. Refinement was a word she frequently used and looked for in people, especially her employers. She despised what she termed 'low class whites' for what she perceived as sloth, ill breeding, low moral standards and ignorance. In retrospect she was more 'royal than the royal' as it were. But she did recognise that there were many good, honest, decent poor white people in the same way that there were many unsavoury ones from the middle and upper classes.

Table manners were very important to my mother, especially if we were invited to eat in the homes of white people. Although we came from a very humble home, it was vital for us to know how we should conduct ourselves outside. Cleanliness was a given. Our home was no better than a shack, but it was spotless. Having to fetch water from the river did not deter us from keeping up our standards. Consequently, my mother was very critical and disapproving of the homes and the habits of some of the people she had worked for or who had befriended her.

I remember that my mother was a good storyteller. She had an amazing memory and a wonderful gift for words. She brought us up on a diet of stories that had strong moral elements. Those stories were European cautionary tales, but the very act of her using them to teach us valuable lessons in life must have surely hearkened back to the traditional past when her ancestors were great orators and storytellers. My most treasured memories of my childhood take me back to those times we spent around the fireside listening to our mother's stories.
My mother told me many times that she regretted not listening to her grandmother in order to learn the language of the old people. That means that even her own mother had lost the language and the culture of her clan. It is sad to think that the languages were endangered so early during the white settlement of the New England District of New South Wales. However, my mother did pick up odd words and phrases of her lost language, and, although there was little if any of the high culture left, she possessed a wealth of folklore.

She was a strong believer in the supernatural and in what she called ‘warnings and signs from the other side.’ She believed in the ‘death bird’ and taught us to do the same. It was never wrong. Whenever we heard its blood-curdling, indescribably chilling call, it was certain that soon we would have news of the death of a close relative.

Raising us in the 1940s our mother worked hard at soul-destroying domestic tasks that, even for those days, paid a pittance. She had to be most frugal with the small amount of money that she had at her disposal. She weighed every penny and thought hard about parting with it. If anyone needed something, they had to save up for it. There was no easy access to credit or to hire purchase in those days. One of the tasks I had to do was to go over all the food bills and check for mistakes. She never trusted the shopkeepers and always thought that they were robbing her. In the days of my childhood, decimal currency was unheard of, so we had to contend with pounds, shillings, and pence. Worst of all were the halfpennies; nevertheless, halfpennies counted. If I discovered that one halfpenny were overcharged, my mother would take the bill back to the shop and demand her refund. I must admit that I found these tasks tedious and was embarrassed when my mother confronted the shopkeeper, but now I think how courageous she was for standing up for her rights. It was not easy for Aborigines at that time to be outspoken and fearless in a white-dominated society.

My mother believed that there was no system as good as the British one, that the British Empire was great, and that it meant freedom for all of its subjects. Those who lived under the Union Jack enjoyed good, solid British justice and proudly affirmed their allegiance to British values. I suspect that her great-grandfather Harrison and the landed gentry in whose homes she had slaved had a lot to do with indoctrinating her.

Recently my brother asked me if I remembered when Mum went to the school and demanded ‘British justice?’ I did remember and we laughed as we reminisced, going over every detail of the event with tears streaming down our cheeks. I shall always remember that day and how my mother conducted herself. We had been getting into trouble at school by being wrongly accused of various offences, and after listening to our complaints, she was certain that we were being victimised. So she jammed her old hat on her head (she always wore a hat to town), shoved her worn handbag under her arm and strode off to confront the headmaster with us in tow. The headmaster, who was known to be a bully by everyone including the white parents, said, ‘Yes, Mrs. Duncan, what can I do for you?’ Our mother stamped her foot, clenched her fists, and said in a forthright voice, ‘I’m here for British justice!’ The headmaster was speechless as he looked at her in disbelief, stunned amazement or stupidity for a good three minutes before regaining his composure. The matter was sorted out eventually and we left feeling we had achieved a modicum of success.
My brother and I talked in fondness of our mother and smiled in pity for her undying faith in British justice. We wept as we reminded ourselves just what 'so-called British justice' had done for other Aborigines and for us. We wept for the pain and anguish it caused our mother, our other loved ones, and those dear, good people of our childhood who were so gentle and forbearing, but most of all, so forgiving. British justice may have prevailed for the white people but there was no justice for us. I doubt if there was justice for the other Indigenous people whose lands were stolen and whose cultures were destroyed by the spread of the British Empire throughout the world.

My mother accepted the myths and lies perpetuated by the white invaders and rulers. She was thoroughly indoctrinated at school and in domestic service for the landed gentry. Her great-grandfather, whom she loved, played a part too by inspiring her to venerate the British Empire and thus making her vulnerable to persuasion.

My mother asked for British justice but, in reality, did not get it. In fact, complete justice for Aborigines is still a burning issue in Australia and has to be fully addressed. The widely touted 'mateship' as proclaimed by the present Prime Minister, John Howard, may yet become a reality if 'mateship' truly means a fair go for all. But there has to be reconciliation and reconciliation can only take place with humility. The government must humbly apologise; it must say that it is sorry, and we must forgive, if that is appropriate. It is simply not possible to go back and to reverse all the wrongs that have been done to Aborigines in the past, especially where there is a legal system that ratifies those things. Saying sorry is not hard and is possible.

My mother's demands for 'British' justice may yet be realised if 'mateship' means what it is claimed to be.

Pearl Duncan is an educationalist. She was the first Aboriginal person to become a trained teacher, and subsequently taught for many years in Queensland (including the Torres Strait Islands) and New South Wales. More recently she has taught Aboriginal Studies at the Southern Cross University and later at the Queensland University of Technology, where she was head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit. She is currently working on a doctoral thesis on Aboriginal humour at the University of Queensland.
Travels with Sally

D.C.F. Rentz

Since this is a book about the life of an anthropologist, one might ask how the modes of an entomologist are relevant. Sally White was married to M.J.D. (Michael) White who was first a geneticist and secondly an entomologist. Michael used 'orthopteroid' insects (grasshoppers, crickets, katydids, stick insects, mantids and the like) as his primary subjects. These insects are also my specialty. I study their systematics, that is, their classification, biology and behaviour. Geneticists have spent a lot of time looking at the chromosomes of these insects because they are abundant, large and relatively easily collected. The chromosomes are also relatively very large and this was very important in the early days before the tremendous advances in microscopy that we know today. Michael was one of the world’s outstanding cytologists and made many important contributions during his productive life.

I joined CSIRO in 1976, after emigrating from my native California. I already knew Michael as a result of our mutual interests. Within a day of my arrival Michael and Sally offered greetings and the loan of basic necessities of life — a toaster and an electric 'jug'. The latter was a new item not previously encountered in California living. Water there is boiled on the stove! Several dinners were enjoyed at the White residence on Blackbutt Street (and Michael would repeat the word, stressing the 'butt' in his very characteristic vocal manner with darting eyebrows watching to see if a grin could be elicited). Fortunately (or unfortunately) he found me a ready audience for his many 'stories'. He reminded me somewhat of my grandfather. Sally knew all the stories and helped fill in the gaps. ‘Tell him about the day Ken (Key) was chased by eagles...’she would say.

Within 6 weeks of my settling in Canberra, Michael offered me a field trip to south central Queensland. He was looking for certain kinds of morabine grasshoppers. These grasshoppers comprise about 250 species, all endemic to Australia. They are all slender, wingless creatures that look like matchsticks with legs. Michael's entomological colleague Ken Key (my predecessor) had been studying morabines for more than 30 years; he and Michael had written a number of joint papers (which Michael described as an exercise in 'entomological masochism'), and Michael needed to get more specimens from certain localities to confirm his hypotheses. [These papers are now considered classics in Australian entomological circles.] Sally told me that Michael was quite anxious to be the first to show me the Australian bush. She was preoccupied with other activities and so Michael and I set out visiting such places as Alpha, Jericho, Beta and even ‘Whites Hole’, all in Queensland. The first night we camped on the verge near Nyngan, New South Wales, and after dark (I do much collecting at night) I found some
katydids called the Mountain Katydid in the adjacent ‘paddock’ (I was informed that they are not ‘fields’ here). I exclaimed that it didn’t appear that there were any mountains for miles. Michael said that was correct and ‘you can see why we need you here’.

Anyone who has camped with the Whites is soon to learn that they espouse no creature comforts. I was presented with a ‘stretcher’. This is a canvas and wire gismo on which one reclines. Without any tuition (instruction in Yankese) my attempts to put the thing together must have become the basis for another ‘Michael story’. I still despise those things. The remainder of the camping gear seemed quite primitive to my thinking. Cooking was done on a gas stove placed on the ground, which I thought was dangerous. The gas-jets seemed to always be clogged and when Sally was along a great deal of time was spent trying to clean them; an entire morning was occupied in the Longreach hardware store with Michael and the owner blowing compressed air through the system because there were no replacements.

Way Out West

*Way Out West* is one of my favourite Laurel and Hardy comedies and I thought appropriate for these tales. I took several trips with the Whites and my ex-wife Barbara to Western Australia. The ultimate destinations were localities in the vicinity of Kalgoorlie. The Diorite King Mine seems to stand out. Whilst in Kalgoorlie, they had to show me ‘that street!’ On each occasion when we travelled through Menzies I was informed that ex-President Herbert Hoover spent some time as a metallurgist there before becoming president of the USA. The routine of a field trip was not for everyone, but I found the companionship and humour to be well worth the discomfort. And the gems of information from both Sally and Michael I utilise to this day. Other participants in the White’s field excursions will recall the ‘card table’ held together by countless screws.
that had to be tightened with each use, and the unique ‘White Tent’, surely the precur-
sor for the Sydney Opera House.

One time Michael wanted to show me Fowlers Bay, not far from Ceduna, South
Australia. It was blowing a gale. After some time we arrived in a full sandstorm. Of
course, nothing was collected. In the morning, with the wind still blowing, I found Sally
on her knees with the stove on the ground under the rear of the Toyota Landcruiser
cooking bacon and eggs. She exclaimed that Michael was English, you know, and he
had to have bacon and eggs every morning no matter what the conditions. I noticed a
considerable lacing of sand with the food. She said it wouldn’t worry Michael. I’ve
returned to Fowlers Bay on several occasions since that visit and still don’t see what
they both felt was so special about the spot.

Yalata connections
Each trip out west had the perfunctory stop at Yalata where Sally would confer with
certain women in the local aboriginal community. She was preparing her article for
Fighters and singers, a book documenting the contributions of certain important women
in a number of Aboriginal communities. I recall the efforts to find the respective women
with whom she was conferring. We always located them — eventually. After a few
inquiries we seemed to head off ‘aimlessly’ into the mulga for many many kilometres,
often asking a question of passers-by as to the whereabouts of certain women. One time
after more than an hour of driving we eventually came to the lady in question, seated
upon a sofa under the wattles. After thinking about it, this was the coolest and most
pleasant place to be on a hot February afternoon.

Does it ever stop raining at Mt Ragged?
Mt Ragged, Western Australia, is one of those remote localities that one finds on the
labels of many insects in the Australian National Insect Collection in Canberra. While I
was studying Australian insects when in the USA, I frequently wondered what the area
was like. It had produced so many interesting katydids with more than 80% unde-
scribed species. When the Whites decided that a trip down there for a couple of days
was entirely possible, I was elated at the opportunity to see the place and look for katy-
dids there. I have subsequently visited the place four times, each time punctuated by a
disaster that required an early departure.

The first trip required travel south from Balladonia through the mixed woodland.
Michael and Sally were intrigued by ‘Balladonia time’ which was some 15 minutes dif-
ferent from the time at localities on either side of the place. This reflects the remoteness
of this community. We started the transect south towards Mt Ragged well after 3.00
p.m. Around 6.00 p.m. we decided to stop and set up camp. We found a pleasant spot
among the Cratystylus and mallees on the edge of a dry lake. After the ‘cocktail hour’
and story-time and dinner, I set out on foot collecting in the general vicinity. I used the
camp lights for bearings as getting lost is the greatest hazard in the Australian bush, not
encounters with snakes, yowies and the like. Snooping around vegetation and bending
over to look at creatures on the ground can leave one disoriented. At one point I looked
around to find my beacon lights and, alas, none were to be seen. I moved a short dis-
tance in various directions and decided I was indeed ‘bushed’. It was a dark night with
no moon so there was not much ambient light. I tried calling: nothing; I used the police
whistle I was instructed to carry: nothing. I tried climbing a tree or two but they were all the same size and I couldn’t see a thing. I had a hunch to walk in a line in a certain direction. This I did and eventually found the clearing and dry lake. I then knew where to find the camp. On arrival I awakened the sleeping Whites who said they retired and merely turned off the camp lights, not realising I was using them as a beacon. They said they heard some sorts of noise but thought it was only ‘curlews’. On all subsequent nights, the camp light was placed atop the vehicle, ‘or David would get lost.’ I suspect after that occurrence I was the topic of yet another ‘story’.

We arrived at Mt Ragged in mid-afternoon in sunshine and scattered thunderclouds, and I walked about the heath vegetation and discovered what a diverse and marvellous orthopteroid fauna lived there. At dinner we decided to spend about three days there to really sample the grasshoppers. After a successful night’s collecting I settled down in my ‘stretcher’ and a short time later a few raindrops were felt. Shortly it became more intense and the ‘Opera House’ was erected. It seemed to rain continuously, and about 4.00 a.m. Michael announced that we should probably leave at dawn since with such large amounts of water on the track he felt my VW Kombi van would not be able to make the trip south to the Esperance road. So there were no bacon and eggs in the morning, and we left at dawn going back to Balladonia. Michael was right, he had to tow me over a considerable distance through muddy puddles that would have delayed me for some days had I been on my own. The next trip a couple of years later resulted in the same fate only I ended up being towed in the opposite direction toward Esperance. The last trip to Mt Ragged was in February 1991, and was by far the most miserable. We had arrived in scorching heat and high winds. No tent could be secured. Sand was blowing everywhere and in the night lightning started a fire-storm in the west and by dawn’s light the fire was approaching camp. We beat a hasty retreat later discovering that the fire had engulfed the camp, burning tables, toilets and, of course, all the interesting vegetation.
For all the travail at Mt Ragged, I have made some wonderful entomological discoveries. I affectionately named White’s Elusive Shield-backed Katydid *Ixalodectes whitei* Rentz from a locality not far from Mt Ragged, collected during a brief stop whilst I was being towed down the track. A species dedicated to Sally will appear in the next volume of my monograph series, volume 3, ‘A Monograph of the Tettigoniidae of Australia’.

The Musgrave Ranges
The last trip I took with the Whites was to the Musgrave Ranges of central Australia in January 1982. The purposes of the trip were to try and map the geographical limits of a morabine grasshopper Michael was studying and for Sally to make contact with some folks at Amata. I went along because of the collecting opportunities offered in localities not usually accessible to entomologists. The weather was extreme — hot and dry. It was 52°C at Kulgera where we were told ‘the frogs have forgotten how to swim.’ We were completely knocked out by the heat — except for Sally. She didn’t seem too worried by it. At one point when we were completely exhausted, Sally suggested we stop in a shady grove of she-oaks (*Casuarina decaisneana*) and take out the stretchers and just relax until nightfall. This we did, except for Sally who sat in a chair, read a book and sewed Michael’s net. We eventually decided to spend a night in a motel and headed off to Kulgera where an eventful night was spent tending the evaporative cooler. It would have been more relaxing in the field. We never did find the exclusive morabine grasshopper and Michael reminded us that this negative evidence did not affect his hypothesis — it might be there only we missed it. And to add to the dismay, Sally did not meet the folks she wanted to see. It seems they had all gone off to Yalata!
Summary

Sally White always had an interesting way of looking at things. She could be relied upon to have an opinion completely different from what one might expect. I was puzzled why aboriginal women wore dresses in the desert. Wouldn’t it be more practical to wear trousers? ‘Oh, no’, she said, ‘It’s a hangover from the Mission days. And anyways, it’s more comfortable.’ Sally herself usually wore a dress in the field, and she was not influenced by the missions.

Sally was a treasure and was recognised as such by her Aboriginal friends. I guess that’s why they addressed her as ‘grandmother’. I have told only a few stories: others escape me now, and still others just can’t be repeated. I consider my time with the Whites as some of the most memorable experiences of my life and am privileged to have been able to relate some of them here.

David Rentz is an entomologist and scientific project leader with the Division of Entomology of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation in Canberra.
Isobel White was passionate in regard to anthropological research among Aboriginal people. Her integrity as a scholar and love for the people made her their champion. This is evident through her work. Her scholarship is undeniable and widely heralded.

Though working primarily in the field of linguistics and Bible translation, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Australia shares much of the same motivation and drive that characterised Sally White’s work over the past thirty years, though the emphasis is different.

In a secular academic world, SIL’s Bible translation emphasis is not easily understood, particularly as all its linguists are not involved in studying for higher degrees. But SIL shares with other groups and individuals like Sally White common ground in a sense of justice, an identification with minority groups who had been deliberately or unconsciously ignored and a conviction that a person’s language and culture should be respected as basic to that individual’s identity.

After 35 years in the field, people might ask whether SIL has made a significant contribution to the preservation and knowledge of Aboriginal languages and to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people? This paper is an attempt to answer that question by narrating examples of SIL involvement with Aboriginal and Islander people in relation to language.

Language and cultural research
To assess where matters stand today, it is necessary to outline early beginnings and where SIL has come from. Vast changes have occurred in the field of Aboriginal studies from the conditions that prevailed in the 1950s when Bill and Lynette Oates commenced studying the Gunwinggu language at Oenpelli in 1952. Then, their SIL training and linguistic expertise were tested in unexpected ways. They were barred from visiting the Aboriginal camp to freely collect data, the authorities stating: ‘We have our territory and that is theirs.’ Lynette, working for a Master’s thesis, was allocated two Aboriginal women from whom she could collect data in the mission house. The ‘Gunwinggu Grammar’, written in 1953, and eventually published in 19641, owes much to Bill’s
greater freedom to collect data orally as he worked with Aboriginal stockmen. This grammar became one of the first reasonably comprehensive ‘modern’ descriptions of an Aboriginal language.

In October–November 1958, Bill Oates was accompanied by another SIL member, Alan Healey, in a language survey of north Queensland. The purpose was to ascertain whether enough indigenous language remained for SIL to commence a Bible translation program amongst the Australian Aborigines. The survey, using a Land Rover except for plane travel in and out of Aurukun, went as far west as Normanton and Doomagee and as far north as Coen and Aurukun, visiting also Gilbert, Mitchell, Lockhardt and Bloomfield Rivers, Hopevale and some isolated Aboriginal camps. A one hundred word list was partly or fully recorded in eleven languages. Most of the Aboriginal people were astounded at white men showing an interest in their languages. One old man was so excited that someone could write down and pronounce his language correctly, that he ran after the Land Rover as the linguists were leaving, pleading with them to stay.

The following year the Oates spent two months on the Bloomfield River. There, they encountered no restrictions on gathering data, only apathy, misunderstanding or hostility from fellow Australians. A mission superintendent who had preceded their arrival by only a few months stated, ‘When I get these people under my control, my work will begin.’ The linguists were expected to ally themselves with fellow whites, but to do so and keep faith with Aboriginal friends who shared with them some of the injustices and discriminations to which they were subjected was like walking a tight rope. At times, endurance was tested to the limit. The publication in 1964 of the fruit of this field work (an analysis of the phonemes of Kuku-Yalanji, a one thousand word vocabulary and an analysis of the kinship system) was the first documentation of this then strongly viable language.

SIL, like many others engaged in Aboriginal research, was given a big boost early in 1961 with the formation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS). Now at last government funds were to be made available for research into all aspects of Aboriginal culture from prehistory to linguistics. In the latter discipline, there were enormous gaps of knowledge, prompting Dr A. Capell, veteran linguist, to quickly prepare a handbook, ‘Linguistic survey of Australia’, presenting the known data on Aboriginal languages, numbering and coding them according to eleven geographical areas and assessing their viability status. Bill Oates served on the linguistics committee of

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4. Capell, A: Linguistic Survey of Australia, Sydney, 1963. Capell identified 633 language names, designating 23 as being worthy of depth study and 375 labelled ‘Basic information needed immediately because of rapid disappearance of the language’; 73 languages were presumed extinct.
the AIAS, and later as research assistant in linguistics. This helped to keep SIL policy congruent with AIAS research policy and attitudes.

**SIL’s emphasis**

The Australian Aborigines Branch of SIL was inaugurated on 19 June 1961. Doubtless some considered a Bible translation program with the Aborigines misplaced optimism, since a Canberra conference listed just a handful of viable languages, stating non-viable languages were becoming extinct at the rate of ten per year.

SIL sent field teams to Queensland to study Wik-Munkan at Aurukun and to continue Gugu-Yalanji at Bloomfield. In the next two years, others began studies in Kundjen (Queensland), Gidabul (northern New South Wales), Burada and Yanyula (Northern Territory), and Pintupi (central Australia).

**Language survey**

As suggested by the early history, language survey has been an area where, as an essential part of its own program, SIL has made a significant contribution. In the early days, survey work was primarily concerned with accurate collection and comparison of language data. More latterly, when language death is increasingly apparent, the need has been to take into account attitudes and socio-cultural trends as well as linguistic data. Those who have worked with a language for many years do not easily face the fact of its demise. Because SIL linguists are motivated to spend a long time in the one language group (up to 20 or 30 years), they are able to intimately assess factors related to language death. Jean Kirton’s 1988 article, ‘Yanyuwa — a dying language’ describes the changes that had occurred since she first studied the language at Borroloola in 1963, twenty-five years earlier. She concludes:

> Yanyuwa is a dying language. If any factor should contribute to its reviving, the writer will rejoice indeed, as at this time the factors contributing to its loss seem too strong to be overcome (Kirton 1988: 1).

The last three months of Jean’s life (shortened unexpectedly by cancer), were spent working on a volume of Yanyuwa grammar co-authored with the Yanyuwa woman who taught her most about the language. In SIL history, this volume was a significant co-authorship between a linguist and an Aboriginal helper. The volume was, in Jean’s words, ‘an attempt to preserve a record of the language of the Yanyuwa people and an expression of my thanks to the Yanyuwa who have shared their language and lives with me.’

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5. Quarterly updates in the form of Linguistic Field Reports were sent to linguists in the field. These were in August and October 1966, and January, April, July and November 1967. There are 44 linguists mentioned, only 15 of whom were SIL personnel, researching over 80 languages and dialects/language names.


7. From early studies in some of these languages came: Occasional Papers in Linguistic Studies, Nos 1 and 2; AIAS; W.J. Oates: ‘Syllable Patterning and Phonetically Complex Consonants in some Australian Languages’ (paper to ANZAAS) (1966); Lynette Oates: ‘Distribution of Phonemes and Syllables in Gugu-Yalanji’ *Anthropological Linguistics* (1964).

Kriol — a ‘real’ language

Even while Jean Kirton lamented the disappearance of Yanyuwa as a primary language of communication, she appreciated that it was largely replaced not by English, but by Kriol. She described the situation in the town of Borroloola thus:

As the proportion of ‘outsiders’ in Borroloola Aboriginal Community has increased, Kriol has strengthened as the lingua franca of the area. It is the one Aboriginal language that remains to those who have lost their traditional language. Kriol reflects the traditional sound system and grammar, but, more than that, its semantic system facilitates expression of the Aboriginal world view. Although the writer sorrows to see such extensive evidence that Yanyuwa is dying, she is thankful that at least Kriol is alive and well and that this language remains for the Yanyuwa to give expression to their thoughts and feelings.¹⁰

Such a positive attitude towards Kriol has not been shared by the wider public, nor has it always been shared by linguists and Aboriginal people. But SIL faced realistically the fact that in many places in northern Australia this creole language was rapidly taking the place of languages that had died, and they accepted it as an Aboriginal language. Margaret Sharpe, working on Alawa in the Roper River area in 1966 under SIL auspices, became aware of its significance and attempted to gain official recognition for Kriol. She and Mary Harris of the Church Missionary Society developed a ‘Roper River Pidgin English primer’ and held literacy classes for some Kriol speakers.

In 1972 SIL assigned John Sandefur to survey the ‘Roper Pidgin’ language situation. Though other people have played important roles in gaining recognition for Kriol, it has largely been the efforts of Sandefur that have put Kriol on the Aboriginal language map for serious linguistic studies and for use in bilingual education. Between 1976 and 1990, Sandefur published 26 articles on Kriol and co-authored others. Also published were a grammatical description, preliminary dictionary and a Kriol language-learning course, the latter two co-authored with Joy Sandefur.

In 1984 a video series of 40 half-hour episodes entitled ‘Kriol Kantri’ was launched. The programs were of a Sesame Street/Playschool type designed for use in schools with Kriol-speaking children and aimed to ‘enhance the self-image and dignity of Kriol speakers, reinforce their literacy skills and help raise the prestige of their language’.¹¹ The serious study of Kriol and its use in literature, including Bible translation, encouraged the kind of pride expressed in the following quotation from a local speaker, Rodney Rivers:

As a Kriol speaker and Kriol being my mother tongue, I would encourage those who read and learn this language to know that they have my compliments as well as that of the 20,000 other people who speak it. Kriol is our language, so don’t be turned off by criticism from ignorant people. Criticism isn’t our language, but Kriol is and always will be.¹²

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10. Kirton, Jean, 1988:16-17
Literacy and bilingual education

In December 1972 the Whitlam government announced a policy to have Aboriginal children in distinctive Aboriginal communities receive their primary education in Aboriginal languages. As it happened, SIL in Darwin had already arranged for a literacy workshop in March 1973 to be conducted by Dr Sarah Gudschinsky using her Manual of literacy for preliterate peoples which was about to be published by SIL-PNG. The newly established Bilingual Education Consultative Committee meeting in Darwin some months later reported favourably on the 'Gudschinsky Reading Scheme' which they observed on Goulburn Island.\(^\text{13}\) The workshop had developed school reading materials in several languages including Maung, Gunwinggu, Pintupi, Walmajarri, Burrra and Tiwi.

Two other important contributions of SIL to bilingual education in the Northern Territory were workshops for training Aboriginal writers, and the initial SIL training course in Victoria where teachers in bilingual schools could receive a basic introduction to linguistics and language learning. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided funding to send teachers from the Northern Territory to the course.

In recognition of SIL's contribution, the Northern Territory Department of Education nominated the Australian Aborigines Branch (AAB) for the UNESCO International Literacy Prize in 1979. Though SIL-PNG won the prize, the AAB received special recognition (along with SIL-Philippines).

The Department of Education's policy to place teacher-linguists in bilingual schools lessened direct involvement of SIL personnel, but ongoing support was given by the publication of vernacular literacy materials. The current SIL-AAIB (Australian Aborigines and Islander Branch) bibliography lists 476 entries in the 'vernacular-secular' section.\(^\text{14}\)

Other significant developments came out of those early days of bilingual education. The August 1973 meeting of the Bilingual Education Consultative Committee considered a proposal for the establishment of a college of Australian linguistics with a three-tiered purpose. The first aim was geared to train Aboriginal people in 'elementary linguistics and so enable them in devising an orthography and preparing primers' and supplementary material for bilingual education. The second aim was more ambitious encompassing 'advanced' linguistics to enable Aborigines to produce 'linguistic descriptions of their own languages', and the third was aimed higher still to produce 'linguistic consultants' who would advise their communities and eventually be part of the academic staff of the college. The proposal came from Sarah Gudschinsky, SIL International literacy consultant, Professor R.M.W. Dixon, David Glasgow (then Director of SIL) and Dr Stephen Wurm. It was accepted, and by March 1974 a decision was reached to locate the school at Darwin College and to form an advisory committee. It was from this beginning that the School of Australian Linguistics, now the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, was established at Batchelor, Northern Territory.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{12}\) quoted in Foreword to Sandefur John R. and Joy L. 1981 'An Introduction to Conversational Iriol', Work Papers of SIL-AAB B-5, Darwin, SIL.


\(^{14}\) These were written by SIL members or Aboriginal or Islander authors with SIL input.
Translation and training

In spite of the forward move by SIL members who joined in proposing this College, SIL has been slow until recently to take up formal training of Aboriginal and Islander people. This is partly because SIL linguists work informally with their language helpers, often coming to decisions together about language analysis, orthography, first draft translating, revising and editing. It is no accident that those who have been involved in a translation program in their own language have been sought after for other language-related work, especially in schools. Others have seen the importance of these 'offshoots', as revealed in this quotation:

One of the most significant features of Bible translation work in various languages, particularly in recent years, has been the emphasis on teamwork between non-Aboriginal linguists and one or more speakers of the language concerned. The extensive awareness of each other's language developed by the members of such a team often results in greater involvement in other language projects by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members.

Until the mid 1980s, SIL engaged in formal training only sporadically, but the voices of both members and Aboriginal and Islander translators pushed the branch to offer training workshops. From 1986 to 1994 more than 20 were held, using a draft text book by Dr Chris Kilham completed in 1990. In 1992, SIL was registered by the Northern Territory Education and Training Authority (NTETA) and two years later the Certificate in Training (CIT) course was formally approved by NTETA. Twenty-two Aboriginal students had completed over 50% of the course by December 1996. The course has modules on grammar, orthography, culture and research as well as translation principles to equip students for the translation task.

Other workshops on song writing and recording (often including translation tasks) have also significantly affected Aboriginal communities though, unlike the CIT course, they do not carry accreditation. Many participants have been encouraged and trained in musical expression and the tapes that have been produced have been among the most popular items sold by the AAIB.

Islander studies

Three of the 27 different languages SIL has studied are in the Torres Strait. Following a language survey there in 1971, a program began in 1976 in Kala Lagaw Ya of the Western Torres Strait. Initially because of distance from SIL’s administrative centre in Darwin and the different context from Aboriginal language programs, the Torres Strait work was not as closely identified with the AAB. However, in 1987, the branch recognised the separate identity of Torres Strait peoples and changed its name from the Australian Aborigines Branch to the Australian Aborigines and Islander Branch, anticipating a similar change from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to incorporate Torres Strait Islander studies.

In 1986 SIL fieldworkers Rod and Judy Kennedy co-authored a collection of articles aimed to fill a cultural information gap, providing an introduction to various aspects of Western Torres Strait people and culture. The core of their book entitled *Adha Gar Tidka*, a local idiom meaning ‘giving assistance unobtrusively’, consists of two substantial articles based on their own research data and written at an anthropology workshop in Papua New Guinea. An expanded edition of this book published in 1990 included articles by three Islanders recorded and transcribed by Rod Kennedy.

Two volumes of scripture were publicly presented in the Torres Strait on 1 July 1994. On this date, there is an annual celebration, ‘The coming of the Light’ festival, when the landing on Darnley Island of the first Christian missionaries from Tonga is re-enacted. The 1994 date was of special significance — a moment in history, so to speak — because the Torres Strait Regional Authority was inaugurated. These three events were celebrated together on Thursday Island, beginning with the re-enactment, followed by an ecumenical service in the Anglican Cathedral in which a collection of Kalaw Kawaw Ya scriptures and the gospel of Mark in Meriam Mir were dedicated, and then proceeding from there for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding which established the Regional Authority. The confluence of church, scripture, language and political identity was representative of Torres Strait life. George Mye, Chairman of Darnley Island and past Commissioner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, stated ‘We are glad that the church and the government are on the same path. We must always stay together.’

Because the primary motivation of SIL is the translation of at least parts of the Bible into minority languages, by far the greatest translation material has been biblical. Language change and decline in a number of translation programs have sometimes limited the goal from a full to a partial New Testament with some Old Testament portions. In some cases where the younger generation is not speaking the traditional language, portions are seen as a temporary bridge to the use of an easy English version. But more and more in recent years it has been done to show respect for the value of the endangered language. Substantial amounts of scripture have been published in thirteen languages. While some may view such results pejoratively, the remarks of a Gambian scholar and professor at Yale Divinity School are worth noting:

It struck me as fairly obvious that missionary interest, say, in the vernaculars of Africa touched on the affected cultures in a very profound way. In most of these cultures, language is the intimate, articulate expression of culture, and so close are the two that language can be said to be synonymous with culture, which it suffuses and embodies...Missionary adoption of the vernacular, therefore, was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message, a piece of radical indigenisation far greater than the standard portrayal of mission as Western cultural imperialism.

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17. Kennedy, Rod and Judy. 1990 ‘Adha Gar Tidit, Cultural Sensitivity in Western Torres Strait’, Work Papers of SIL-AAIB B-14, Darwin SIL.

Evaluative summary

At times SIL has come under criticism for being slow to publish. Nevertheless, 414 books or articles of published works have been written, with a further total of over 250 unpublished papers deposited with the AIATSIS where they can be accessed. The materials range from descriptive phonology, grammar and discourse write-ups, dictionaries, and data from language surveys covering much of the north of Australia, to language and culture learning courses.

A problem that continues to face SIL in Australia is the lack of Aboriginal and Islander people on staff. This is largely due to SIL’s financial structure where members do not receive wages but are dependent on churches and individuals to provide their financial backing. Aborigines and Islanders could not look to be supported by this system. A percentage of monies received by SIL members is given to finance international and branch administrative costs. In a small branch like the AAIB, finances are limited and do not stretch to pay salaried workers. Fortunately, the Bible Society in Australia provides funding to pay the wages of a number of Aboriginal and Islander translators, wages which otherwise the SIL fieldworker would have to provide.

In any self-evaluation, the voice of Aboriginal and Islander people is always important. SIL-AAIB values comments like the following, quoted and translated by Jukuna, a Walmajarri speaker from Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia:

White people are forward, not ashamed of themselves. They spread their language [English] around everywhere. So, if they can do that, I, without apology will write my language [Walmajarri] in its hard [fullest] form as they do their English.19

Or this comment from Mike Williams, a Pitjantjatjara speaker:

The Pitjantjatjara language is very important to the Pitjantjatjara people. So we are translating into Pitjantjatjara, so that old people, young people and children all can hear and understand, for they cannot understand a lot of English or other languages. But now they are very happy that the Bible in Pitjantjatjara is becoming a reality.

_Lynette Oates, a linguist who has worked on Aboriginal languages for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, is now based at Wodonga, Victoria._

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Favourite foods and the fight for country: witchetty grubs and the Southern Pitjantjatjara

Kingsley Palmer

Introduction

Isobel (Sally) White first visited Yalata Lutheran Mission on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain in 1969 with Dr Margaret Kartomi. The following year, having visited Port Augusta and Marree with Mrs L Hercus (now Dr Hercus), she applied to the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for a grant of $800 to spend two months at Yalata to investigate women's status in traditional life.1 The grant was approved, with an admonition from the Research Committee to be sure not to visit any men's secret sites with the women. Sally went to Yalata in August 1970, writing in a letter to the Institute that 'they [the Aboriginal women] demand to be taken some miles in the Land Rover for hunting, until I am tired of the sight of dead kangaroos and wombats! These are still the main source of protein in this camp'.2 The rough conditions she endured in the camp, known as Big Camp or ngura pulka in Pitjantjatjara, are evidenced by her request to the Institute in November 1970 for 'a sum of about $40 ... for repairs to our Department tent, which got chewed by dogs and speared by children in the camp at Yalata'.3

Sally was successful in gaining a second grant from the Institute in 1971, again with the stipulated condition that she must not infringe male secrets, to which she replied, 'I resent the gratuitous injunction not to accompany informants to sacred sites. I regard this as a reflection on my own knowledge and intelligence, but even more as a slight on the Aboriginal women themselves'.4 It is a reminder of Sally's own struggles as a female anthropologist in a world that remained in the 1970s still very much the domain of men. But Sally's research was fundamental and immediate. Life in the Yalata camp was tough and at times dangerous but it gave her a close understanding of social relations, cultural activity and the impact of the mission on the people. She was also able to come to an understanding of some of the effects on social relations that had resulted from the involuntary relocations and dispossession that Yalata people had suffered following their forced move from Ooldea. After three weeks fieldwork in August

1. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies file 70/3 ff 3-4.
2. Ibid., f 32 (letter to F.D. McCarthy 23.8.70).
3. Ibid., f 39 (letter to F.D. McCarthy 28.11.70).
4. Ibid., f 49 (letter to D.R. Sheppard, Executive Officer. In a hand-written note to Mr Sheppard Sally wrote, 'This was a very hastily drafted letter — as you realise the last paragraph was not aimed at yourself' (Ibid., f 49).
1971, Sally's tent was burnt down by a drunken man, evidently jealous of Sally's work with her husband and her adoptive 'sisters'. Sally left the field in a hurry, feeling 'defeated and frustrated'.5

However, Sally regarded this unfortunate incident as merely a temporary setback. She made numerous subsequent visits to Yalata, collecting materials on life histories (particularly of the women6), ritual life and daily activities, including hunting and food preparation.7 As Sally herself pointed out, the Yalata people were the same people, or their descendants, whom Daisy Bates described in 1938, and with whom Bates had lived for several years in the sand hills of Ooldea.8 They were also the people with whom Ronald and Catherine Berndt had worked in 1941 and with whom they had camped as young researchers out of Sydney University.9 Ooldea was closed in 1952 and the people dispersed variously north to Indulkana or west to Cundeelee, while a substantial proportion were relocated to Yalata where the Lutheran missionaries were pleased to recruit them to a new mission set up soon after at an old well on a newly declared Reserve in 1953.10

Yalata Lutheran Mission and the Maralinga lock-out

The distance and difficult terrain of the Nullarbor Plain made return to traditional country difficult and, with the onset of the atomic testing program at Maralinga and Emu, such visits were not only discouraged but access barred by British and Australian army personnel. The Lutheran missionaries and the Native Patrol Officer employed by the Woomera Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) worked to limit any visits north (see Brady, this volume). However, the Yalata people's orientation was always north — linking cultural and spiritual practices to their homelands in the Great Victoria Desert in both South and Western Australia. When I commenced work at Yalata in 1981, some limited visits had been made to the homelands, by courtesy of a former missionary and Mission Superintendent,11 but the expeditions were infrequent and available only to the men. There had been little thought given on the part of the mission authorities or government bureaucrats to a return to what had now become the 'Maralinga Lands', although the bomb testing ended in 1963 and the Range was formally decommissioned in 1968.12 By the early 1980s negotiations were already afoot for the Lands to be returned to Aboriginal control. Lack of water, remoteness and distance were cited by government officials and some Yalata staff as reasons for a return to country being impractical.

For Yalata people, residence on the new Reserve was unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The country was not their own. A few individuals could claim ancestry to the original inhabitants of the region, whom Sally White variously identified as the Wirangu or Gulbinda Bidjandjara.13 Most Yalata people identified as Pitjantjatjara,
belonging to the southern group of people of that name now widely dispersed across communities in northern South Australia and eastern Western Australia, as well as the Northern Territory. For the majority of Yalata residents, sacred sites for which they were responsible and their associated ritual interest lay to the north of the Trans-Australian railway line (know as the ‘Trans Line’) and for many their country of origin was as far away as the Mann Ranges or within Western Australia. Cultural attachment to the Yalata Reserve was developed through association with the travels of the Dreaming ancestors, some of whom it was believed roamed south through the country west of the Reserve or to the north of Yalata, one of these being associated with Pidinga (Lake Ifould) some 50 km north of Yalata. However, Yalata people felt a huge sense of loss as a result of not being able to access their own country and were concerned for its safety, particularly as they well understood that it was being subjected to violent destructive and long-lasting damage as a result of the atomic testing program. They were also unable to gain access to some traditional foods, including witchetty grubs and red kangaroo, which were either absent or only found in limited quantities in the Reserve.

The climate was also substantially different from that of the deserts north of the Nullarbor Plain. Yalata in winter receives the full force of the westerly gales that sweep in across the Great Australian Bight, making for cold wet conditions. Desert shelters (wilija), comprising sticks set in the ground and covered by tarpaulins or brush, made for poor protection in wet and windy conditions. In summer the intense heat and choking dust made life difficult, while the water supply at Yalata was a constant source of concern for mission authorities and residents alike. Further north in the sandhill country beyond the Trans Line, conditions were drier and generally warmer, the ground less dusty, the trees more majestic and generous with their shade.

Given this history of dispossession and alienation it is hardly surprising that Sally White found in Yalata a harsh society afflicted with violence and alcohol abuse. But she also found friendship and companionship and a group of caring women who looked after her and protected her. By the early 1980s Yalata’s reputation was well formed as a ‘difficult’ community being described as a ‘depressed and broken-down tribal existence’ where traditional ‘rites [are] gradually diminishing’. A corrective to this view, commonly held at the time by Department of Aboriginal Affairs staff and seemingly confirmed by the many crises suffered at Yalata, was required. Developing an understanding of how a history of alienation and dispossession, powerlessness and imposed paternalism had affected the Southern Pitjantjatjara was long overdue. Subsequently, with the advent of a more enlightened management at Yalata and the proper implementation of self-determination, Yalata people were able to return to their own country where they developed the settlement that became known as Oak Valley, 150 km northwest of Maralinga. The details of this event and its implications have been set down elsewhere. However, during the period of my initial fieldwork at Yalata (1981–82) residents were not only mindful of the desert as an option and an alternative to living at Yalata, but had developed a series of devices to advocate its repossession and benefits.

13. AIATSIS file 70/3., f 39 (letter to F. McCarthy 21.11.70) and f 66 (letter to F. McCarthy, 10.3.72).
They did this despite having no immediate expectation that such a return could be realised.17

The Indigenous response to the Reserve

Yalata residents had developed clear views about the country of their adoption, comparing it unfavourably to the desert which they had been forced to leave. The limestone of the Nullarbor fringes, where Yalata is situated, makes for a fine powdery grey soil, dusty in summer and muddy in winter rain. The dust is all pervasive and as a result of the over-exploitation of vegetation, particularly round the settlement, coupled with the repeated use of vehicles to access bush camps, grey dust was everywhere. The Southern Pitjantjatjara refer to the ground at Yalata as *parna tjilpi* (literally, grey earth or ground). The term *tjilpi* is also used to mean ‘grey’ in the sense of becoming old and infirm. *Tjilpi* is also used as a term of respect and address, rather in the same sense as the term ‘elder’ is used in some contexts today. However, in conjunction with the term for ‘earth’ its sense was pejorative, not complimentary. It was believed that the grey earth was responsible for making people’s hair grey and a cause of premature ageing, sickness and even death. One man told me in response to a question about Yalata, ‘No good. The ground no good, *parna tjilpi*.’ I asked him what he meant and he stated, ‘It makes us worry, makes us go grey. It makes us feel no good.’

The country to the north of the Trans Line and beyond, comprising a substantial sand-dune belt and open plains which was the traditional country of many of the Yalata people was regarded with pleasure and described in positive, often eulogistic terms. I remember once passing a particularly fine desert eucalypt18 in sandhill country close to the Serpentine Lakes in Western Australia; the women in the Toyota praised its size, its shade and its very existence long after it had passed from view. Such trees, not to be found in the Yalata area, are typical of the desert homelands of many of the older Yalata residents. This country is called *parna wiru*, which means ‘good, fine ground’. The coarse desert sand is not dusty, blows less easily unless heavily disturbed and has few rocks, making for a comfortable camp. Yalata people stated that, unlike the grey earth of the Reserve, the desert sands did not make them unwell, and did not promote premature ageing or grey hair.

While these linguistic devices were elaborate tropes that neatly contrasted present discomfort and its supposed consequences with former comfort and wellbeing, the devices also provided a clear statement of preference: an expression of dissatisfaction with forced residence on another person’s country and a desire to return to one’s own country. There were other, perhaps less obvious, devices that people used as a means to articulate preference for homeland desert country as well as its produce. Two of these were foods — witchetty grubs and the red kangaroo.

Going for *maku* and hunting *marlu*

*Maku* (‘witchetty grubs’, *Xyleutes leucomochla*) were an important albeit small part of traditional living in the desert. During fieldwork at Oak Valley from 1984 to 1988 a colleague and I were able to observe at first hand how *maku* were collected, cooked and

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17. Palmer 1990a.
18. Probably *Eucalyptus papuana* or *E. gongylocarpa*, referred to as *para* in Pitjantjatjara
distributed. We were also able to note the value placed on maku by gatherers as well as to record absolute quantities collected.

Maku are the larvae of the Goat Moth (Cossidae) and they are a pale yellow or white colour, although very young ones are sometimes pink. They are found in the roots of a number of shrubs, typically Acacia kempeana (known as ilykuwara in Pitjantjatjara), but they may also be found in the roots of other acacia such as A. muranyana, A. victoriae and A. ligulata. As the moth hatches from the root it burrows upward, discards its skin, emerges from the sand and flies away. The skin is known as mirinpa, a term also used for a grub which is close to maturity and therefore tough and not good eating. The discarded skins are eagerly sought by the gatherers as an indication of the possible presence of other grubs beneath the sand.

An expedition to collect maku is termed generally maku-ku (literally, 'for witchetty grubs'), although the term may be qualified by a verb. Typically the expedition involves women and children, although men are not disinclined to participate, even though digging for vegetable food and small animals (including rabbits) is generally regarded as women's work, involving the use of a digging stick (wana). A wana was formerly made from a length of mulga and sharpened at one end, but is now fashioned from a length of steel rod and flattened into a duck's beak at one end by heating in the fire and beating out. Steel rods from windmills are particularly favoured for digging sticks, when available. Some women will cut a digging stick on arrival at the search site, selecting a bush or small tree for the purpose. Before departure from camp (and during the journey) there is animated discussion as to the best place to go for grubs, but on arrival at the agreed destination, people split up into small groups of two or three, a mother taking younger children, the men perhaps going off together. Within a few moments no one is to be seen across the open sandy plains where the acacia bushes grow in abundance.

A woman selects her bush carefully, having due regard for the numbers of discarded skins on the ground. She then begins to excavate the sand, observing the root line by the presence of a low lineal (and barely perceptible) protuberance radiating from the trunk of the bush. While the roots are not deep below the surface (perhaps 150 to 200 mm on average) the expenditure of energy required to excavate the roots, particularly on a hot day, is not to be underestimated. Many roots have no grubs present or the brood may have hatched, necessitating a move to a new bush identified as promising. Some grubs are eaten raw as they are taken, although most are stored in an old fruit tin or suitable container brought along for the purpose and then they are lightly roasted in the ashes of a small fire, often on site. If the expedition has been particularly successful, some will be taken back to camp for allocation to kin. The somewhat nutty taste of the grub may be a consequence of the partly digested wood present in the intestines of the grub.

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20. See White 1972: 204.
The numbers of grubs collected indicate that the labour-reward ratio is high. On one occasion two women working for a total of 1.75 hrs between them collected 59 grubs which were estimated to weigh on average some 5.48 gm each, giving a total yield of just over 323 gm. Over half were eaten by children as they were collected, so only a small quantity made it back to the camp. On a second occasion three adults and four teenage children spent just over an hour and a half to collect 45 grubs, before moving on to a second location where six of the party recovered 37 grubs in a mere 15 minutes. Obviously the reward will depend upon the quantities of grubs present in the roots and there is some luck in this. Arriving just after a major hatching will mean a poor harvest. Moreover, the Great Victoria Desert does not appear to have sites where maku are known to be superabundant, as I have noted in desert areas south of Balgo, west of the Stansmore Ranges, Western Australia, where grubs found in the trunks of eucalypts are so plentiful that the area is deemed to have mythological associations to explain the relatively large numbers of grubs to be recovered from the site.

Table 1 is a summary of the data outlined above. It is interesting to note that the two diggers on trip 1 were experienced elder women, while the party in trips 2a and 2b included two men and three teenagers, while one of the women carried a small baby which no doubt impeded her progress. Given a nominal weight for a grub of about 5.5 gm, figures derived from four periods of fieldwork in the region over a twelve month period indicate a per capita annual consumption that could be as high as 1.6 kg. Opportunistic gathering is limited to moves to a new camp site (where suitable bushes are plundered for grubs) or other expeditions which in turn depend on the availability of a vehicle. Breakdowns and punctures (with no spare tyre) may also provide the opportunity for gathering activities while passengers fill in their time awaiting rescue. However, it is likely that traditionally, as people fanned out across the countryside daily in order to secure a livelihood, maku were consumed in small quantities, although they may (as today) have been consumed more by children than by adults.

Table 1: Maku yields on three occasions

<table>
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<th>Diggers</th>
<th>Total time</th>
<th>Nos grubs</th>
<th>Aggregate weight</th>
<th>Per hr yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trip 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.75 hrs</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>323 gm</td>
<td>184.6 gm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip 2a</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.5 hrs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>247 gm</td>
<td>23.5 gm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip 2b</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>203 gm</td>
<td>135.3 gm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The time and energy required to recover the grubs could only be justified if the source for the food (the acacia bushes) was at hand. Nevertheless, witchetty grubs are high in energy, providing more kilojoules than wild honey (sugarbag), approximately 80% of the protein of a kangaroo but with between 20% to 47% fat. Peile notes of the

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24. Maralinga Lands, November 1987
Kukatja who occupied the northern parts of the Great Sandy Desert, south of the former Pallotine Mission of Balgo, Western Australia, that witchetty grubs were an important part of the diet of both babies and children.29

Expeditions to collected *maku* were often combined with hunting activity, particularly as this gave any men in the party the opportunity to contribute to the food supply. The Maralinga Lands had long been regarded as providing a plentiful supply of meat, partly because they were less hunted than the Reserve, but also because the *marlu* or red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*) was found in abundance in the desert and was much preferred to the *kulpirpa* or grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) which was more common at Yalata. Reoccupation of the Maralinga Lands provided ample opportunity for hunting which was pursued with great enthusiasm, particularly by the younger men. Hunting expeditions were carried out from the main camp, in whatever vehicle was available, although a four-wheel drive was preferred, as this gave greater flexibility and access to the sandhill country favoured by the red kangaroo. However, Holdens and Ford Falcons were urged off the tracks and into the bush, and people often shot opportunistically when travelling the long road from Watson (on the Trans Line) to the camp at Oak Valley.

Quantities of meat taken and eaten were considerable. During field work in 1987 and 1988 a colleague and I calculated that in excess of 800 kangaroos were taken in a year, and recorded an average daily consumption of 549 gm.30 These calculations made allowance for wastage, non-edible tissue and portions wasted or fed to the dogs. Eating half a kilo of kangaroo meat a day represents a significant intake of protein. Residents were eager to exploit this resource, which may have been available in larger quantities than traditionally, due to prolonged periods of non-exploitation as well as the availability of vehicles and rifles. Access to the meat of the red kangaroo was seen as one of the benefits of desert living in contrast to the fact that it was generally not available at Yalata. Certainly the meat constituted an important part of both the diet and hunting activity of outstation residents while the cooking and subsequent distribution were important and frequent social activities in the life of the camp. When kangaroo was brought in, most, if not all, received a portion, and this sharing served to confirm a sense of community amongst residents of the newly established settlement.

*Maku and marlu* as metaphor

Yalata was largely devoid of both *marlu* and *maku* as well as a number of other desert species. The grey earth of Yalata does not support the acacia favoured by the Goat Moth to lay its eggs which produce the larvae. However, these are found in abundance north of the Trans Line in the desert country. The red kangaroo is found only to the north of Yalata, requiring a substantial journey of perhaps 25 to 30 km to reach its habitat, where it was still not common. North of the Trans Line, on the plains of the Great Victoria Desert, it is found in greater numbers and the desert was considered its true home. Consequently, during their enforced stay at Yalata the Southern Pitjantjatjara ate no witchetty grubs and few red kangaroo.

29. See also Tindale 1952: 60.
After a period of fieldwork at Yalata in 1981, plans were made for a colleague and I to take a party of Yalata residents back to their traditional country to visit sites and inspect country. For the first time such an expedition was to include women. Seats were limited and in strong demand. Not all who wished to travel could be accommodated. However, one request from those remaining rang in our ears as we departed, ‘Bring us back some maku’. We were also told that once in the ‘spinifex’, as the desert north of the Trans Line was popularly called, red kangaroo would be plentiful. Indeed, once back in the spinifex country maku stops were frequent and most days we ate marlu. On subsequent trips, the collection of grubs and hunting of red kangaroo were important components of any visit to the clean sands of the desert. Back at Yalata, and as discussions developed about the return of the Maralinga Lands and, more importantly, a return to what was to become Oak Valley, the importance, significance and culinary merits of maku and marlu were a repeated subject for discussion and debate. Living back in the desert, so it was prophetically argued, would provide easy access to plentiful supplies of both marlu and maku. The grubs were characterised as being nutritious (which they were) and could also be used as a paste, when raw, rubbed into the skin and hair to make people shiny and healthy, in contrast to the sickly pallor that characterised living at Yalata with the grey dust. Red kangaroo, easy to obtain in the spinifex, made people strong and had a softer, tastier meat than the grey kangaroo. Marlu is a significant mythological character for the Southern Pitjantjatjara, being surrounded by a complex of narratives and cultural practices dictating how it should be prepared for cooking, cooked and allocated, and it was consider the proper meat of the Southern Pitjantjatjara. Few grubs actually made it the considerable distance back to Yalata and most kangaroo meat was only fit for the dogs after the long journey. However, both had acquired a significance far beyond any value attributable to their nutritional content, particularly in the presence of a reasonable supply of foods in the community store.

In 1972 Sally White published a short paper in *Mankind* about hunting dogs at Yalata. She describes how the Yalata people hunted three principal animals: the wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*), the grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*) and the red kangaroo (*M. rufus*). Dogs were used to hunt kangaroo and were found to be more reliable than the (evidently) inaccurate rifles available at that time. Wombats were either shot or clubbed. White asks why the hunting dogs should be so valued, particularly when they ate a substantial proportion of the meat they hunted. She answers this in part by stating that the adoption of European dogs to replace the native dingo, a process observed by the Berndts in 1942, ensured success in hunting and a relatively plentiful supply of ‘wild protein’ independent of the missionaries and Yalata. Dogs were important because they helped secure highly prized meat which was valued because it could be obtained without obligation or reliance on the missionaries or government. The process of using dogs to obtain meat constituted a statement and act of independence and was also an expression of a disinclination to accept the rule, control and domination of the mission.

By the time I worked at Yalata a decade later, the people had gained greater autonomy and the missionaries were no longer present to issue rations and control people's lives. However, Yalata people continued to use food as a metaphor to promote their preferred environment and to distinguish present occupation of the Reserve from their aspirations to reoccupy their desert homelands. What White does not mention was the Yalata people's decided preference for red kangaroo (marlu) over the grey (kulpirpa). Yalata people, in confirming a preference for marlu, stated that it was the 'proper' meat for desert dwellers; it was a fundamental part of their culture, way of life and living. Like the maku it also served to remind them of the desert and their former lifestyle. Both had become a metaphor for the spinifex country to the north that people longed to repossess. Both had become synonymous with an ideology that rejected missions and government settlements while embracing a return to homelands, clean sand and the spinifex which many continued to regard as their true and proper home. While both species were potentially valuable sources of nutrition, at Yalata their symbolic value far outweighed their economic value.

In slightly different ways both the marlu and the maku had acquired a value for the Yalata people through their representation of a culture and a way of life which the mission had sought to displace. The value of the marlu and the maku lay not only in the fact that they were good to eat, but also in their attributions; they were good to think with too.

Conclusion

The history of the struggle of the Southern Pitjantjatjara to regain their homelands has been marked by successive frustrations and setbacks occasioned by government interference and missionary zeal. They were a people heavily affected by the building of the Trans Line, completed in 1917.\(^{35}\) They were abandoned by a mission at Ooldea that had fostered their dependence, and relocated to the Yalata Reserve to suit the South Australian government and the expansionist policies of the Lutheran missionaries. Locked out of their country by policies and procedures that made it virtually impossible for them to return to their homelands until the early 1980s, the development of an outstation was still considered an absurdity by many when I undertook my field work at Yalata at that time. However, the Southern Pitjantjatjara retained their language and cultural practices to a degree many would have considered impossible. Their links with the spinifex were articulated, not only through ritual and song (which was vital and vigorous in the 1980s), but in more subtle ways where cultural and territorial preferences were framed through reference to phenomena that were quintessentially of the spinifex and their own territory. The return to the clean sands of the parna wiru of the desert provided people with the opportunity to exchange symbols of what had been a lost inheritance for economic certainty.

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References


Play songs by children and their educational implications

Margaret J. Kartomi

In the broad enculturative process, children learn to sing and play the music of their particular cultural tradition, which is controlled by adults. In all cultures children are sung or taught songs by adults for children, including such songs as lullabies, nursery rhymes and songs of advice. Clearly distinguishable from this repertoire of songs for children, however, are songs by children. These are songs created by children at play for the purposes of the individual or group play situation. These songs are found in all cultures and they share a common approach to rhythm, formal structure, textual form and content, and performance style. They share a quality which is perhaps most aptly described as a quality of childlikeness (Kartomi 1980: 172).

Teachers who are aware of this repertoire have a rich source of musical materials upon which to build effective music teaching techniques, especially in the process of encouraging children’s awareness of the basic elements of music and their native musical creativity. The educational adage ‘to move from the known to the unknown’ has valuable application here. When introducing children to the principles of musical rhythm, metre, form, melody, tempo, stress, dynamics and timbre, teachers can start with the songs children create themselves. By understanding the stage of creativity which particular groups of children have already reached in their play world, teachers will have a head start in introducing musical ideas which children would otherwise find quite complex.

There is evidence that children everywhere manipulate sounds naturally and creatively in the play situation. Our children are not just immature imitators of the adult world; they are both creative and imitative. As in child art, which has a unique, non-adultlike quality, child-created music has distinctive stylistic qualities all its own. This fact is well-known in the field of art, among other things through children’s art exhibitions, but it is much less widely realised in the field of music. Why is this so?

Western culture art has been taught to children differently from music. In recent decades, teachers have often given children rein to draw freely according to their own childlike view of the world. Adult artists and others appreciate the results of child art in its own right as artistic expressions of the perception and imagination of childhood. On the other hand, music has tended to be taught either individually to children or in class groups. The emphasis has been on learning to perform from music notation. In group singing classes teachers have encouraged children to achieve clean entries and closures.
Likewise, teachers of group instrumental performance have tried to produce a ‘clean, balanced’ ensemble sound. Adult ideals have dominated teaching methods. With a few relatively recent exceptions in the case of improvisation and other experimental music classes, little rein has been given to the musical creativity of children.

It is now becoming clear that songs by children are worlds apart from adult-created children’s music, both in their textual and musical qualities, for children select their modes of expression according to their own childlike view of the world. They have their own approach to rhythm, form, melody and performance style. Children create, reproduce and perform according to their sense of priorities as children, according to what they unconsciously select as important for use in the play situation and their view and experience of living. Their style of singing is also indicative of the play situation. The sweet timbre and smooth entry techniques of a boys’ choir is worlds apart from the singing styles of the real play world. Children at communal play often sing in a chesty, forceful way, with great vigour. Sometimes they sing softly and meditatively, for example while doodling, drawing or thinking about something. Children are indeed imitative, but there is a fecund source of musical creativity in every child. Children often create songs about their pleasant and unpleasant feelings and experiences, such as special eating treats or being ‘told off’ by adults. Their need to express their feelings can take the form of song creation. Sometimes the spontaneous musical wanderings of a single child catch on with other children and a song is thereby established, if only for a few days, weeks or months. Some songs created at play, however, last for years.

Texts of children’s play songs are often very direct. They may express thoughts about subjects forbidden them by adults, such as sex, urine and excreta. The existence of a rich, diverse body of play songs in Australian playgrounds is shown, for example,
in Ian Turner’s *Cinderella dressed in yella* (1969). In this book, Turner presents texts of many play chants collected in Melbourne playgrounds, such as the song in transcription 1 (to which I have added the transcription of the rhythm to which the song is normally chanted).

Rhythmically the last line of this song, which has been sung by children in Melbourne for several years, resembles the main rhythm of a song for the game called ‘chasey’. This song, which I collected in an Adelaide playground in 1968, is shown in transcription 2.

If we look into our memory of childhood, all of us can probably remember ditties like these, for they are typical of countless childlike songs found in many cultures. The ethnomusicologist Brailoiu was the first scholar to collect a body of play songs across the cultures. In his intercultural study of songs by children in Hudson Bay in Canada across to Europe, Africa and Japan, he proposed some norms of play-song style. This collection, plus songs collected by other investigators (especially from Monash University, see e.g. Kartomi 1980, Hall 1984, and Romet 1986) suggest that communities of children everywhere have their own constantly changing repertoire of child-created songs, songs which share similar textual and musical qualities. These songs may refer to particular places or people or to pleasant or unpleasant events in the children’s lives, or they may refer to more general experiences or feelings. It is likely that songs of any community of children are in constant flux. For example, a repertoire of child-created Pitjantjatjara song texts sung at Ooldea (South Australia) in the late 1930s and published by R.M. and C.H. Berndt in 1940 are quite different from the child-created songs sung by the same group of people after they migrated to Yalata, an Aboriginal (Pitjantjatjara) camp and Lutheran mission station situated at the edge of the Nullarbor Plain in South Australia.

How are play songs created? How do they become established in the repertoire of songs sung by children for any length of time? In 1969, the anthropologist Isobel M. White and I went to the Pitjantjatjara camp at Yalata to study the music sung by children there (and in White’s case, to study the lives of the Pitjantjatjara women). While in the bush at Yalata I occasionally left the tape recorder running in order to record sounds made by children while they were concentrating on their play activity. The spontaneous musical wanderings which I recorded gave some indication of the types of ideas which came naturally to their minds and threw some light on the nature of their creative processes. Children at play at Yalata created, improvised and eventually established their play songs in a similar way to any other play activity. Most of their musical improvisations or doodlings were forgotten immediately after the moments of creation. They consisted of original or borrowed musical thoughts based on the children’s past musical and verbal experience, either in Pitjantjatjara or Western tradition or in both.

While drawing together in a group in the sand or on paper, for example, one child would sing a phrase which would be taken up, repeated and varied by other children in turn, mostly quite unselfconsciously and even absentmindedly. This is the way, I believe, that children’s play songs are created. Sometimes the improvisations are remembered by groups of children and adapted into the general repertoire of play songs. Clearly only a minute portion of the total improvisational activity of children survives, even for a short amount of time. Only a very small number of improvisations
are eventually absorbed into the body of established play song, which may often last for several years. It is my belief that children's musical doodlings pass beyond the ephemeral stage only when their rhythms are memorable and their texts express a clear commonly felt positive or negative experience of children, such as one of pleasure, pain, fear, solidarity or derision, and that these play songs are normally sung when children play together in a direct assertive fashion, such as corporate games, when eating together, during group teasing situations and on occasions demanding a team spirit. While at Yalata I was able to record a number of versions of established play songs, songs which according to Mr Albert Prater, an elder of the people at Yalata, were created by 'little children, not mothers'.

The play song texts sung at Yalata, like those in white Australian playgrounds (see Turner 1969) and elsewhere, deal with common feelings and experiences of children, and they include some 'underground songs' containing forbidden words. Two popular songs sung by children when we were at Yalata were Njakula Pumpinu and Apu Wini both of which contain the naughty word, kuna (excreta). The text of Njakula Pumpinu translates 'I seeingly bent, excreting'. The song is especially popular among boys at play, sung with loud teasing laughter and mock pleasure at its 'vulgar' meaning. Apu Wini, on the other hand, is a serious song which may have originated from the adult repertoire, but with kuna often laughingly substituted by the children for the word apu. Apu Wini means 'baby on a carrying dish', and the second phrase of the song means 'Ninja is telling something'. Another children's song is Pulpala Tingku, meaning 'poor fella dingo, don't steal'. 'Poor fella dingo' is a term of derision for the wild Australian dog, the dingo, which is greatly feared by the children at Yalata. Some songs describe pleasant experiences dealing with food, of which there is on a whole a limited variety at Yalata. For example, the song Maralinyganja describes a rare treat which occasionally offered itself to the children and adults when 'white army people', moving down the Ooldea Road from the erstwhile military establishment at Maralinga, used to pause to drink at the water tanks and gave the Aborigines tomatoes to eat. As a result, they began to associate Maralinga with good food and the children created a song with a mixed Pitjantjatjara-English text which means 'at Maralinga, good place, nice place for eating'.

However, the most popular play song at Yalata in 1969, which was sung almost interminably by the children, was Wi:tzikspa, a song about the breakfast cereal Weetbix which is eaten after being dipped in an empty can or pannikin (panikinta) of tea. The main utensils used in the area are empty cans, and tea is the most common drink for all age groups. Another song, Pupuŋtu, expresses the children's feelings of solidarity for the boy, Pupun, when he was in trouble with the adults. The origin of the song was recounted to us several times by children and adults at Yalata, who said that it was created by Pupun's friends. One of the children translated the text as 'Pupun borrowed a tyre', thus offering the less negative word 'borrow' in place of the emotive word 'steal'. Pupun 'got into trouble' for 'borrowing' a tyre marking an airstrip at Yalata at the time of an expected plane landing. The song reflected the children's sympathy for Pupun, who was severely reprimanded by the white adults.

The style of these play song texts possesses the universal childlike characteristics of brevity, repetitiveness, directness of sentiment and humour. They have a contemporary quality, unlike the mainly religiously and historically oriented texts of the adults'
and children's ceremonial song repertoire and the soothing texts for lullabies. The straightforward, relatively unsubtle nature of most of the play song texts partly determines their musical characteristics as a song type. The texts also reflect the bilingual situation at Yalata.

What are the unique characteristics of child-created music? As has been intimated above, Brailoiu was the first scholar to present a theory about the universal rhythmic characteristics and formal tendencies of songs by children. He proposed the hypothesis that the rhythmic, metrical and formal-textual qualities of songs by children are based on four main rhythmic models and their variants. (Only three of the models are relevant to my Yalata song collection; thus the fourth model is not discussed here.)

Brailoiu asserted that songs by children tend to consist of lines with a duration of eight quaver beats, either joined two by two (Model 1), or joining two crotchets and two pairs of quavers (Model 2), or joining four crotchet beats (Model 3). They are typically in binary rhythms, like children's footsteps, though some have alternating binary and ternary rhythms. Most play songs consist of one or more series of eight syllables each, although some consist of shorter or longer series. Where an eight-beat consists of less than a value of eight quavers, rests substitute for notes, thus bringing the series' total durational value to eight quavers. Such a series is said to be truncated (as in the second bar of the song I collected in Melbourne, 'Red Top taxi, you’re not he.') Other series are extended from the normal eight to a total value of, say, ten quavers, as in *Njakula Pumpinu* (see below). Since Brailoiu's Model 1 uses only one recurring time value (i.e. quavers) it is termed 'isochronic.' Model 2, on the other hand, is termed 'heterochronic', as it consists of a pair of crotchets and two pairs of quavers arranged in a variable, paired sequence. Model 3, based on a series of four crotchets, is, of course, isochronic. Brailoiu's bar-lines mark word repetition, assonance and syntactic parallels and his dotted bar-lines show the metric pulse, usually in pairs of quaver beats.

As it turns out, the two Australian playground songs I transcribed fit his theory well, as do a number of Aboriginal Australian play songs collected at Yalata, South Australia in 1969, and as do virtually all songs by children that I have encountered. Some, however, consist of four series of eight quavers, with an added semiquaver in the fourth series, followed by a series comprising four crotchets (which may, however, be freely added to in the playground situation according to the whim of the children at play).

Thus the play chant ‘Red Top taxi, one, two, three; Red Top taxi, you’re not he’ resembles the rhythm of the second series of the famous Anglo-American play chant ‘Eeney meeney miney mo, catch an Indian by the toe’. It also resembles the second series of a popular play song that I recorded at Yalata, called *Wi:tpikspa* (Song 1), namely *panikinta narinji*. The first series of *Wi:tpikspa*, on the other hand, is Brailoiu’s Model 3 (the truncated version, called Type 22). As in most play songs, the series of the *Wi:tpikspa* song are repeated many times, either singly or in alternation with each other.

Like *Wi:tpikspa*, the strictly binary-metered song, *Pupuntu* opens in the transcription shown below with a series (Model 2, Type 22) which is established by a slightly varied repeat and is followed by another series: *taia tjilamanu*. This is also repeated. After which the singer restates the original series. The song consists of five series, each
Transcription 3: Wi:tpikspa, Version 1
PLAY SONGS AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Transcription 4: Wi:tpikspa, Version 2

Transcription 5: Pupuntu

Transcription 6: Njakula Pupuntu
Transcription 7: Apu wini

Transcription 8: Maralingganja
of eight quavers in duration, and the formal structure of most performances is the repeatable $a a b b a$ (see Transcription 5).

*Njakula Pumpinu* consists of five non-equal heterochronic lines averaging eight quavers in length. All series are performed, however, in truncated or extended form (see Transcription 6).

The first line is an extended variant of Brailoiu’s Model 3 (Type 23), repeated twice, whereas the second line resembles one of the truncated Model 1 examples. The formal structure of the song varies in performance, but it always alternates between the formal structures of $a b$ and $a a b b$, where $a$ is the duple plus triple or sextuple metric first line and $b$ is the triple-metric second line.

*Apu Wini* is also based on the formal principle of alternation between and repetition of two rhythmic series, $a$ and $b$, but its overall formal structure is always $a a b$, which may be repeated as many times as the children wish. The song resembles play songs in other parts of the world by virtue of its eight-quaver series, its short repeated first line, its childlike shouted manner of performance, and the amusing substitution of the word *kuna*, meaning ‘excreta’, for *apu* (see Transcription 7).

The first and second lines are ‘skipping-rhythm’ versions of one of Brailoiu’s Model 2 models (i.e. Type 10), while the third line is a complete instance of the same, and the fourth resembles his Model 3 (Type 22).

The short play song, *Maralinganja* also possesses child-like structural qualities. Its first line is an extended series performed in irregular metre often with a lingering third syllable in the structure, $a b b$. See Transcription 8.

However, the second and third series, based partly on English words, are chanted in straightforward duple metre with the third line being a truncation version of the second. The first series is an extended version of Brailoiu’s Model 1.

The main element of musical variability in these child-created songs is the formal structure. All the play songs are based on two short contrasting rhythmic motifs or series, each of which may be repeated and alternated with the other in regular or irregular sequence. Thus a song may have a different formal sequence each time it is performed. The rhythmic motifs are associated with definite melodic ideas, but these are highly variable in performance. The play songs are generally based on two musical ideas which alternate in regular or irregular fashion. Two basic types of metre are used. Some songs are in strict duple metre, namely *Pupuntu, Apu Wini, Witi:pikspa* and *Maralinganja* except when it lengthens the syllable *nya*. The other songs alternate regularly or irregularly between duple and triple metre.

The melodic line in the play songs is variable, being subservient to the rhythmic characteristics. Different versions of the one text may have quite different melodic features. Melodic range in the songs tends to be quite small. Monotone chanting occurs in most of *Witi:pikspa* (Transcription 3), *Maralinganja* and *Pupuntu*. Bitonal chanting is to be found in parts of *Pupuntu* and *Njakula Pumpinu*. Sextonal singing occurs in *Apu Wini*. A tetratonal version of *Witi:pikspa* is shown in Transcription 4. Sometimes songs are shouted at free pitch. Excluding shouted tones, the widest melodic range among the songs I recorded was 900 cents in *Apu Wini* and an octave in one version of *Witi:pikspa*. 
Most of the songs have a prevailing descending direction of melodic movement, where the pitch of the initial tone is the highest of the range and the pitch of the last tone is the lowest. Exceptions include most of the Wi:tpikspa versions and the monotone chants (which I recorded but have not included here). Most songs have a high amount of tonal repetition and a fairly low degree of melodic direction change. Half tones are rare in these play songs, unlike in the adult music. Most of the songs are chanted loudly in chorus with very loud, indefinite-pitched shouting on some syllables. Tonal variability between shouted versions of the same song is quite marked, but usually with the same rhythm and accentual patterns. Rhythm and accent are primary; melody is secondary.

Metric accents generally occur on the first syllable of the word as in most children's play songs over the world, but this is only to be expected in Pitjantjatjara songs as the first syllable is normally stressed in the language anyway. However, the position of accents is irregular in many performances. When little girls or boys are at play they sing softly or whisper well-known play songs with little or no stress at all. On joining in with a group of children in loud singing, on the other hand, they often perform strong accents on different notes each time they sing.

Conclusions

Teachers wanting to promote and encourage children's musical creativity in the classroom may find it valuable to start from the children's own play song world, modifying the adult-derived methods of teaching and adopting a more child-centric one, observing them at play (see Corsaro 1985), and fully exploiting the sources of their musical creativity as they teach them about the principles of music and to perform songs of the adult repertoire. Music education begins at a very young age and it occurs willy-nilly outside the classroom as well as within it.

Not all songs by children are, or should be, accessible to adults for, as we have noted, children have their own underground songs which they do not want adults to hear. It is fascinating to come across such songs in one's own backyard. Yet surely adults should not seek out such knowledge; on the contrary they should allow children the privilege of keeping these songs to themselves and to use them as an emotional outlet. However, an increased awareness by adults of these and other products of children's musical creativity only serves to assist teachers in the continual search for new creative approaches to the teaching of music to children.

In many ways, the play songs which I recorded at Yalata have more in common with play songs in other parts of the world than they have with the music of the adult Pitjantjatjara community. This is despite the fact that the children begin to be enculturated into the adult traditions when they are very small. Child-created play songs at Yalata have little in common with the soothing, ornamented descending melodies sung to infants and the religious and legendary songs of the adult tradition which are absorbed by children on story-telling and ceremonial occasions.

Two main conclusions about the nature of childhood and its music may be drawn from this study.
Firstly, children are not just little people learning to become adults. They have sets of values of their own, which are expressed in and expressive of both communal and individual play situations. They include certain unique musical attitudes and preferences.

Secondly, children's play songs exist as an identifiable musical type. Though partly derived from or influenced by adult cultures, these songs have been shaped by children according to their own outlook, experience and purposes in the play situation. The typical sound of children singing at play is a rather chesty, forceful sound, characterised by ragged entries, uneven texture, energetic even raucous dynamics, and a vigorous, animated atmosphere. Children’s music is in a continual process of change, both in the minute musical details of performance and in the larger matter of repertoire which indicates that creativity is an ever-present factor in children's music.

Acknowledgments

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Original copies of my field recordings made at Yalata, South Australia, in 1969 are held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra and the music archive of the Department of Music at Monash University, Melbourne.
‘Wire Yard’: a song from near Lake Eyre

Luise Hercus and Grace Koch

Introduction

Sally White was not the kind of scholar who sits with pencil poised and recorder on, expecting to be told all the answers. She was always a quiet observer, unobtrusive and helping people with whatever they were doing. She got to know the people of the Lake Eyre Basin very well, and made a deep impression on the brilliant and highly traditional Mick McLean, the last Wangkangurru man born and brought up in the Simpson Desert. Although she was not old at the time, he always referred to her affectionately as ‘old Charlie’ (‘Charlie’ is the closest a Wangkangurru speaker can get to pronouncing ‘Sally’). She came on the first trip we made with him, in 1966 to Arabana country, where he wanted to show us some sites for the Rain History. On the way north we stopped for lunch at a now defunct roadhouse in Copley, a small township which was the home of many Adnyamathanha Flinders Ranges people. While we were ordering, Sally, usually the last person to say anything hasty, suddenly exclaimed ‘Good God! That is a w...!’ and there indeed, on display, was a tea towel with a large picture of a ritual string cross. Mick McLean was deeply shocked to hear that secret-sacred word and to see the tea-towel, but he always admired Sally for her attitude and her knowledge — and for the speed with which she caused that tea-towel to disappear. After that, on the many occasions when he wanted to mention this type of sacred object he always referred to it as ‘you know that thing old Charlie said’. The following text was recorded by another Wangkangurru man who esteemed Sally, Leslie Russell.

When the last Wangkangurru people left the desert in 1900–01 they brought with them a full knowledge of their own traditions and language. Those who left the desert on the eastern side went to the nearest stations, Cowarie and Karlamurina, and many then went to Birdsville or to the Killalpaninna Mission on the Cooper. They were not overwhelmed by all the new things that they saw, and for at least two generations maintained their traditional knowledge, their ability to make songs in the language about some of these new things, and their sense of humour. In this environment a song cycle was composed at Killalpaninna dealing with contemporary events and places. A number of people must have been involved in the composition of this song cycle, including Leslie Russell Wanga-pula ‘Two Mornings’, who with his older cousin Jimmy Wanga-mirri ‘Many Mornings’ was the last to be able to sing it. It was called Kudnarri, ‘the floodplain of the Cooper’. This was mainly in Diyari. Peter Austin (1978) has recorded and analysed a number of the Diyari verses, there are some comments from Tamsin Donaldson (1979) and there is a study of just one verse (Hercus and Koch 1998).
There was however also a section that was not in Diyari but in Wangkangurru, with verses that were attributed to a spirit, the Warranha. This Wangkangurru section was apparently the work of one author, an old Wangkangurru man who lived at Killalpaninna in the first decade of this century. Jimmy and Leslie sang some of the songs together, but the verses about the Warranha were sung by Leslie Russell alone, as Jimmy happened to be away at the time (tape 700, at Marree, May 1975). Mick McLean (Wangkangurru) and Alice Oldfield (Kuyani) were present; Alice knew the song and the locations.

**The Warranha comes to Wire Yard**

The Warranha was a mysterious giant who was said to live on an island in Lake Eyre North. All the other inhabitants of the island were women. The Warranha travelled over the Lake and the vicinity moving around with the whirlwind — he rose up into the sky covered by the whirlwind: only his eyebrows were visible, he was therefore usually referred to as Winti-pilpa, 'Only Eyebrows'. He hunted for dingoes and nobody else was allowed to touch them anywhere near the Lake (Hercus 1971). In this song the Wangkangurru author imagines that the Warranha in his journeys has suddenly seen the new building at Cannatulkaninna Station, usually known as Wire Yard.

Two Frenchmen, the brothers Jean and Baptiste de Pierre, bought Cannatulkaninna from the Bosworths in 1906 — it was part of the large area of land that the Bos-
worths had owned, including Muloorina. The de Pierres held it till 1913 when they sold out to the Killalpaninan Mission (Bonython 1971: 39).

It was sandhill country and is now part of Etadunna Station. The de Pierres built a tin house when they bought the lease. Eric Bonython gives a brief account of what this house was like in the early 1920s when it was an outstation of Killalpaninna, then owned by Lance and Beryl Powell (Bonython 1971: 88). It was situated opposite a high and long sandhill:

When Lance went west to their outstation, Cannatulkaninna (or Wire Yard as it was often called) for an extended period, Beryl sometimes accompanied him. The small, unlined iron house was alternately hot and cold to extremes according to the weather and most unpleasant. More dingoes seemed to congregate there than anywhere else on the station. Several times the mill and pump broke down completely and Lance strove desperately to remedy the fault while the cattle stood around the empty trough.

The house was probably not very different when it was new, some 15 years earlier when the song was composed. Aboriginal people were well acquainted with the place: Ben Murray and his brother Ern worked for the Frenchmen at Wire Yard in conditions of virtual slavery described by him in Austin et al. (1988), and it was certainly not a happy place. The de Pierres were trying to establish a sheep station in an area which was utterly unsuitable: apart from this one erratic well there was no permanent fresh water and dingoes were always present. The enterprise was doomed to failure like many similar ventures.

The Wangkangurru man who composed the song must have seen this house when it was first built, in 1906 or not long after. Through the eyes of the Warranha, without saying anything directly, he hints at the futility of some of the activities of white settlers. This is a well-known literary genre, where through the eyes of an outsider an author wonders at a situation: the Wangkangurru author has in fact reinvented the genre that is best known through the Lettres Persanes (1721), where the famous French author Montesquieu criticises conditions in France through the puzzled comments of an imaginary visitor from Persia.

The following is the text of Leslie Russell’s recital, including his explanations and comments, which were interspersed between the verses; these comments were in Wangkangurru and English. Wangkangurru words are given in italics, and translations and editorial comments are in brackets.

Text. Leslie Russell singing and explaining
Verse 1

Winti-pilp-nai
Winti-pilp-ya
Pilpapilp-li katiyrnda ya
Pilpapilp-li katiyrn
Winti-pilp-nai
Winti-pilp-ya
Pilpapilpa-li katiyrnda ya
Pilpapilpa-li katiyrnda
Winti-pilpa

(Only Eyebrows)
Only Eyebrows
Only Eyebrows indeed
He turns his brow indeed
He turns his brow
Only Eyebrows
Only Eyebrows
He turns his brow indeed
He turns his brow
Only Eyebrows)
Comments

*Mathapurda Winti-pil-panha* he is the man from Lake Eyre, he stops there, Warranha I sing, I haven’t got many. I sing his station all that like his home, that old woman Alice, look you know like.


(Old Man Winti-pilpa, ‘Only Eyebrows’, he is the man from Lake Eyre. He lives there. I am singing the song of the Warranha, but I don’t know all the verses. I am singing about the country that is his domain, his home. Old Alice here probably knows all about it.)

Verse 2

*Pantu ilé pilyp-rnda*  
*Pantu ilé pilyp-rnda ya*  
*Méle kunné kunméré ya*  
*Méle kunné kunméré*  

(Like a saltlake it shines  
Like a saltlake it shines indeed  
But the clouds are truly in a haze  
But the clouds are in a haze)

(Repeat verse 2)

Comments

This is Wire Yard eh! he is looking he is coming from Lake Eyre, I’ve never seen a house like this before in this place!

Alice. Leslie is singing Warranha ha ha

Leslie. *Pantu wili pilyparnda, warli marra.*  

(Like a saltlake it shines, the new house.)

Cloudy you know open, you call’m *mii kunmi kunmiri* You hear’m I sing again ...

You know rain you see cloud like haze *kunurduku*, that is what it means

(The verse was then turned around and repeated)

It’s all Wangkangurru.

Verse 3

*M-nkarra pul-re ya*  
*M-nkarra pul-re*  
*ThuRa washamayira ya*  
*ThuRa washamayira!*  

(The two girls indeed  
The two girls  
Truly they are washing the door  
They are washing the door!)

Repeat
He is looking from the top of the sandhill and he see these women,

Rumanga-na pularu thuRa washaMaru
(Inside the room they were washing the door.)

Ulyurla-pularu roomanga pularu warliri thu thuRana nhaRu ku-thi thuRa washamayingura
(The two women are inside the room, and the two of them are right there washing the door).

Verse 3a

R-manga-na pul-re ya
(R-inside the room truly the two of them
R-manga-na pul-re
Inside the room the two of them
ThuRa washamayira ya
They are washing the door indeed
ThuRawashamayira!
They are washing the door!)

Verse 4

Thiyalurire withiyalur-ya
(What is this, how is it?
Nhurpa-nhurpayira
It makes a loud rasping sound
Nhurpa-nhurpaye
It makes a loud rasping sound
Thiyalurire
What is this?
Thiyalur-re
What is it?
Nhurpa-nhurpayira
It makes a loud rasping sound
Nhurpa-nhurpaye
It makes a loud rasping sound
Thiyalu
What is this?)

Commentary
It's a song about two people sawing wood with a 'hacksaw', a cross-cut saw two men work one in each way,
sawamarnnda maka, maka warpinangkangura, mathapurda-pula tharkangura sawamarrida
akarda, ilinha pidlara
(They were sawing wood, there was wood lying about, two men stood there sawing, that is what this verse is about.)

Verse 5

P-Ratyirina manéra
(The light of a fire truly draws me close
P-Ratyirina manéra ya
The light of a fire draws me close
Kurpalpurunha pirdara ya
A magpie dives down, yes
Kurpalpurunha pirdara
A magpie dives down
P-Ratyirina manéra
The light of a fire draws me close
PaRatyirina manéra
The light of a fire draws me close
Kurpalpuruna pirdara ya
A magpie dives down
Kurpalpuruna pirdara
A magpie dives down)
WIRE YARD: A SONG FROM NEAR LAKE EYRE

Maka paRatyiri anha manira, him looking at it again from the top of a sandhill, mudlu yaraparu, nhanhinangkarda. Ukaru mathapurdaru nhanhinangkarda mudlu yaraparu, old Warranha

(The light of a fire draws me towards it, and a magpie dives down (towards it), that is what he says when he is still looking down from the top of a sandhill, that old man is looking down from the top of a sandhill, old Warranha)

Wadlhu nguyunga, ukakunha country, he come from there, he turn back from there, uka thikarna nguranga ukakunhanga Lake Eyre

(It all happened in that one place (Wire Yard), which was in the Warranha's country. The Warranha ultimately turned back and went back to his camp, in Lake Eyre.)

Verse 6

| Lhampa kutira: kya          | (They bring out a lamp indeed       |
| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:ra     | The light draws me close            |
| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:       | The light draws me                  |
| Lhampa kutira:              | They bring out a lamp               |
| Lhampa kutira: ya           | They bring out a lamp indeed        |
| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:ra     | The light draws me close            |
| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:ra     | The light draws me close            |
| Lhampa kutira               | They bring out a lamp               |

The verse is then turned around as follows:

| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:ra     | (The light draws me close            |
| Pa:Ratyiri:rina mane:       | The light draws me close             |
| Lhampa kutira: ya           | They bring out a lamp                |
| etc                         |                                        |

Commentary

Two Frenchman been on that place like

pularu wirrarna, warli nyurdu tyirkatyirkalhuku.
(They bought the place and they also got ready the house).

I wouldn’t know (anything further), that old woman know, I am only a baby! (compared to her).

Lhampa kutira, lhampa pularu kutira, nhutimaRa two Frenchman owner of that place, Wire Yard
(They brought out a lamp, the two of them, that pair of brothers, the two Frenchmen who owned that place, Wire Yard.)

Musical analysis

Although the Warranha song verses are part of the Kudnarri song series, the musical structure differs considerably from the rest of the series. Unlike the Rain series from the
neighbouring Lake Mirranponga Ponguna, where analysis shows that the same song performed by several men from different regions can still be recognisable as one song (Hercus and Koch 1995: 114-19), the Warranha songs are really a separate set of musical reflections, almost a sort of trope, inserted into the Kudnarri series. All six verses of the Warranha maintain a strict musical and rhythmic framework. The analysis will compare the Kudnarri verse about Blanche Ned as sung by Jimmy and Leslie Russell (Hercus and Koch 1996: 144-47) and two of the verses of the Warranha as sung by Leslie Russell (see musical notation, next page).

**Melodic structure**

Both the Warranha and the Kudnarri have different pitch ranges. The Warranha encompasses a perfect fifth while the Kudnarri only includes a minor third.

The six verses of the Warranha all use the same melody, which works as a set of four musical phrases that are shown on the notation as numbers above the staff at the beginning of each phrase. The texts of the two Warranha verses are sung through twice while the Kudnarri verse is sung three times.

Warranha songs display a small range of one or two notes in the first musical phrase while the second phrase ascends to the highest notes of the song and descends to the lowest, which functions as a tonic. The third phrase rises again, undulating between two adjacent pitches, descending to the tonic and repeats the tonic throughout the last phrase. Verse 1 holds strictly to this pattern within a minor key while verse 2 vacillates between the use of an A flat and an A natural in phrases 1 and 3. This vacillation, plus an occasional ornamental note and/or a stepwise or melodic leap to the final sounding of the tonic in the third phrase, are the only variations that happen within the melodies of all six verses. In contrast, the Kudnarri song simply descends to the tonic for the last two phrases.

A distinctive feature of the Warranha songs is the setting-off of the first phrase from the second by a brief rest. This does not appear in the Kudnarri song, which continues straight through until the end of the text. The Warranha first and second phrases repeat the same text, but they work together as a musical question and answer. The melody of the first phrase either repeats or vacillates between two of the highest pitches, then pauses at this point of tension, or ‘question’. The second phrase begins on the highest note of the song and descends to the tonic, coming to a musical ‘resting point’ or ‘answer’. Verse 4 actually poses a question in the first two phrases in relation to wondering about the strange sound of a hacksaw: ‘What is this? How is it?’

**Rhythmic structure**

The Warranha text lines follow a pattern of a pair of repeated lines followed by another pair of repeated lines, or AABB. The Kudnarri includes three text lines, only repeating the last one, or ABCC. Last lines of all three songs may include a few syllables or more of the first line as the song tapers off.

Both the Warranha and the Kudnarri songs are isorhythmic in structure, but the isorhythmic units vary in complexity. Aside from the occasional musical ornament, Warranha songs use only two note values which stand in a ratio of 1:2, shown as crotchets and quavers, whereas the Kudnarri units employ some dotted figures.
Song about Blanche Ned
Sung by Jimmy and Leslie Russell in 1968
A 2076B, 08:24 (Song item 8)

Note: All musical phrases marked by bar lines. Numbers for musical phrases are shown by numbers the first time through.

A - pi - nya - ra li - la - nga-------------------------- Nga - rla - nge-ra di - ya - nge-ra-

Pi - nya - nge-ra li - la - nga-------------------------- Nga - nha - nge-ra di - ya - nge-ra-

Tha - rli - nge tha - rli - nge-------------------------- Tha - rli - nge tha - rli - nge-ra-

Pi - nya - nge-ra li - la - nga-------------------------- Nga - nha - nge-ra di - ya - nge-ra-

Pi - nya - nge li - la - nga-------------------------- Nga - ria - nge-ra di - ya - nge-ra-

Tha - rli - nge-ra tha - rli - nge-ra-------------------------- tha - rie tha - rie li - la - li Song fades away
The Warrana (verse 1)
AIATSIS Archive tape 4307 track B, 19:19
Sung by Leslie Russell

The Warrana (verse 2)
AIATSIS Archive Tape 4307 Track B, 23:03
Sung by Leslie Russell
Addition of syllables happens systematically throughout each Warranha verse. The syllable ‘ya’ appears between all phrases except for the first and the last. The first phrase is emphasised by the rest instead of using the ‘ya’. This syllable nearly always comes on the tonic note, but it may appear as a sort of ‘kick off’ on a higher pitch at the start of the second performance of the text, as can be seen in Example 2. The Kudnarri song used the syllables ‘nge-ra’ for all phrases but the first, differing from the Warranha in using them at the very end of the song. Thus for the Warranha, the syllable served as an internal connecting device between the phrases whereas the Kudnarri used ‘nge-ra’ both within and at the end of the song.

Both examples of the Warranha exhibit two distinct metrical patterns with the insertion of one bar of compound meter wherever the ‘ya’ appears. Example 1 maintains a duple meter while Example 2 tends towards a triple meter. If time signatures were inserted in the examples, Example 1 shows bars of 2/4 meter while Example 2 has 6/8 bars. Wherever the ‘ya’ appears, the meter changes to a bar of 5/8, which is longer than a 2/4 bar but shorter than a 6/8 bar. It is not possible to compare metrical changes between verses of the Kudnarri series at this time because only one verse has been examined.

Conclusion

Many years after this song was composed, in 1950, Eric Bonython accompanied by Ern Murray, who had been made to work at Wire Yard soon after the advent of the Frenchmen, tried to find the remains of the old station. Bonython describes this (1971: 172).

We climbed on an isolated sand dune that was smothering some trees. We had no idea where we were. To our surprise on the other side of it was the remains of a galvanised iron water tank. Ern kept muttering to himself like a man in a dream. ‘I can’t believe it’ he kept saying. Before us, vanishing in the distance, lay the wreckage of Cannatulkaninna station homestead, strewn far and wide over a mile, blown by the great sandstorms of the drought years... Two galvanised iron walls of the house had fallen flat and were nearly buried, but everything else seemed to have blown away. The well was full of sand and Ern said a dam had vanished too. As if to mock the efforts of man, a few desert flowers bloomed upon the sand. They were the only ones we saw.

The Warranha was vindicated.

This song gives a glimpse of the way in which Aboriginal traditions were formed: the events of 1906 were still remembered in song as if they had happened yesterday and this would probably have continued, but there was no younger person to whom Leslie Russell could pass on the verses of the Warranha. History has proved right the unspoken comments of the author on the futility of the shiny metal house and the activities that went on there.

Apart from its historical interest the Wire Yard song is of mythological significance. The Warranha was very real to the people of the Lake Eyre basin: he was a mythical being, always present in the area around the lake. He was not quite of the stature of a totemic Ancestor, in that groups of people did not identify with him, but individuals did. He was somehow an Ancestor in the making. This shows the lively flexibility of the
It is almost certain that native myths ceased to be invented many centuries ago. The chants, the legends and the ceremonies which we record today mark the consummation of the creative efforts of a distant, long-past age. Because they were not shrouded in quite the same degree of sanctity and secrecy the myths and chants of the Lake Eyre Basin represent a continuous tradition that was constantly evolving. The fact that there could be a humorous, yet reflective song about the Warranha in a modern setting is a lively illustration of this.

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References
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Gulu-kula: dogs in Anbarra Society, Arnhem Land

Betty Meehan, Rhys Jones and Annie Vincent

Canines in Australian Aboriginal society have turned out to be a considerable puzzle to anthropology. The role and significance of dogs, and traditionally dingoes, in this society had previously been so taken for granted as to be beyond reasonable doubt. In recent years, however, a lively, though sometimes 'dogged', debate has developed that demonstrates otherwise. The debate is fired by more or less radical departures from the economic-utilitarian perspective that attributes to canines a decisive usefulness in man's food quest. Indeed this is usually seen as the primary reason for the animal's domestication (Kolig 1978: 84).

In 1972, Isobel White published an article about the role of dogs in Aboriginal society. In so doing, she was contributing to a lively debate which had been initiated by Mervyn Meggitt in 1965 and which continued intermittently over the next two decades, primarily in the pages of the now sadly defunct journal *Mankind* (Gould 1967, 1968; Jones 1970, White 1972, Hamilton 1972, Kolig 1973, Long 1974, Hayden 1975, and Kolig 1978). Meggitt had examined the hypothesis proposed by archaeo-zoologists that the original domestication of the dog had occurred from the wolf by Mesolithic hunting peoples within the geographical context of northern Eurasia during early post-glacial times, perhaps some 10 000 years ago (Downs 1960). This was believed to have been the first successful domestication experiment carried out by humans and to have occurred due to a symbiosis of mutual ecological advantage between the two species. Both man and dog are social animals, and dogs are capable of being incorporated into the social hierarchies and bonding relationships of a human world. In return, the dogs' acute senses of smell and of hearing and their speed gave human hunters a major advantage in their foraging strategies. There is direct archaeological evidence for wolf-like dogs associated with Mesolithic hunting and gathering sites in northern Britain, such as at the famous swamp-edge site of Star Carr in Yorkshire, dated to about 9000 years BP (Clark 1953, Degerbol 1961). Other canids, believed to be domesticates have been found in the Middle East, within archaeological contexts which span the boundary between terminal hunting and the earliest farming societies at about 12 000 years ago, such as the epi-Palaeolithic Zarzian site of Palegawra Cave in Iraqi Kurdistan (Turnbull and Reed 1974) and Natufian sites in Israel (Davis and Valla 1978). In northeastern Asia too, there are dogs of the same order of age in cave sites in Japan (Lawrence 1967, Ikawa 1964), and importantly also in north America, such as at Ventana Cave in Arizona, dated to some 11 000 years ago (Colton 1970: 153), and in pre-Inca Peru (Wing 1977),
suggesting strongly that some of the first immigrant groups into the American continent were also accompanied by an early domesticated dog.

Recent genetic research has not only confirmed some of these ideas, but has indeed extended aspects further back in time. According to Vila et al. (1997), mitochondrial DNA studies on samples, firstly from more than 150 wolves around the world and secondly from 140 domestic dogs representing about 65 breeds, have shown that all of the dog breeds had only one original forebear, namely the wolf. The latter included wolf populations from both Eurasia and North America, and the dating of wolf–dog separation must be substantial. Since the time of Pliny the Elder’s description in his book *Naturalis Historia* of Gauls tying their female dogs in the woods to mate with wolves and thus increase the strength of the progeny, it has been known that wolves and dogs can readily interbreed. This Classical observation has been confirmed by recent genetic research (Wayne and Ostrander 1999), and there appear to have been at least four separate domestication or back-breeding events leading to different geographic populations of domestic dogs. As to the timing of these events, according to personal information from Murray Cox, from the University of Otago, ‘a date of 12 000 years BP, as an archaeologically supported proposition, is not inconsistent with the genetic data’.

In general, the arguments put by Downs (1960) and other archaeologists have been at a utilitarian, ecological level posited in terms of selective advantage: that the use of dogs gave those communities which possessed them greatly superior success rates in hunting efficiency. Conversely, for the dogs involved, association with humans afforded protection and access to a range of new nutritional resources unavailable to them in the wild state. For this debate, the Australian data hold a central place (Manwell and Baker 1984). Here was an entire continent inhabited by hunters and gatherers until the advent of the Europeans in recent times. Widespread throughout its various ecological zones, though significantly not on the island of Tasmania, was the dingo, a subspecies of wild dog, which had been on the continent for several thousand years. Aboriginal peoples had various ecological and ritual relations with the dingo, some of which had been recorded in a haphazard and anecdotal fashion over the past two centuries within the ethno-historical literature. Meggitt, the author of the classic text *The Desert People* (1962) worked within the historical context of recording the culture of the Warlpiri people of the Western Desert at a time in the mid-1950s when most of his Aboriginal informants had recently emerged from a totally nomadic traditional life into the fringes of cattle station life at Hooker Creek, in the Northern Territory. His detailed account of the relationship between Aborigines and dingoes was doubly important in that not only did it deal with dingoes rather than dogs, but also with Aboriginal communities whose experiences and memories dealt with a period when they lived entirely independently of the European world. Meggitt (1965) examined Down’s (1960) hypothesis and found it wanting, concluding that while some elements of a relationship of mutual exploitation between the Aboriginal hunters and dingoes existed, there was no evidence to indicate that this was sufficient to cause the domestication of dingoes. Furthermore, in his opinion, tame dingoes contributed relatively little to Aboriginal diet. Clearly whatever relationship there may or may not have existed between man and this animal, had to be explored within domains outside the purely utilitarian (Manwell and Baker 1984: 251–52).
Dingoes and domestic dogs

We have a potential taxonomic confusion in this debate concerning the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and dogs in the broadest sense, which needs to be cleared up at the outset. This concerns the important differences between dingoes and domestic European dogs though both animal categories are within a single species. Dating the arrival of the dingo, a subspecies, *Canis familiaris dingo*, on the Australian continent, has been a matter of contention for over a century. Early claims of dingo bones within Pleistocene deposits, such as those of McCoy (1882) for Victoria, and by Krefft (1867) for a tooth within bone deposits in a limestone cave at Wellington, New South Wales, have not been confirmed by subsequent stratigraphic research, nor — in the latter case — by chemical analyses comparing the concentrations of fluorine within the tooth with that of indisputable Pleistocene bones found in the deposit (Gill and Sinnott 1973). The absence of dingoes both in Tasmania and on other large offshore islands such as those of the Bass Strait and Kangaroo Island, and on Barrow Island off the coast of Western Australia; all isolated by the post-glacial rising sea some 10,000 years ago, is powerful evidence that the animal arrived on the continent later than this time.

During the early 1970s, Mulvaney (1975: 138-43) claimed that the antiquity for dingo on the Australian continent extended back as far as some 7000 to 8600 years ago. This was based on an interpretation by T.D. Campbell and R. Edwards of the excavation at Mt Burr, a rock shelter in South Australia, but a more detailed field re-examination of the stratigraphy at this site by R. Luebbers (1979) has shown that the bones came from a disturbed area against the back wall, unrelated to the reported carbon date, and that their real age was probably only some 1000 years (Gollan 1984: 924). A good indication of the oldest possible date for the arrival of the dingo is afforded by the excavation at the limestone cave of Devil’s Lair in the southwest of Western Australia, where a flowstone capping sealed the deposit, with a top date of 5000 years (Balme et al. 1978). Nowhere within the underlying layers, with many thousands of bones of other animals, is there any evidence whatsoever of dingo. The oldest full skeleton of a dingo comes from Mulvaney’s own excavation in Shelter no. 6 at Fromm’s Landing on the lower Murray River, with a sub-adult animal recovered from a layer dated to between about 3000 and 3200 years ago (Mulvaney 1975: 140). Detail osteological analysis of this specimen by Macintosh (1964) indicated no change in morphology of the species over the past three thousand years. A review by Gollan (1982, 1984: 924) of the available Australian fossil material, both from archaeological occupation sites and natural pit traps, indicates numerous finds of dingo remains, extending back to a maximum of about 3500 years ago, the latter date being obtained from Madura Cave on the Nullarbor Plain in Western Australia (Milham and Thompson 1976). His view was that colonisation across the entire continent had been rapid, giving a probable maximum date for its introduction somewhere in northern Australia at about 4000 years ago. These data are of great taxonomic importance since they indicate that, contrary to some previously held views (Clutton-Brock 1969: 307-8), the dingo is neither the descendant of an early domestication event, nor has it a particularly ancient genetic lineage (Gollan 1984: 924).

Concerning origins, there is no convincing evidence of domestic or feral dogs in the neighbouring archipelago of South East Asia or the near Pacific before about 3000 years ago. A partial exception is the island of Timor, with dogs appearing within the archaeological record at about 3000 to 3500 years ago (Glover 1986: 169, 205; Gollan
1984: 924), some time later than the introduction of both pigs and pottery; and from the limited fragmentary material available, these dogs resemble the dingo. Gollan (1984:924) thinks that the dingo probably did not come to Australia by some gradual regional osmosis from the South East Asian archipelago, but rather more directly with some unknown seafarers from an original source in southern Asia. It was then a fully domesticated dog, similar to contemporary canids in the Indus Valley, and probably biologically derived from the Indian wolf. Within Australia, it became feral and spread independently of man, undergoing in the process, some biological adaptation to predation in dry ecological conditions (Newsome et al. 1980). One probable consequence due to ecological competition was the extinction of the marsupial carnivores, the Tasmanian Wolf (*Thylacinus*) and Tasmanian Devil (*Sarcophilus*), which disappeared from the fossil record of the mainland Australian continent by about this time. Another population of wild dog, genetically almost identical to the dingo and sometimes referred to as *C. familiaris hallstromi* or the Singing Dog, is also found in the highlands of New Guinea (Bulmer 1967–68).

Dogs of recognisable European breeds were introduced in the very first days of the British colonies, and there is ample historical evidence that these dogs were quickly adopted by Aboriginal communities living on the edges of colonial contact. These often large packs were also commented upon unfavourably by the colonists, who contrasted this social behaviour with that of themselves, especially members of the privileged class having small numbers of specially trained dogs (Greenway 1998). It is unknown to what extent there was any significant genetic contribution to the progeny of these camp dogs during the nineteenth century by wild dingoes, especially in those situations remote from European settlement (Newsome and Corbett 1982). Nevertheless, as recently as the 1950s there were substantial numbers of Aboriginal people living traditional lives in the Western Desert and indeed also in parts of Arnhem Land, who had not had any, or at least not much, contact with introduced dogs. The classic ethnographic accounts from this period and before, would have referred almost entirely to their relations with dingoes. It is a historical fact that, with open access to dogs, these Aboriginal communities also adopted them extremely swiftly, even in the most traditional contexts. Thus we have in the 1960s and 1970s a set of ethnographic accounts of the role of dogs in these societies, which though still being placed within the economic context of foraging, and involving people steeped in their traditional behaviour and language, nevertheless had been transformed to some extent by a new set of relationships with the introduced animal. We must not forget that behaviourally, there are considerable differences between dingoes and introduced dogs, and that the complex set of relations developed by Aborigines with the latter animal may not of necessity have been the case with the former.

**Utilitarian or symbolic?**

The debate within the Australian literature enumerated above has tended to alternate between two poles; the one engaged in assessing what utilitarian role dogs or dingoes did or did not contribute to the hunting capacities of Aboriginal communities, and the other playing down this in terms of intangible emotional, guardianship or symbolic roles. While each author has promoted a particular point of view due to their own research experiences, some interesting convergencies have also occurred.
Let us take the case of dingoes first. Isobel White (1972) worked with Pitjantjatjara-speaking people who had been relocated during the late 1950s from their arid homelands in northwestern South Australia to the Yalata Aboriginal Reserve close to the coast of the Great Australian Bight in South Australia, in order to facilitate British atomic bomb and missile range testing. According to White’s extensive discussions, the Pitjantjatjara people had never domesticated the dingo as a hunting aid, and in this conclusion she agreed with Meggitt. Hayden (1975: 11), however, in another study took Meggitt (1965) to task for reducing ‘the almost universal integration of the dingo among Australian Aboriginal bands to a non-economic status and perhaps to a matter of human whimsy’. He reviewed a range of historical data about the ways in which Aboriginal people had made use of dingoes and dogs for hunting game in arid and semi-arid regions and also included his own field observations made at Cundeelee in Western Australia. Hayden thought it probable that the dingo (and by implication, dogs) had occupied an important economic position in Aboriginal society throughout a much more extensive area of the Australian continent than had been suggested by Meggitt. While Hayden regarded this as his most significant conclusion, he also recognised other roles that dingoes and dogs played in Aboriginal societies — for example, as sources of warmth during cold winter nights and as forewarners of attack: points also made by Manwell and Baker (1984: 248). There is archaeological evidence from coastal shell midden sites in New South Wales that over the last 1000 years some dingoes were being incorporated closer into the human social domain, with slight consequent osteological changes perhaps due to selection; and that these dingoes were also given burial within the living site midden deposits, prompting Gollan (1984: 926) to observe that ‘the domestication of the dingo by Aborigines can be seen to have been [a] culturally continuous, but biologically episodic process’.

Concerning European introduced dogs, there has been a greater body of direct observational data. Gould (1967, 1968) recorded dogs specially trained to hunt kangaroos at Laverton and Wiluna in Western Australia by Pintubi-speaking people, who themselves had only emerged from the desert during the early 1960s. Women used these dogs to hunt, while men used rifles and spears. He argued that this technique with dogs had been developed as a result of recent contact with Europeans. In Gould’s opinion, this set of hunting methods was efficient and was gaining in popularity.

White (1972) also documented that European dogs were eagerly adopted at Yalata and had caused radical change in some traditional hunting methods, especially those of women. Hamilton in the same year (1972) reported on the use of dogs among the Jankuntjara people then living at Everard Park in northwestern South Australia. Her article explored many aspects of the human–dog relationship, and she examined the role of dogs as pets, competitors and food providers. Her conclusions were complex but it appeared that while dogs made no significant contribution to the food supply, pups provided an outlet for affectionate nurturing behaviour. In addition dogs were important ritual figures, being depicted in a number of interconnected tjukurrpa or dreaming narratives and as well, they served as reference points for moral homilies about human behaviour (Hamilton 1972: 293).

Kolig’s articles (1973, 1978) took a more polemical approach than previous contributors to the topic. His point of view, in his own words, leant ‘towards a more intellectual emphasis’ and in so doing, questioned many of the conclusions reached by
previous authors. According to Kolig, the Wolmadjeri and related groups of desert Aborigines south from the Kimberley of Western Australia, who ‘vaguely share a common cultural background with the Jankunjtjara, are emotionally attached to their dogs and the situation Hamilton depicts at Everard Ranges in every respect conforms closely to the one here’ (Kolig 1973: 122). In addition, Kolig drew attention to the triangular ambiguous relationship between humans, dogs and the supernatural, and characterised the Aboriginal conceptualisation of the dog as being a rather vicious, dangerous being. The dog, in all aspects and forms, is closely associated with the realm of the supernatural — much more so than any other animal.

Tasmania

A separate historical case study, namely that of the Tasmanian Aborigines, was examined by one of us (Jones 1970), using nineteenth century historical sources. Unlike on the Australian continent, there were no dingoes in Tasmania, since the latter had arrived after the post-glacial flooding of Bass Strait. Thus the Tasmanian Aboriginal people at the point of European contact at the very end of the eighteenth century were one of the few hunting and gathering peoples of the world never to have known the companionship of the dog. The other prominent example is that of the Andaman Islanders in the Bay of Bengal, to whom dogs were introduced in 1858 (Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 417). In Tasmania, within the time span of only a single generation between 1803 and 1830 and within the cataclysmic context of societal collapse due to the British impact, Tasmanian Aboriginal people made a great effort to acquire dogs, which they used to transform their hunting methods. The situation was complex, with the raids and trading of sealers having by 1830 removed from the coastal regions of northern Tasmania, most of the Aboriginal women, so that their traditional contribution to the chase was under-represented in the ethno-historical literature. Men used dogs, described as ‘kangaroo dogs: large, looking rather like well-built greyhounds’ (Hiatt 1967-68: 260) to bale up wallabies and in some cases kangaroos against trees, where they were dispatched by hunters using spears or clubs. During the early colonial days, there were also numerous groups of white hunters operating in southern and eastern Tasmania. Some of these were officially sanctioned parties, detailed to hunt in order to supply the early settlement with meat, and others were seeking outlawed escaped convicts and bushrangers. To what extent the Aborigines had gained their dogs and learnt new hunting methods by mimicking the whites is a complex question. The result however was that by 1830, packs of dogs were a ubiquitous feature of Aboriginal camp life. On the Bass Strait islands and on Kangaroo Island, Tasmanian Aboriginal women used packs of dogs to hunt wallaby, a practice which continued at least on Kangaroo Island as late as the 1870s. Jones’ conclusion was that the Tasmanian situation indicated the powerful symbiotic relationship that almost inherently occurred between hunters and dogs. It is significant that during the decade after the last of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people had been removed to the government settlement on Flinders Island in the early 1830s, the historian John West recorded that there were large packs of wild dogs, believed to be descended from the Aboriginal dog populations, roaming the forests of the Western Tiers of central Tasmania. Yet these did not survive, their viability being dependent on the human interaction.
The Anbarra case study

Our contribution to this debate draws on observations made during long-term fieldwork with the Anbarra Aboriginal community who inhabit land round the mouth of the Blyth River in northern Arnhem Land (Northern Territory). The main study by Betty Meehan and Rhys Jones occurred over a twelve month period between July 1972 and July 1973, and between October to November 1974 (Jones 1980, Meehan 1982). Follow-up observations were done by Meehan from June to October 1978, which were partly related to providing field support for the making of the film Waiting for Harry (McKenzie 1978), at the site of Djunawunya, three kilometres west of the Blyth River mouth, and partly to assess changes which had occurred five years after the main study. The major focus of our research had been towards a quantitative documentation of Anbarra subsistence diet and foraging throughout an annual cycle. We had not focused specifically on the role of dogs except where they impinged upon subsistence activities. However, in our daily journals, we also recorded much anecdotal information about dogs. The specific question of the economic role of dogs had been raised with us in 1979 by Klim Gollan, who at the time was writing his PhD thesis on the dingo in Australia. He circulated a questionnaire to a number of workers who had had experience with Aboriginal communities at the time, and a response was prepared in manuscript form by Meehan and Vincent (1979), which is the empirical basis of the present paper.

Although we found something familiar in all of the articles cited above, we wish to underline where we believe our study has an original contribution to make. Firstly, most of the studies quoted above were done within the context of established settlements, whether government, mission or cattle station. Although the people themselves were all of traditional culture and their memories of life before these institutions were obviously keen, their subsistence economy was nevertheless almost entirely dependent on goods and supplies provided by the broader Australian society, either in the form of direct rations in the 1950s and 1960s, or as State-based welfare payments later on. Some foraging for food was done on a part time basis, but the core residence was within the settlements themselves. Thus there were few ecological constraints in these circumstances, either on the capacities of dogs to contribute to the food quest or conversely to be themselves fed from surpluses. Gould’s observations were an exception but, while being extremely important in their own right, were limited in their time duration; the detailed quantitative studies of foraging extending usually over a few days, or at the most a week or so.

The context of our fieldwork

Briefly, the historical circumstances of our work on the traditional subsistence economy of the Anbarra was as follows. Until the 1950s, the people of central Arnhem Land had had as little contact with the outside world as any Aboriginal group in Australia. A patrol on foot traversing the area was carried out by the Reverend G. Sweeney in 1939 for the Northern Territory Administration, and this showed substantial numbers of Aboriginal people living in the region between the Liverpool and Blyth Rivers under traditional economic hunting and gathering systems. In 1947, a small government trading and supply post was set up for the duration of that dry season, at a place called Maningrida on the east bank of the Liverpool River. Within a few weeks, Aboriginal people had flocked to this from the entire region to take advantage of the supplies of
flour, sugar, tea, and above all tobacco, and also out of curiosity. In 1957 a settlement was set up at the same place and although originally the aim had been that this would only provide trading and medical services, leaving the bulk of the Aboriginal population 'in the tribal areas with a minimum disruption, initially of their tribal patterns' (Patrol Officer Ted Egan in Hiatt 1965: 10), it almost immediately led to the establishment of a township, with almost all of the Aborigines concentrating themselves within it according to their tribal or linguistic affiliations. Hiatt (1965: 11) records that, during a foot patrol to the Blyth River area in June 1958, there were 'only a few people still living in the bush. They said that everyone else was living at Maningrida, on a mission, or in Darwin'.

A decade later, and despite major assimilation both economically and culturally, there were also countervailing tendencies starting to be expressed. These resulted from the fact that many Aboriginal people within Maningrida felt the social pressures of living in a large community of about a thousand people, often in close proximity with other groups who were linguistically quite different, and with whom in the past they may have had ambiguous or even hostile relations. There was also the powerful emotional pull of the lands that had been left, of the ritual obligations that could only fully be carried out through living on them (Tonkinson 1980: 119). This led in the early 1970s, to what has been called the 'outstation movement' (Meehan and Jones 1980: 135–37), whereby substantial groups of Aboriginal people began to leave, either on a temporary or semi-permanent basis, some of the large government settlements and return to their own lands. This was originally directly contrary to the official government policy of 'assimilation' and was accordingly resisted by a variety of official agencies, from education through to health, or even through direct methods of forcible removal. With the election of Gough Whitlam's federal Labor government in December 1972, this was overturned with a reversal of policy towards one of 'self determination' (Coombs 1974, 1980), which transformed the situation entirely.

When two of us (Meehan and Jones) arrived in Maningrida in July 1972, ready to embark on what was effectively planned to be an archaeological study of past Anbarra land use and occupation, we found that the community with which we had hoped to work was established on the eastern bank of the Blyth River at a place called Ngali-jibama, where for a period of several months they had been preparing for a major Guna-biba ceremony. Here they were supporting themselves almost entirely by hunting and gathering for their own foods, with minimal support from 'European' sources. At the conclusion of the great ceremonial events, many of the participants stated their intention to maintain their occupation of their traditional lands and accordingly we were invited to remain with them, which we did over a period of twelve months, when we attempted on a daily basis to document their foraging system over an annual cycle.

During this period from July 1972 to July 1973, we lived within a core band community of about 35 people and moved with them through a series of seasonal camps (Meehan 1982: 26–41). There were other related Gidjingarli-speaking groups totaling about 100 people, who carried out their own patterns of seasonal foraging, sometimes connecting with us. During this period, all of the meat and fish in the diet was obtained by hunting. Concerning carbohydrate foods, supplies of flour and sugar were brought in to the community every two or three weeks, though during the full wet season, there were no external supplies for periods of about a month. The women spent a considera-
ble amount of time collecting vegetable foods and fruits and at some periods of the year
this constituted a significant proportion of the carbohydrate dietary content (Meehan
1982: 49–51). We did not fool ourselves that this, by some wave of the temporal wand,
was 1872. The Anbarra used metal knives, iron tips in their fish spears, nylon string in
the weave of some of their fishing nets, metal fish hooks, and a few shotguns. Yet both
we and they felt that what we were experiencing had profound resonances with the
pre-contact past, which for most of our older companions had only occurred within the
midpoints of their lives. Our fundamental research aims were to try and document
Aboriginal foraging activities in quantitative terms, rather than, with the exception of
the pioneering Arnhem Land study in 1948 of McCarthy and McArthur (1960), what
had usually been expressed in general qualitative accounts.

Other studies of a similar nature to ours, carried out in Arnhem Land during the
same period, were those of Jon Altman (1987) with the Gunwingku people southwest of
Maningrida and Nic Peterson and, following him, Neville White, with the Ritharrngu
people living near the southeastern edge of the Arafura Swamp. Our perspective now,
after the passage of 25 years, is that these studies will never again be repeated. The
processes of cultural change have been such that even around Maningrida, with the
granting of full land rights and the freedom to occupy and exploit traditional lands, sys-
tematic foraging for subsistence is no longer carried out except on a minor scale. Our
journals therefore document a passing phase, half frozen as it were in the lens of history.
Frank Gurrmanamana, with whom we worked closely and in whose extended hearth
we lived, said it directly when he chastised us sometimes for not documenting fully his
accounts of the past — ‘More better you book ‘im down straight’.

Linguistic classification concerning canines
The Anbarra speak a dialect of the Gu-jingarliya (Gidjingarli) language, the term being
derived from ‘those with the tongue’. Other dialect groups were the Martay, living in
the inland eucalypt forest on the east of the Blyth River and the Gulala along the eastern
coastline as far as Cape Stewart. A related dialect to Gu-jingarliya was Gun-narrepa, spoken
by people on the southern edge of the Blyth River plains and in the woodlands
beyond. These peoples collectively were referred to by their neighbours as the Burarra
(Meehan 1982: 12–14). The major linguistic study has been that of David and Kathleen
Glasgow, culminating in the latter’s Burarra-Gun-narrepa Dictionary (1994) and, while this
was based on the Gun-narrepa dialect, we have mostly followed her orthography in this
paper except where some proper names have become established previously in the lit-
erature. Gu-jingarliya is one of the ancient non-Pama-Nyungan languages of north-
western Australia, and has a pre-fixing grammatical structure with four noun classes
(Evans and Jones 1997).

The general Anbarra term for dog which we recorded is kulakula, or in the Glas-
gow orthography (1994: 296) gulukula. This includes all categories of dog including the
dingo. Martay people call them wartunga (op.cit.: 673), but both terms are mutually
understandable by all groups. We do not know the etymology of either of these terms.
The animal is within the an- or masculine noun class. Arnhem Landers classify the nat-
ural and human world into two moieties Yirritjinga and Djowanga (cf. Yirritja and
Dhuwa of northeastern Arnhem Land) and the dog, including dingo, is within the Yir-
ritjinga moiety. In the Glasgow dictionary, a key word is often usefully introduced
within a sentence that epitomises its context. Concerning *gulukula*, they were described as 'the dogs [that] always eat the crumbs that fall when the owner is eating' (op.cit.: 296).

Dingoes and wild dogs are also specifically referred to by several other terms which are etymologically interesting. The Anbarra call them *an-gugurkuja* (op.cit.: 43), which is derived from the verb stem *-gurkuja*, 'to be frightened' or *-gugurkuja*, 'fearful one', and refers to their being afraid and running away from people on contact in the bush. Another common name is *an-mugat* which comes from the noun stem *-mugat*, 'wild animal or beast'. This can on occasions also refer to a wild, solitary or even a dangerous man, an outlaw, whereas in the feminine noun class of *jin-mugat* it applies to an unruly woman, one out of social control. The same class of meaning is behind the Gunnartpa term for dingo *an-mugarla* literally 'he in the bush' derived from *-mugarla*, 'belonging to the bush, or the jungle' (op.cit.: 50). It can be seen from these terms that camp dogs and dingoes are conceptually within different entities, the former belonging to the domestic world and the latter being within the wild domain of the bush, only fleetingly impinging on human society.

**Dingoes and people**

As in the rest of Arnhem Land, myths exist about the arrival of the dingo, and a consistent theme is that this proceeded from the east. For example the Ganalbingu people believe that a series of sacred waterholes located on the eastern side of Arafura Swamp were made during the 'Creation Time' by the ancestral dingo spirit Watu, of the Yirritja moiety, who, travelling from the east, arrived at the place of Ngaliyindi and created there a series of waterholes, a mountain and a cave; the latter being the home of the ancestral flying fox, Warrngu (Djurritjinni 2000). In the Blyth River area, the dingo myth is associated with some low, tidally-exposed mud islands called Ngandi-nginyanginya just off False Cape Stewart. On Anbarra territory itself, in a Yirritja estate, there are several large, discrete shell middens, said to have been formed by Gulukula (Meehan 1982: 172). These, consisting mostly of the open sea shore bivalve *Dosinia juvenalis*, are situated on a small fossil inland dune, some 500 m south from the present coast and separated from it by a further complex of sand dunes which incorporate most of the named sites of the important Djowanga moiety site of Djunawunya (Hiatt 1982). Radiocarbon dates on the most prominent of these Gulukula Mounds indicate that it was accumulated between 900 and 650 years ago.

In some parts of Arnhem Land, the dog also, as opposed to the dingo, has been incorporated into the mythology. Thompson (1949) recorded in northeastern Arnhem Land in the 1930s major ceremonial activities associated with the departure of the Macassan fleets after the trepang or bêche-de-mer season. These ceremonies not only depicted the *mali* or spirit shadow of the Macassan anchors, which came to signify the departure of the spirits to the realm of the dead (op. cit.: 36), but also effigies of the dog, as in the totem of the Mildjingi clan.

We did not hear much discussion about dingoes competing with people for food though on a couple of occasions when we were part of a goanna and long-necked turtle (*Chelodina* sp.) gathering expedition, people pointed to empty turtle carapaces saying that the dingoes had beaten them to it! We were told that in the past wild dingo pups were sometimes captured from the bush and brought into the camp, though it was
added that normally they ran away when they grew up. It was said that the sire of a large ginger-coloured dog, Belk (the name of a coarse grass which grows on coastal sand dunes), had been a dingo but we observed no such intermixing of wild and camp populations. It would be extremely difficult for a dingo to enter an Aboriginal camp without everyone being alerted to its approach by a cacophony from angry, frightened camp dogs. Camp dogs tended to stay in the camp or close by their masters if they were out on hunting trips and people were anxious that their dogs not be left behind in the malpi (bush) because they were afraid that the ‘wild dogs’ would kill them.

We have never heard dingoes being referred to as untrustworthy nor have we heard them described as being tricksters. There is a hint, however, that people had a certain respect for them. Frank Gurrmanamana said that neither he nor any other Anbarra person would ever shoot a dingo, but it was said, perhaps as a form of slander, that other unspecified Aborigines did. We heard of no stories about dingoes killing people or babies.

**Anbarra dogs: numbers and ownership**

Men, women and children owned specific dogs. Men tended to have one, usually a male, which they fed and kept in reasonably good condition, many even having collars, which conformed to police regulations at the time in Maningrida, and they were devoted to their masters. Women tended to have many dogs and although the occasional key hunting dogs were well-cared for and healthy, most dogs kept by women were underfed, miserable looking creatures. A few elderly women, who sometimes owned large numbers of animals, made an effort to give them water and a little food each day. This might consist of some mullet when the catch had been good, or on one occasion a cooked yam which was refused by the dogs. The ordinary camp dogs, however, had to scavenge for their food: scraps thrown to them or grabbed from the hearth, and bits and pieces collected from the low rubbish dumps that surrounded each cleared household area. We have also seen them eat faeces of both human and dog. To protect food from dogs, it was stored on rectangular platforms about 1.5 m high called belabela. These structures were also used as shades, people sitting and cooking under them during the daytime.

On average, each woman owned about three dogs. A pack of more than 12 dogs was attached to a group of Gulala women and children who lived by themselves at a coastal site close to Cape Stewart. At one stage, a male relative resided with this group but only for a short time. These people were said to have kept such a large number of dogs as a protection against malevolent spirits or the threat, either real or imagined, of dangerous human strangers.

The number of dogs in a camp varied over time. A census taken at the Anbarra home base, Kopanga, on 3 November 1972 indicated that 94 people were in residence, namely 40 adults and 54 children. Between them, they owned the unusually modest number of 14 dogs. Seven households had no dogs at all, six had one, two had two, and only one household had four. At the wet-season site of Lalarr-gujirripa on 5 February 1973 there were 13 adults and 22 children living there — a total of 35 people. There were also 20 dogs, namely six adults and 14 pups, the number of dogs per household ranging from one to seven, with two households claiming to own five dogs each.
Children adored pups, some owning two, and they often cried or threw tantrums when a new litter appeared in the camp if a new pup was not given to them. Usually the parents, already had ‘too many dogs’, but in the end, children had their own way and a new pup became part of the household. Much affection, attention and food was lavished upon pups by children (and often by adults too) but this usually slackened off as the animals reached maturity. It was our belief that people were attracted by the ‘puppiness’ of the young animals. When that disappeared and they became merely ‘dogs’, their owners tended to lose interest in them and they were left to take their chances within the rest of the dog population. They still tended however, to concentrate their scavenging and other activities around the natal hearth.

Some responsibility was associated with the ownership of dogs. If a dog was fighting in the camp or stealing food, it was expected that its owner would stop it and perhaps make recompense for any losses. If someone was bitten by another person’s dog, apologies and/or compensation were usually forthcoming. On one occasion at Gupanga, a dog bit a brother of its owner. This was considered to be so serious, though in fact the wound itself was minor, that a small ceremony was organised to make the incident ‘all clear’. The owner of the canine culprit sang his own song cycle one evening after dinner, especially for his injured brother and apparently that was the end of the matter.

Population and breeding
Most Anbarra dogs were the offspring from populations that had lived in the community for some time, being derived largely from Maningrida, missions or other settlements. We do not think, however, that they were traded in the real sense of the term. Normally they were gifts given to someone, from a close relative or, if the recipient was an important man, by men of similar stature in another community; like most Anbarra gifts, they also signaled reciprocity sometime in the future. At the time of our fieldwork, there was developing a preference for formal ‘European’ breeds, especially those brought in from Darwin. This, we believed, was based almost entirely on the fact that these animals were usually bigger and healthier and that, initially at least, they lacked the nasty characteristics that many camp dogs seemed to develop. People said of such dogs that they were an-mola (‘good’) though we rarely saw them go hunting. The opposite to these were ‘rubbish dogs’ or an-bachirra, a term often ascribed either to other people’s dogs or dogs that were in particularly poor health, which stole food from platforms or which were savage.

The ‘breed’ dogs tended to survive longer because they were cared for more than the camp dogs but also they tended not to maintain their original health and vigour once they had taken up residency in an outstation camp. The majority of camp dogs were small and skinny. Many had chronic ‘mangy’ skin complaints, some having no coats left at all. These unfortunate creatures spent most of their time whining and scratching. Many dogs had ‘diseases’, the details of which we know little, which caused their genitals and anus to become raw red in colour, protrude and secrete pus. Their eyes too, were red and watery, and diarrhoea was one of their common ailments; so also was heart worm.

Fights involving any number of dogs from two to twenty were common features of camp life. These tended to occur when bitches were on heat, but also when dogs
belonging to particular households trespassed into the territory claimed by others. There appeared to be no system whereby a certain male dog was mated with a particular bitch. Occasionally, we saw a bitch on heat tied up or in some way protected from rampant males, but this was usually a half-hearted affair. When unfortunate animals became stuck in the act of copulation and were mass-attacked by other males, people made some desultory efforts to protect the pair by throwing water on them, but ultimately such events were considered to be highly amusing.

When bitches gave birth to large litters of pups, no genuine attempt was made to destroy any of them. One of Nancy Bandeiyma’s bitches had a litter whilst we were camped at Djunawunya in 1978, and because her household already owned a large number of dogs (15–20), she felt that she should get rid of the new arrivals. Instead of hitting them on the head or throwing them into the sea, she carried them several kilometres east along the beach and left them there, no doubt hoping that some other agent would dispose of them. Next day the mother dog had carried them all the way back to the camp and the matter lapsed. Pups seemed to be chosen from litters for reasons such as colour, fatness, liveliness, or because they reminded their owners of some of their totems. However, the offspring of two good hunting dogs, Manyjaparna and An-dirrbula, were sought after.

Some dogs died at birth either because they were unhealthy or because one of the male dogs bit them on the head. Others died because they were struck by venomous snakes or taken by crocodiles. The hunting dog An-dirrbula died because she ate the contents of a tin of baking powder. A balanda (European) friend of her owner explained how this could be relieved by piercing her stomach with a metal skewer, but she was not treated and subsequently died. Some were beaten so severely, usually by their owners but sometimes by angry relatives, that they died from wounds. We know of one dog that received a heavy welt across the spine with a big stick, because it was instigating fights in the camp. It later died, its owner insisting that he would retaliate one day and kill a dog belonging to the person who had wielded the fatal blow. We did not hear that this revenge had happened before we left the field.

The Anbarra attitude towards their dogs was an ambiguous one. So often they were talked of as pests and most of them, according to Western norms, were underfed and roughly treated; but still no concerted attempt was made to control their numbers. In a sense, for most of the creatures it was a contest for survival when they competed with the rest of the camp dogs for food and sexual gratification.

**Training and caring**

We were told that pups chosen to be hunters were trained by having their noses rubbed in the urine of intended prey — for example, goanna. We saw this done once at Lalarr-guijirripa in 1973 but were unable to follow the performance of the dog which had undergone this treatment. Frank Gurramanama once applied liquid squeezed from the anus of a wallaby to An-dirrbula for the same purpose.

When people moved camp, all the dogs were encouraged to accompany the group. Everyone called them to come and generally returned to get them if they did not respond. On our way along the beach to Wayal, about 10 km east of the Blyth River mouth on 13 July 1973, we had dogs with us. Some of them were pups and when they became tired, as they did frequently, they slumped down, panting heavily and looking
as if they intended to stay exactly where they were. Unfortunately, at the time, we were not carrying water and so could not revive them that way. However, inevitably, they were picked up and carried. In July 1978, when people moved from the Nakarra site of Gorrng-gorrng in eucalypt woodland just west of Anbarra country to the coastal site of Djunawunyia for the mortuary ceremony that was to be held there, there was no room in our vehicle for all of Nancy Bandeyama’s dogs. The next day she returned to Gorrng-gorrng and walked back with her dogs — a round trip of some 12 km. Rarely, some dogs which were in ill health and too weak to follow were left behind in a vacated camp. It seems that these did not turn feral and hunt for themselves but stayed very much within the confines of the camp. If they were not retrieved by their owners they would die. Several dogs left at the deserted home base Kopanga were extremely thin, their rib cages protruding noticeably, and exceedingly weak. They had managed to climb onto some of the platforms in the camp on which people had stored canvases and food. There they had eaten everything they could find including soap and tea leaves. When we moved back to this site two months later, these dogs were nowhere to be seen and presumably they had died. Nobody seemed to be particularly concerned.

Hygiene issues
Dogs were not considered to be cleaners of camp sites, although they acted as agents in scouring the ground for discarded bones, fish skins and other food scraps. They defecated and urinated whenever and wherever they pleased, though they were usually chastised if this involved areas close to the hearth. We noted at Kopanga in 1978 that many dogs tended to excrete on the curvilinear piles of rubbish which were swept to the periphery of hearth areas, but this was by no means universal. People conceded that some of their camp dogs were dirty and may have had a role in the transmission of low-grade infections such as eye irritations and intestinal complaints, especially amongst infants, but they did little to improve this situation. They would not use fresh water holes in which dogs had been known to swim until the well had been scoured out and clean water was flowing freely. Some people would throw all of their dogs into the sea water every now and again to ‘clean them up’. Coastal people, obviously seeing salt water as a cleansing agent, also maintained that their dogs were healthier than those belonging to inland groups because hinterland dwellers could not force their dogs to swim in the sea.

The role of dogs in the food quest
Dogs accompanied most hunting and some fishing expeditions which we observed, yet only a few individual dogs captured any animals on most of these expeditions. Dogs were most useful for hunting the lizard-like goannas (Varanus spp.) when tall green grass covered the inland sand dunes and large earth mounds, formerly formed by jungle fowls, in which the goannas had dug their burrows. When women hunted goannas and feral cats, they used the dogs to flush prey from the long grass. They completed the task by digging reptiles out of holes or pulling cats from trees, then stunning or killing them with digging sticks or logs.

On 8 December 1972, after about a month of rain which came from the southeast before the wet season proper began, one of us (Meehan) accompanied a goanna hunting expedition:
As we moved on to one of the yarlinga [inland fossil sand dunes] two metres high, I saw for the first time, dogs being used for hunting...Nancy and Frank walked behind the dogs urging them on with the words ‘mal mal’ ['go! go!']. The dogs, surprisingly, responded in a well-disciplined way — the idea being, I suppose, that the goannas were now out of their holes and walking about and the dogs could find them and bail them up.

Dogs rarely killed the animals they bailed up or pinned down with their paws. They were actively discouraged from doing so by the Aboriginal hunters. On the expedition described above, the hunting dogs found a dying goanna. Meehan’s companions did not want the reptile for food — it was too old and thin. The dogs snapped and snarled at it and made attempts to bite pieces from its tail. They obviously wanted to eat it but had no idea how to go about it. The Aborigines made no attempt whatsoever to kill the animal and cut it up for the dogs either.

During our fieldwork, we recorded those instances where named dogs were said to have caught items of prey, though it is probably more accurate to say that they had been responsible for flushing animals out and holding them captive until the Aboriginal hunters secured or despatched them. Animals captured by dogs were goannas (74 or 90%), blue-tongue lizards (6 or 7%) and feral cats (2 or 2%). Seven dogs were specifically named as successful hunters, and five more dogs were said to have helped in the capture of goannas. This meant that 12 dogs were actively involved in the procurement of 82 animals, approximately seven per dog. This calculation is misleading, however, as one dog, An-dirrbula (Plate 1), made an outstanding contribution, catching 48, including all of the blue-tongue lizards and feral cats.

A rough estimate of the number of animals caught by each named dog is as follows, together with the meaning of the dog names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dog’s name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>No. of animals killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An-dirrbula</td>
<td>shellfish, <em>Dosinia juvenalis</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniaparna</td>
<td>mudflat</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilba</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelabeli</td>
<td>yellow belly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minijarreau</td>
<td>eye of something</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mipaldara</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy’s dog</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine other animals killed were procured by five unspecified dogs.

Even if it were not intended that they hunt, one or more dogs almost always accompanied foraging groups. This was especially true for groups of women and children but held as well for family expeditions. Women setting off on foraging expeditions to procure goannas, fresh water turtles, shellfish or yams always called their dogs to accompany them. This was similar to making sure that they took their dilly bag, tomahawk, matches and digging stick and in this sense, dogs were an essential part of women’s foraging equipment. Dogs were specifically encouraged to accompany women shellfish gatherers to the beds, particularly when it was likely that they would be working for some of the time at least in knee-deep water as the tide went in and out. The dogs barking and cavorting in the water were said to keep the sharks away. People
said that dogs sometimes caught small fish in the sea and certainly we have seen them engaged in that pursuit, but we never saw them catch anything.

We recorded the number of dogs that were taken on 18 foraging expeditions. In fact, only two or three expeditions without dogs were noted by us. The average number of women and children on these expeditions was about eight (groups ranged from one to 23). The average number of dogs per trip was about five (groups ranged from one dog per ten people to two dogs per person). When groups crossed the Blyth River estuary mouth in dugout canoes for a day of foraging on the eastern bank, some 'hunting' dogs accompanied them but more frequently the canoes were overloaded with people and so most dogs had to be left behind. Despite being instructed to remain on land, they would follow the canoe by swimming over the river. That we never saw one taken by a crocodile was a constant surprise. When people were returning from a Guna-biba ceremony at Yinangarnduwa near Cape Stewart in December 1972, they crossed the river in a canoe but there was no room for their old dog, Minijarraura. It turned up the next day, having swum the river at its mouth where it is almost one kilometre wide. People talked of this event with interest and the dog, despite its nasty temperament, was admired for its stamina and bravery.

When men went on a focused hunting expedition, either singly or in small groups (rarely more than two), in order to get wallabies or large waterbirds, they sometimes took a dog with them — one that could be relied upon to be obedient and quiet. More often, however, they hunted without dogs. Anbarra men at that time were learning to capture the feral water buffalo (nganaparra) which were increasingly encroaching onto the Liverpool and Blyth River wetlands from western Arnhem Land. Normally, they did this with the aid of vehicles and what small calibre guns that they had available — 0.22 rifles and shotguns. Only a few Gun-nartpa men to the south had a licence to own 0.303 rifles, which are the most effective weapon against these large beasts, and which they had learnt how to use from experience working with balanda professional buffalo hunters in the Alligator Rivers region to the west. When vehicles were not available or were unusable because of flooded mud flats, Anbarra men hunted on foot and experimented with dogs, encouraging them to 'round up' the buffaloes so that armed hunters could shoot them from close range. We saw one dog involved in this strategy but on that occasion the hunters failed to bring down the buffalo.

Dogs as a food taboo
To our knowledge no camp dogs or dingoes were ever eaten. In fact, Frank Gurrmanama was horrified when we suggested this hypothetical possibility. He said that the Anbarra could not eat gulukula because they were a 'friend' and that if they did, they would 'vomit'. He did say that it was reported that the people from Melville Island ate dogs and he expressed his disgust at such a practice. This was really the case of ascription of strange or 'primitive' behaviour to a distant, half-known people. We should add that the Anbarra do hunt and eat feral cats (jin-mugat, bujibuji cf. 'pussy-pussy') and regard their red flesh as excellent. As yet, only a few cats were kept as pets in the camps, but it was becoming a more common practice, especially in Maningrida. (It will be interesting to see if attitudes towards the eating of cat flesh grow more like those pertaining to dog flesh if cats become gradually assimilated into Anbarra camp life as pets.)
Another similar case which is as yet unresolved concerns pigs. These were unfortu­nately somewhat irresponsibly introduced to Maningrida in the late 1970s by Tongan Methodist missionaries, and some quickly became pets of Aboriginal households. Inevitably some of their progeny became wild, and these have by the late 1990s established growing feral populations, whose ecological depredations on the Blyth River wetlands and further to the east at the mouth of the Arafura Swamp are causing considerable concern among land managers (Finlayson et al. 1999) and increasingly to Aboriginal people themselves. Programs have been put in place to shoot them as part of vermin control. The Anbarra to whom one of us (Jones) talked about it in July 1999 were wary of eating pig meat, partly because it was strange and partly because many animals were said to be infected with communicable diseases such as tuberculosis. However, at an outstation in Djinang country on the western edge of the Arafura swamp, a group of Anbarra men were seen butchering and carefully inspecting the meat of a wild pig which they had shot. They sliced some pieces and grilled them. The taste and smell were said to be 'too sweet', though one man volunteered that the meat was a bit like 'bacon' which the balandas or white people bought in the supermarket. The meat was gingerly eaten, and whether this was because of its novelty, or because pigs for the previous decade or so had been pets in many Anbarra households, is not known.

Guard dogs
Anbarra people believed that the bush was potentially inhabited by dangerous forces, both human and supernatural, and that they must be on the alert for them at all times.
This was especially true for women and explained why they rarely went hunting alone but usually as part of largish groups, and why they nearly always had dogs with them. Men felt less vulnerable. On a purely utilitarian scale, dogs were useful to warn about snakes or other animals around the camp sites. As soon as night fell, people rarely left the glow of camp fires because, for them, the darkness was full of potential malevolence. Occasionally, some noise or movement would disturb the sleeping dogs. They would instantly leave their camp fires and run towards the origin of the disturbance. There they would take on a rigid stance and begin to bark and growl, creating a most memorable din. People usually interpreted these outbursts as the dogs’ responses to the presence of spirits, *wangarra* or the ghosts of dead relatives. There was also the issue of a ‘murder man’, either conceived of literally as an enemy with some hostile intent, but more generally as a person with supernatural powers to commit ritual murder. It must be remembered that in general, except in the cases of small babies or very old people, deaths of individuals through illness were not considered to be due to natural causes, but to some form of sorcery. The Anbarra name for such a sorcerer is *an-muragalk*, the term being derived from *-ragalk*, a thin long bone point made from the fibula of a wallaby, and believed to be inserted behind the upper left rib cage of a victim while asleep or otherwise not conscious, and so killing him by piercing him in the heart. Dogs were considered to have special powers which could sense the presence of such dangers and alert humans to it before they themselves were aware of it.

The dogs also reacted in the same way when a buffalo came near the camp, usually to drink from the camp waterhole. Any innocent visitor would get the same reception if they arrived unexpectedly late at night. If such a person had not remembered to alert the community of his impending arrival, and to arm himself with a stout stick, he might well be severely savaged by the mangy sentinels of the night.

**Emotional support**

It is clear that for some members of the Anbarra community, dogs and especially pups fulfilled an important emotional role. Every Anbarra person loved ‘puppies’, and, as far as we could interpret, treated them tenderly as if they were human babies. They forced food upon them, cuddled and talked to them, slept with them and carried them around. They pinched and pummeled them in order to get a response from them in much the same way as they did with small babies and toddlers.

On the other hand, Anbarra women, usually middle-aged to old and widows, but sometimes older wives from polygamous marriages, had a special relationship with their dogs. One woman we knew was the older wife of a senior Anbarra man. This man was her second husband; they had one son. When her first husband died, she and her younger sister became the wives of their present husband. This man, as long as we have known him, regarded the younger of these two women as his ‘really’ wife – his pal and his companion, though he has always treated his older wife with respect. However, the older wife was not altogether happy with her lot. She fought frequently with her sister and her husband, and often complained that her relatives were not looking after her as they should. She bemoaned the fact that her only son spent little time with her and even more infrequently sent her food. This woman owned a large number of dogs (about ten) and she spent most of her time with them. If she went to the waterhole or to a ‘dinner-time camp’, they went with her. They slept beside her at night and sometimes one or
two of them joined her and her sister’s daughters (who always slept with her) inside the mosquito net. This woman spent a considerable time during each day sleeping and at night was somewhat of an insomniac. Many times we were woken during the early hours of the morning, when the camp was usually quiet, to hear her having an animated conversation. It took us several such experiences to realise that she was talking to her dogs. They were totally devoted to her and always sat up and pricked their ears when she addressed them. This was not surprising, for she fed and watered them every day. When one of her bitches gave birth to a litter of pups she constructed a small dome-shaped shelter from cloth — similar to those that were built for Anbarra women when they were about to give birth to a new baby — to house the mother and her offspring. This is an exceptional example of the relationship that some women had with dogs but it clearly supports our belief that dogs can sometimes be substitutes for kin and dwindling responsibilities.

Dogs as warmth
Within this tropical region we never saw dogs used specifically as blankets and, unlike central Australia, there are no freezing temperatures even at the depth of ‘cold weather time’. Some dogs were permitted to sleep inside mosquito nets with their owners but these were usually pups. The rest of the animals remained outside formal sleeping areas, usually resting around the hearth belonging to their owners. By morning time, if the night had been chilly, they could often be seen sleeping on the ashes of the hearth.

Material culture
We did not see or hear about any part of a dog, such as teeth or bones, being used in the manufacture of an artefact. Sometimes, however, dogs wore artefacts themselves. Necklaces were made from land snail shells and painted with white clay. These were placed around the neck of a dog for night hunting. The hunters could see the white shells in the dark but, more importantly, they could hear them rattling as the dogs pursued the prey. We never saw this hunting technique used but we did acquire one of the necklaces.

Disposal of deceased dogs
We saw no dogs cremated or placed in trees after they had died. However, the Anbarra had begun to bury their dogs in graves. On one occasion, Meehan asked if she could have the skeleton of one of the dogs which was said to have dingo ancestry for osteological examination by K. Gollan in Canberra. After some hesitation, this request was agreed to. The dog had been rolled in paper and cardboard and buried in a metre deep grave. People watched the disinterment with great interest, examining everything that came out of the grave and naming the bones. Analysis indicated that the animal was totally of European origin with no dingo ancestry. As promised, the remains were returned soon after, and when last seen were stored in a plastic bag, on top of a domestic platform.

Concluding remarks
To return to our central question, it is undoubtedly the case that a few dogs, well trained and with a particular aptitude for the task, were a great aid in hunting. This was not only in their direct contribution to the chase as we have documented, but also more generally in providing some kind of a screen for hunting parties, in flushing out game
The dog Manyjaparna with Nancy Bandeyama (now deceased) who is collecting *gulach*, the sweet spike rush (*Eleocharis dulcis*) from the black soil plains behind Kopanga during the late dry season of 1972 (Photograph: Meehan and Jones collection 1972).

and alerting to snakes and other potential dangers. This was particularly true of women, who seldom embarked on any foraging expedition without the accompaniment of dogs. These good hunting dogs (Plates 1 and 2) were well looked after and fed. However there remains the essential problem that the bulk of the dog population in Anbarra camps was absolutely hopeless at hunting. Not only did the dogs not make any direct contribution to the products of the chase, or hunt on their own accord, but also they were net consumers of the total amount of food in general circulation. What, therefore, was their role or, as we have put it elsewhere (Meehan and Vincent 1979), ‘why so many?’

The answer to this question resides in two main roles that dogs played in Anbarra society. The first was as sentinels and guards. We have briefly outlined and explored this in both the prosaic and supernatural domains. The latter cannot be underestimated. Having a large community of dogs gave to the Anbarra people a sense of social space and security which extended way beyond the limits of their cleared camp areas or their parties as they travelled through the country. In this context it is interesting to note that the propensity of barking in European dog breeds may have been a specifically selected trait in the early domestication process (Manwell and Baker 1984: 244) and of course the dingo, by contrast, is noted for its relative silence. The other major role was to provide companionship and to be objects of affection. Again this was particularly noted in the case of both children and women, especially elderly women.

The Anbarra liked owning and being surrounded by large numbers of dogs. We are conscious of the fact that in this case study, there were no particular constraints due to food shortage, since the supply of basic carbohydrate in the form of flour and sugar was available from the Maningrida settlement base. This was particularly the case dur-
ing our later fieldwork in 1978, when the largest numbers of dogs were recorded. Dur­
ing such ‘fat’ times, there were few external limits on dog population levels and the
Anbarra did not exercise any obvious controls on them. During times of hardship, how­
ever, we believe that things would be quite different. It is highly likely that the bulk of
any dog population would have been left to its own resources, and in situations of
forced mobility due to food shortage, abandoned at old camp sites, with probable death
due to starvation. Our model of a stochastically fluctuating population profile is how
we envisage the situation, had dogs been introduced into Anbarra society, say in the
nineteenth century, away from the confines of the broader European system.

Our study presented here, partially stimulated by Sally White’s own pioneering
contribution from the other side of the continent, adds to an empirical body of data con­
cerning Aboriginal relations with dogs. Apart from their own intrinsic interest, we
believe that these studies potentially provide great insights into the processes that led to
the initial domestication of the dog which might, given the emphasis of this paper,
appropriately be termed as woman’s best friend.

Acknowledgements

Without the support and total cooperation from the Anbarra community, this work
could not have been carried out. We thank them all, but especially Frank Gurrman-
mana, Nancy Bandeiyama (now deceased) and their family.

The manuscript document (Meehan and Vincent 1979) lodged in the library of the Aus­
tralian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, contains fur­
ther specific field data not used in the present paper.

Betty Meehan is an anthropologist who has worked for many years with the Anbarra people of
north central Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Rhys Jones is Professor in Archaeology
and Natural History in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian
National University, Canberra. Annie Vincent is an archaeologist who has worked in East
Africa and Australia.

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Shirley Andrew

In 1985 Isobel White, Diane Barwick and Betty Meehan dedicated their book *Fighters and singers* to Shirley Andrew Rosser. Their words: '... who knows about books and cares about people' were an elegant tribute to both her professional standing and her personal qualities.

Shirley Andrew had a distinguished career as an editor. Her major contributions in the field of Aboriginal studies were as director of the publication section of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. These were the section’s formative years; under her leadership it established its position as a leading international publisher on Aboriginal Australia. It also encouraged the work of Aboriginal writers.

After her marriage to writer William Rosser, Shirley lived in southern Queensland for some years and then moved to northern New South Wales. Throughout she maintained her professional interests, and in spite of serious illness continued to edit works for publication and to advise and encourage local writers. In this she made important contributions to local history. She also assisted Aboriginal researchers and organisations, continuing a lifelong commitment.

Shirley Andrew was for many years a correspondent to *Aboriginal History*. The Editorial Board has valued her expertise and her commitment to Aboriginal studies. It grieves her death in December 1999. Those of us who knew her personally will always remember her courage, integrity and grace. To her family we extend our sincere sympathies.

Isabel McBryde
Notes and Documents

Aboriginal History turns 21: Ann Curthoys’ speech in launching volume 21

After some delay, volume 21 of Aboriginal History was released on 14 September 1999. To mark the occasion the editorial board that day conducted a simple launching ceremony in the Jabal Centre, the Aboriginal students’ study centre at the Australian National University (ANU). The principal speaker at the ceremony was Professor Ann Curthoys, Manning Clark Professor of Australian History in the university’s School of Humanities. Professor Curthoys spoke as follows.

Welcome friends. Welcome to the Jabal Centre, and to this launch of the 21st volume of Aboriginal History.

This is an important occasion, a 21st birthday. I think we should all be proud this journal has lasted 21 years. The editors of the first issue were Diane Barwick and Robert Reece, with Andrew Markus review editor, and an editorial board which included Isabel McBryde, Luise Hercus, Hank Nelson, Niel Gunson, Nicholas Peterson, Lyndall Ryan, Charles Rowley, Peter Corris, and myself. Two of these people — Diane Barwick and Charles Rowley — have since passed away, and the journal commemorated their passing in important ways, but many of the rest of that first editorial board are still involved in the journal one way or another. Luise Hercus, in particular, is review editor of the issue I am launching today.

And there are many other stalwarts of the journal, not least Peter Read who has guided it through difficult years and without whom it may not today be thriving as it is. Another stalwart is Peter Grimshaw who was treasurer of the management committee for that first issue, and is still the treasurer for this issue, the 21st.

In recent years the journal has survived through the appointment of guest editors for every issue. As we all know, this has guaranteed quality and diversity, but it has not guaranteed speed. Accordingly, in 1998, Ian Howie-Willis was appointment managing editor, and he is located in our department, the History Department here at ANU. Though how much longer there will be a history department is currently in doubt, and the journal may shortly belong to some combined entity, like a School of Humanities. We will see. In any case, the appointment of a managing editor located on campus means that while the practice of inviting guest editors will continue from time to time, we now have a great deal more continuity in the editorial process, and trust that the journal will appear more regularly.
The 21 years of the journal have been a tumultuous 21 years, for Aboriginal people and politics, and for the discipline of history, and especially for the conjunction of the two, the field of Aboriginal history. Since 1977, when the first issue emerged, we have witnessed a great many changes in Aboriginal land title and in the political and administrative structures governing Aboriginal people's lives. We have witnessed continuing Aboriginal cultural expression in painting, theatre, film, dance, and writing. Since 1977, we have lived through the Bicentennial protests, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Police Custody, the Mabo and Wik cases and their legislative consequences, the Stolen Generations Report, and much else. In history, we have seen a growing interest in forms of narrative, in life writing, in environmental history, in cultural history. Historians have interacted with new theoretical developments in the humanities, centred around questions of cultural theory, post-structuralism, and the ever-present problem of historical truth and perspective. The intellectual landscape of the humanities and social scientists has changed considerably, as the disciplines of history, anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics, the disciplines that have primarily informed this journal, have interacted with and learned from one another in new ways. Book publications in Aboriginal history, both by historians such as Henry Reynolds, and the various forms of life-writing by indigenous authors, most notably Sally Morgan, have grown dramatically. The vast majority of books in this field were published after this journal began in 1977.

Despite this growth in book publication, the journal is as important as ever. It continues to publish ground-breaking articles and pertinent reviews. The journal has been a repository of excellent scholarship, widely used in teaching. I could not run the Australian Aboriginal history unit here at ANU without it.

Most of the historians working in the field have published in it, often with key articles that have since become foundational in teaching. I think of the very first article in the first issue, W.E.H. Stanner's 'The history of indifference thus begins', or Peter Read's 'A rape of the soul so profound' in a later issue, or Henry Reynolds' article on nineteenth century Queensland and Francesca Merlan's 'Making people quiet', both in volume 2. There was Richard Broome's article on professional Aboriginal boxers, Robert Hall's on Aborigines, the Army and the Second World War, and Stephen Muecke, Alan Rumsey and Banjo Wirramurra's article on 'Pigeon the outlaw: history as texts'. This article, in volume 9 in 1985, signalled the emergence of articles involving Aboriginal authorship, though it may not have been the first, and it was followed by others of sole authorship, such as Henrietta Fourmile's much quoted 'Who owns the past?' in volume 13, and contributions from Gordon Briscoe, Mick Dodson, and others in volume 18.

This issue, then, follows in a grand tradition. It begins, sadly with several obituaries: to Fred McCarthy, Mick Miller, Isobel White, and Mum Shirl, all major figures in Aboriginal life and scholarship in this country. It then has an excellent article by John Maynard, about Fred Maynard and the Australian Aboriginal Progressive association, a product of the Stanner Fellowships scheme, sponsored by the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (ANU) and administered by the Board of Aboriginal history. John Maynard was the fellow in 1996, and was also at that time a visiting fellow in the History Department. As a detailed and researched account of his grandfather, this article
makes for some arresting and informative reading, and is a signal I think of a growing contribution to the journal from authors of Aboriginal descent.

I can’t mention all the eleven articles in this issue by name. All are well researched, and well written. Whether it is the Catholic missionary involvement in child removal, as so movingly written about by Christine Choo, or the influence of the contact with the Macassans on Yolgnu attitudes towards mining in Arnhem Land, or the scandalous treatment of Ralph Piddington in Western Australia in the 1930s — and there are others equally as interesting and important — we are in every case given a treat, in scholarship, research, analysis, and writing. Every article has something new to say. Bob Dixon’s translation of the story of Christie Palmerston, as told by George Watson, continues one of the traditional strengths of this journal, its use of linguistic expertise to record and translate indigenous people’s remembered histories.

And then there are the reviews, all, as usual, useful and informative, from people like Gordon Briscoe, Noel Loos, Neil Andrews and others. I especially liked Richard Kimber’s review of Diane Bell’s recent enormous book (and the review itself is long), assessing positive and negative qualities with equal measure and providing a model of appreciation and constructive criticism — enough to restore one’s faith in the reviewing process. Whether one agrees with Kimber or not, of course, depends on having read Bell’s book, which this review reminds me I must do.

So I think the appearance of volume 21 is indeed something to celebrate, both for itself, as a symbol of 21 years of influential and quality scholarship, and as an indication that there is a great deal more to come. Congratulations to the editors, Rob Paton and Di Smith, to Ingereth McFarlane who is credited with having provided them with substantial assistance, and to all the others involved in bringing this volume out. May there be many more to come!

Ann Curthoys

The Sally White/Diane Barwick Award

This award commemorates the great contributions that Sally White and Diane Barwick made to Aboriginal studies generally and to this journal in particular. The award, which is made on the recommendation of the journal’s editorial board, consists of a cash grant to assist indigenous scholars in undertaking current research projects.

The recipient for 2000 is Ms Jukie Appo of Bundaberg, Queensland. Ms Appo graduated in 1999 from Deakin University, Victoria, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Design) degree within the Institute of Koorie Education. She is presently undertaking a BA(Hons) program at the Mitchelton, Brisbane, campus of the Australian Catholic University.

Ms Appo’s thesis topic at the Australian Catholic University is ‘An ethnographic study of the Burnett River, Queensland, rock engravings in the Gooreng Gooreng community’. The extensive Burnett River engravings appear to have been first recorded for the ethnographic literature by the Rev R.H. Mathews in 1901. In 1972 they became the subject of controversy when 96 of the rocks on which they were engraved were
removed and relocated to other parts of Queensland. Their removal was a catastrophe for the Gooreng Gooreng people, for whom the engravings constituted critical physical evidence linking them with their traditional lands. However, although the engravings are now widely dispersed, Ms Appo argues that the Gooreng Gooreng people regard them as ‘part of their identity...and monuments to their living, continuous culture’.

Ms Appo, who is herself a member of the Gooreng Gooreng people, believes that much of the recorded material on the engravings has disappeared. Her project involves interviewing Gooreng Gooreng elders to obtain their perspectives on the engravings and also visiting the present locations of the rocks to record and describe the engravings again.

The editorial board congratulates Ms Appo on her award and hopes that the results of her research will eventually be published in this journal.

The board also draws attention to the fact that it welcomes applications for grants under the Sally White and Diane Barwick Award scheme. It is currently calling for applications from Indigenous women who plan to do their honours year (i.e. equivalent of the fourth year in a Bachelor of Arts program) next year, 2001. People wishing to inquire about grants should contact Dr Peter Read at the Australian National University (phone: 02 6249 4685; email Peter.Read@anu.edu.au).

Ian Howie-Willis

An interview with David Unaipon

Few Aboriginal leaders have received the acclaim and respect given to the Reverend David Unaipon (1872–1967), whose portrait now appears on the Australian $50 note. Regarded as a genius and a scholar for most of his adult life, he proved the lie to the racial theories prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s, an era dominated by eugenics and flawed intelligence tests. The son of an Aboriginal evangelist, James Ngunaitponi and his wife Nymbulda, David was born at the Point McLeay Mission, South Australia, on 28 September 1872.

Encouraged to develop his artistic and scientific interests by kind patrons, he was frustrated by the mundane occupations provided and lack of opportunity for educated Aborigines. His flair for inventing, his polished speech and presentation and his impassioned motivation secured his position as a spokesman for his people. While the churches saw him as living proof of their evangelisation efforts, his individualism and outspokenness sometimes led to disagreements with his own people as well as with secular and religious authorities. Though he often suffered from discrimination when travelling he still remained relatively free from the official restraints placed on Aborigines.

From the 1920s onwards his fame increased through his publications on Aboriginal culture and mythology, his influence on Aboriginal policy and his continued interest in inventions which still occupied his mind in his nineties. In 1922 he was already a rising star. In that year he was interviewed by the English spiritualist Horace Leaf, who
was on a world tour following on the heels of a similar tour by his colleague and fellow spiritualist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1920. While it is evident that Leaf acknowledged David Unaipon’s intellectual gifts it is apparent from the account of the interview that both the Presbyterian missionary and Leaf were reluctant to acknowledge full equality of mental capacity. This was for them, a theoretical position which they were bound to support; it was a position which would be held until the refutation of the Porteus intelligence tests.

Unaipon’s conviction that he was ‘a fair sample of what can be accomplished if the aborigines are taken in hand when young’ sent a clear message to his contemporaries that it was justifiable to remove Aboriginal children from what was considered a ‘degenerate’ environment. For Unaipon an Aboriginal youth must either grow up in a harsh tribal environment or be nurtured in a Christian home. Anything in between was degenerate brought about by the demoralisation of Aborigines by Europeans eager for their land.

The account of Leaf’s interview with David Unaipon which follows is taken from his book Under the Southern Cross: A Record of a Pilgrimage (with an introduction by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), London 1923, pp.107–114. David Unaipon, after a strenuous life of preaching, lecturing, writing, and experimenting, died at Tailem Bend Hospital (South Australia) on 7 February 1967 and was buried at Point McLeay.

Niel Gunson

One of the most remarkable men we met in Australia was Mr David Unaipon, a highly educated Christian aboriginal. We were introduced to him by the Rev. T.W. Leggett, Secretary of the Presbyterian Mission to the Australian Aborigines. Mr Leggett is of the opinion that the intellectual powers of the aborigines are very much under-rated although they may not be equal to those of white people. David has been educated by the Mission since he was a child, and shows an unusually high mentality. He is a charming personality, and an inventor of considerable merit. Before the war he devised an aeroplane, but destroyed it on moral grounds; the thought of it being used to destroy life was too repugnant to him. The Government is offering a prize for the best sheep-shearing machine, and it is admitted that the one invented by David is the most effective of those that have, up till now, been submitted. The object of the machine is to cut the wool without damaging the animal’s skin.

David is a fine preacher, speaking splendid English, and he is also a good Latin and Greek scholar. According to Mr Leggett, he read Newton’s Principia through and understood even the mathematical equations at the first reading. So capable is he that the Presbyterians purposed sending him shortly on a missionary tour to Tasmania.

I found Mr Unaipon to be a very well-preserved man of medium stature, clean shaven, and about 50 years of age. An exceedingly pleasant personality, with a charming voice, and quiet confident manner. His conversational powers are excellent, and except for his colour he would pass for a cultured Englishman of more than average intelligence. Intensely interested in the education and general improvement of his own race, he believes that properly dealt with they could be educated in a generation. He is convinced that he is a fair sample of what can be
accomplished if the aborigines are taken in hand when young. He complained that the popular opinion of his race was framed on the comparatively few degenerates met with around the borders of civilisation, or in the towns; a very unfair and misleading method of judgment. The common assertion that they are lazy is a libel against the aboriginal when in his native state. The white man is responsible for this obvious defect among those who have come under his influence. His desire to become possessed of the black fellow’s land has resulted in reducing the aborigines to a state of indolence discreditable and harmful to the race.

‘What happens when the white man wishes to possess native territory?’ said David. ‘In the early days he would simply have taken it without compunction, even shooting the native if he thought it necessary. Now he must get it by gentler means; so what does he do? He approaches the aboriginal with offers and promises. ‘You sittem down, Jimmy,’ says he. ‘We givem you food and clothes and tobacco. You no workem. We workem and feedem you. See, Jimmy?’ Jimmy naturally sees, and sits down, and eats and drinks and smokes. He can reasonably do nothing else. Aware of the irresistible power of the white man, he, as a rational being, yields to it. Thus he cultivates bad habits foreign to his native state.’

This is certainly typical of what we saw when we visited the Aborigines’ Reserve established by the Government of New South Wales at La Perouse. In a few crudely built houses in a large field overlooking beautiful Botany Bay, and near enough to Sydney to enable him to reach it without much trouble, the aboriginal lives with his half-caste friends and idles the day away. How different this mode of life must be when compared with that of his tribal state, in which he must rely on his ability as a huntsman and fisherman to obtain his daily food or starve! The Rev. Frank Paton, writing recently, gives a graphic picture of the method by which the white settler dispossessed the aboriginal of his native land and degraded him:

As the white settlements spread, the settlers took the best of the land for their cattle, and the native retreated before them. But they had to keep within their tribal boundaries, or be attacked by other tribes. This meant that, when the best of their own land was gone, the natives could no longer live in their usual way of hunting, and they knew no other method. And, as they could not live in their old way, some of them began to spear the white man’s cattle, instead of the kangaroo and opossums, which were dying out. This brought upon them the anger and revenge of the settlers. Though some white men treated them kindly, others were very cruel, and hunted them like wild animals. Thus, deprived of their usual food, the remnants of the tribe gradually became idlers, hanging about the white settlements, and there they learnt all the vices of civilisation, without its virtues. Drink, opium, and evil diseases, and consumption carried on their deadly work, and even Christian people did not realise for a long time that they owed any duty to the aborigines.

David mentioned that a careful study of the tribal customs of the aborigines reveals very good reasons for them, even when they appear cruel and unnecessary. The arduous conditions of their native state makes it essential that only the fittest shall be permitted to survive. To assure this, three tests are applied to each individual, male or female. They are:

1. The mastery of appetite.
2. The mastery of pain.
3. The mastery of fear.
The first test, the mastery of appetite, takes place when the children of both sexes are approaching adolescence. The headman of the tribe then informs them that they must not allow their appetites to master them. 'It is,' he says, 'like an old man inside you who will make you do everything good or bad that he wants you to do, unless you master him.' After seriously explaining to them the importance of the test they are to undergo, he sends them away to think the matter over and acquaint him later whether they are prepared to undergo the trial or not. The children invariably return, stating that they are ready to face the ordeal.

Then for two days they are compelled to abstain from all food, the tribe meanwhile moving rapidly from place to place so as to exhaust the children and increase their hunger and thirst. They are obliged to watch the others prepare and eat food, but must not show the slightest inclination to eat or drink themselves. At sunrise on the third morning, when the children's appetite is thought to be most keen, the elder says they may eat and drink. A tasty meal is slowly and elaborately prepared before them, increasing their pangs of hunger. Now begins the most important part of the ordeal. On receiving the food each child is expected to show no unusual avidity nor to eat more than it was in the habit of eating before the fast. The communal as well as the personal value of the test is obvious. The mastery of appetite guarantees the individual's power to go without food during the periods of want sometimes frequently occasioned by lack of game or drought, without attempting to take what belongs to another without permission.

The control of pain is a more severe trial and equally important to the life of the tribe. Boys and girls are, when a little older, subjected to the severest tortures which they must undergo without flinching. Without previous warning the young girls may be flung on their backs while their two front teeth are knocked out by a stick about nine inches long being struck with a stone hammer. At another time their chest or stomach or face may be cut open with a stone knife, previously dipped in hot ashes. The reason for the knife being made hot, is to make the operation more painful, and also to cauterise the wound and hasten the healing of it. The boys are made to lie on hot ashes and are burnt so severely that when they rise from their uncomfortable bed their backs are covered with blisters. The tests for the conquest of fear are equally trying.

Whoever fails to pass all these tests is regarded as degenerate and unfit, and usually destroyed or rendered impotent. The method usually adopted for destroying these unfortunates is curious but less painful than the tests. Like most primitive races, the aborigines of Australia are well acquainted with the power of suggestion and inherently subject to its influence. Much of their magic is based upon it. They generally destroy degenerates by means of it, through the process known as 'pointing the sticks'. There are several ways of doing this, and all are regarded as effective. In this case, however, a well-concerted scheme involving the co-operation of several people, including the medicine man, is arranged. An individual is told off to engage the doomed man in conversation, and another to lie near them and keep staring at the victim, who has, of course, not been let into the secret of the method. After a while the degenerate, observing the man persistently staring at him, will inform his companion, saying 'I wonder why so and so keeps staring at me.' 'Ah,' replies the other, 'he's pointing the sticks at you.' This information will greatly disturb the degenerate's mind, for this form of magic is greatly dreaded.

A little later a specially attractive meal of emu's fat will be prepared by the tribe under the supervision of the headman. Emu's fat is a special delicacy, greatly liked
by aborigines, and if it is eaten in large quantities causes biliousness. Orders are secretly issued that all but the doomed man must eat frugally; he, however, is encouraged to over-eat, with the result that he becomes very sick. His enemies inform him that this is owing to the 'sticks' having entered him and doing their deadly work. They then advise him to consult the medicine man, who gives the final emphasis to the suggestion. Carefully examining the man he suddenly produces some splinters of wood or sharp pieces of stone, declaring that they are part of his 'sticks' which, alas, have entered the victim's liver, stomach, and kidneys, or some other vulnerable part of the body. The rest the medicine man pretends to be unable to extract as the 'sticks' are too deeply embedded, a statement which is equal to a death sentence, for the individual goes away fully persuaded that his case is hopeless, and lies down and dies. We saw several examples of these 'sticks' in various parts of the country.

The power of the medicine men over their tribesmen is extraordinary, and, as is usual in such cases, the line between the occult and trickery is difficult to discover. The term 'blackfellow-doctor' is used to express those who have psychic and magical powers as well as those who merely heal. They have rain-makers, seers, spirit-mediums, and bards, who employ their poetic faculties for purposes of enchantment. The wizards are everywhere credited with the power of conveying themselves through the air, or of being conveyed by spirits from place to place. Numerous cases are given by the natives of wizards 'going up,' although this usually takes place in darkness. This may be because of the deleterious effect of light on psychic force, or because it hides the witch-doctor's deceit. If it be true that the return is frequently accompanied by means of a tree, down which he descends and finally jumps to the ground, it must be admitted that these circumstances are suspicious.

His powers of psychometry are supposed to be wonderful. Not only can he 'read' from articles that have been owned and used by other people, the nature and destiny of their owners; he can also use them as a means through which to transfer to those owners an evil or good influence. The belief is that anything that has once been in contact with a person is, by some occult link, always in touch with him. Through this invisible connection the wizard casts his spell upon his unfortunate victim.

The sorcerers are not induced to exercise their powers without some material reward — they all demand payment in kind. Some of their patrons give presents for favours received; others from fear of possible injuries. The sorcerers are not particular, and will gladly take such items as weapons, rags, implements, and especially game.

No one seems to know how the sorcerers acquire their mysterious powers, although some form of qualification is obviously necessary before the confidence of their fellow tribesmen can be won. They seem to surround themselves with an air of profound mystery. Some tribes say that the ghosts of ancestors visit a sleeping man and communicate to him the secrets of sorcery. Others believe that the gifts are bestowed by some supernatural being who inserts, by very material means, occult powers into the selected man's body.

According to some writers, Australian aborigines have no religion beyond the dread of ghosts and evil spirits. They certainly are supposed to have no worship, even of idols. This belief in ghosts only, does not apply to all tribes. The Kamilaroi tribe in the north-west of New South Wales, believe in Baiame, the maker of all things, and the rewarder of men according to their conduct. He it is who sees and
knows all, being kept well informed by a lower deity who presides at the initiation ceremonies. Another deity acts as a mediator. The latter has a wife who has charge over the instruction of women. The Spirit – that which speaks and thinks within men – does not die with the body, but ascends to Baiame, or it may wander about on earth, or enter a wild animal or white man. The belief that when an aboriginal dies he reincarnates as a white man is no doubt of recent growth. A native expressed this belief in the following words: ‘When black-fella tumble down, he jump up all same white-fella.’

It is probable that this idea originated at the time William Buckley, the escaped convict, was found by the aborigines. Whilst wandering about he saw some spears and other native implements on a grave and took them along with him. The natives who found him thought he was their late chief returned to earth as he was carrying the dead chief’s weapons. Many tribes believe that the spirits of the dead return to their old haunts, and that sooner or later they will be born again. The idea is more developed in some tribes, who believe the sexes alternate at each successive incarnation.

I spoke to David Unaipon on the question of the belief of the aborigines in God and the hereafter, and he assured me that they believe in God, but never mention His name as it is too sacred. They pray, but ‘they always pray for someone else. They ask that they may have good hunting, for instance, so as to supply their children with food. They also believe in the Son of God. The name they give him means ‘Rock,’ and when an individual dies they sometimes crucify the body, stretching it out because they think it pleases God. The next world,’ said David, ‘is conceived as being like the earth, only better, and all people go to the same place. They do not believe in two places, heaven and hell.’

I asked David whether he knew of any belief among the aborigines of the possibility of communicating with the dead. The belief, he assured me, was common that the spirits of the dead often returned to advise and guide the living. A belief closely resembling the ‘calling’ mentioned by Dr Samuel Johnson prevails among them. The spirits are not seen, but can sometimes be heard speaking, and on such occasions they come to warn of impending danger. David has himself twice experienced this phenomenon, his deceased father’s voice warning him and thus saving his life. On both occasions he was walking on a very dark night in a district little known to him, when the voice called upon him to halt. Obeying the command, he carefully examined his whereabouts, and found that had he moved a step further he would have fallen down a disused mine shaft.

‘What was the voice like?’ I enquired.

‘Exactly like my father’s.’

‘Was it clear and distinct?’

‘Perfectly. Just as when I had known him on earth.’

‘Are you confident it was to warn you?’

‘Yes. Remember, another step and I should have been a dead man. I had absolutely no knowledge of the existence of the pit-holes, and could not possibly have seen them without careful examination.’
Pain of losing places, people

On 16 April 2000, the Sunday Times (the Sunday edition of the Canberra Times newspaper) published an interview with Peter Read, present chair of the Committee of Management and Editorial Board of Aboriginal History. The interviewing journalist was Ian Warden, and the report of his interview ran under the above heading. The report is reprinted here.

Dr Peter Read coined the phrase ‘stolen generations’. He still thinks taking Aboriginal children away was wickedness, writes Ian Warden.

In 1980 the ANU’s Dr Peter Read, a scholarly but passionate historian, was mining the NSW state archives when he began to unearth great big nuggets of wickedness. He was excited and appalled.

‘I’d go and grab anyone I knew who was working there in the archives,’ he recalled last week ‘and I’d say ‘Jesus Christ! Come and look at this!’ and I’d show them this stuff [official records of how and why Aboriginals were taken away from their families and reserves and sometimes, in Dr Read’s words, ‘driven mad by the state’] and say ‘Can you believe it?’

Dr Read, usually a quietly industrious man who researches and writes books about the pain of dispossession and about what he calls Australia’s ‘lost places’ is having 15 minutes of public limelight (the 15 minutes Andy Warhol said we all will have) because the nation is debating the ‘stolen generations’ (Dr Read insists on the plural) and because it is a subject he knows a lot about.

He began reading the records in 1980 and then in 1981 wrote a book called The Stolen Generations. Never in any doubt that the taking away of the children was ‘wicked’ and ‘attempted genocide’ he was just what the doctor ordered for the 7.30 Report’s Kerry O’Brien a few days ago. The liberal O’Brien, like many other Australians, got himself into a state over the prime minister’s and Senator Herron’s flint-hearted and semantic calculation that there had never been such a thing as the stolen generation.

Dr Read is 55, and very tall and lives in Turner and walks to work at the ANU’s Centre for Cross-Cultural Research. His workplace sounds from its name as though it might churn out esoteric things but in fact his most recent book, Returning To Nothing — The Meaning of Lost Places, is a social history and an oral history about the sorts of losses of dear places and dear things almost all of us will suffer in some form or other. His book discusses, among other things, the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy and the pain of the people who lost their city, the feelings of the farmers of Namadgi and the high country who were forced to go away to make way for national parks, the feelings of the people of the suburb of Beecroft and the towns of Adaminaby, Yallourn and Macedon forced by governments (and in Macedon’s case by bushfire) out of the places they loved, one housewife’s emotions over leaving the family farm, a Canberra Croatian’s horror on going to Croatia in 1993 and finding that the civil war of the 1990s had demolished the family home of 600 years, and the grief of the daughter of the Weetangera postmistress when the family had to move from the post office in 1970.

The chapter about the ACT’s Namadgi National Park made this reporter squirm. In the 1970s and 1980s in my fashionable greenness I was one of those who thought that there should be a kind of cleansing in national parks of all farms and all traces of white activity. It was in this spirit that the authorities destroyed so many of the huts of Kosciuszko. Peter Read’s chapter ‘Namadgi: Sharing The
High Country' is the story of how farmer Granville Crawford, forced to leave, loved and cared about Namadgi every bit as sensitively as any of us who, in our Goretex ensembles, spent weekends walking and climbing there and insisting that pristine nature should be enabled to swarm back, and that in such a place cows were rats and cattle yards and fences were eyesores. Mr Crawford’s heart was broken, and he said so in interviews with Dr Read and in the rough but heartfelt poetry that he wrote about his feelings and that are reproduced in Returning To Nothing.

‘I’ve always been a historian who carries a tape recorder wherever I go’, Dr Read explains.

‘And I think [half-joking, half-serious now] if we all carried a tape recorder we’d all be much more passionate than we are because we just don’t know what’s going on in a community until you talk to its people. And when you do, how can you be anything but passionate when you hear their stories?’

‘I’m a real ‘place person’. I’ve always, from my earliest memories, been attracted by abandoned places. I still am. And when I received an ARC grant about seven years ago to investigate the meaning of places in Australia I realised I should be working on what touches me most closely. Lost places, abandoned places, places that no longer exist for some reason or other. That’s the place part of me working there and then the oral historian in me chimed in and said, “Well, you’d better go and talk to people who’ve lost their places. Don’t just go and look at the places and read the records because there’s more to the story than this.” And of course as soon as you hear the story of someone who’s been dispossessed you realise what a powerful story it is, and one which cuts across many of the preoccupations of our society.’

Dispossessions, he says, touch people irrespective of their gender, race, class, nationality and political allegiances.

‘We’ve got to realise that we’re not only entitled to, but we really do sink our roots into places and there’s no point in following political correctness and saying [to people, like farmers, we might disapprove of] you shouldn’t do that. It’s very destructive both to those individuals and to all of us as Australians seeking the ways in which we can all belong to each other. We mustn’t try to deny the right of people of whom we disapprove to love, to be attached to, and form long, very lasting affections for places. It just does happen.’

On the newsworthy matter, Dr Read says that we have to talk about stolen generations, plural, because the process began as long ago as 1814. He says that John Howard is quite wrong when he says that the taking away of children and older Aboriginals was well meant, ‘because the records themselves make it perfectly obvious that the intention was not the best interests of the child but the convenience of the state’.

What the state wanted, and quite openly said it wanted, was to see to it that worthless Aboriginal society was abolished by taking away young Aboriginals and making them live the sorts of white lives that would cure them of any affection for their own primitive, filthy culture. Taken away, brothers and sisters might see each other every two or three years but often not at all. The 1921 report of the Aborigines Welfare Board discussed the solving of the ‘Aboriginal problem’ by continuing to take Aboriginal children away from their parents to put them in the care of whites. What the Board meant by the ‘Aboriginal problem’, Dr Read says, was the resistance that Aboriginals showed to being told to live as white people
told them to. Another thing the state often sought by removing Aboriginals from one place to another was to rid respectable white towns of the amenity-spoiling presence of blacks living such uncivilised and perhaps not very law-abiding lives nearby and generally letting down the neighbourhood. In 1936 in NSW, Dr Read points out, you could be arrested on suspicion of being an Aboriginal and driven out of the town, and the onus was on the accused to prove that they weren't Aboriginal.

Dr Read studied the records and then went out to meet the people who were in the records and who were still alive.

'I saw those records as a historian and then I met those people about who those files were written. Putting those experiences together you realised not only that it was a wicked policy but that the results, the walking and talking people, were all affected to some degree.'

The emotional and physical impacts on Aboriginal people of the policy have, he says, been catastrophic. It's commonplace for the living victims to believe that they were taken away by the state because they weren't wanted by their parents and families and/or to have all of their self-esteem taken away by what the state did to them. Many have died long, long before they should have from illnesses caused or exacerbated by their ordeals.

There seem to be no men living who as boys were taken away and put in the Kinchela Home between 1939 and 1969. They all seem, Dr Read thinks, to have died 15 or 20 years before they should have.

'How can all this be anything but wickedness?' Dr Read wonders.

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Reviews

Fighting words, writing about race by Raymond Evans. xiv + 277 pp. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia [Brisbane], 1999 $29.95

Revisionist historians of Queensland have, since the 1960s, been spurned both for their reconstruction of Queensland history and for their writing into history of Aborigines. Raymond Evans is one such revisionist historian and has written the book Fighting words, writing about race both as a defence of revisionism and as a narrative about ‘race’ consciousness. Evans, as he explains, came from Wales with his parents during the post World War II migration scheme. He grew up in Brisbane suburbs and gradually grew to both learn about and empathise with Aboriginal rejections of Australian prejudices and indifference towards themselves and about their observable customs, beliefs and exotic manners. The book is not, as Jackie Huggins would have us believe, about ‘personal recollections’ of a search for an understanding of the Aboriginal past. In contrast to that supposition, the book is a didactically and pedagogically structured text. In this review I look at the implicit and explicit criteria used by Evans to expound a historiographic theory for reconstructing a narrative in which non-whites ought to feature.

Fighting words is implicitly a book on the sociology of non-whites in history. Raymond Evans uses criteria related to social history and sociology melded with ideas which may be described as structuralism and symbolic interactionism. Evans, in a book with four parts, aims to: convince the reader that a historical racial model has been neglected; that history has to have a moral overtone, that racial conflicts have the same causes and effects as gender and labour relations, with, finally, an epilogue that assumes that history has exposed Aborigines and others as victims and he has uncovered ‘white guilt’ which whites alone have to confront. The book is highly moralistic and uses ‘race relations’ as a method of reconstructing the symbolism of the past of ‘the underdog (with Aborigines, Chinese and non-whites)’ in largely Queensland history, and who have no biographies. The reader needs to be aware how Evans uses historical sociology as a way of convincing the reader of the authenticity of the point of view he wants them to share.

This book only fleetingly takes the reader into the hostilities created in Queensland’s intellectual and political life from the 1950s to the present. Such people have had to confront a deeply ruralistic State that held (and still holds) deep racial and political beliefs on how societies ought to distribute their wealth and property, practice law and order and control their racial composition for a future imagined ‘good society’. As such, Queensland intellectuals have been attacked, ridiculed and arrested for their attempts to revise the perceived truths nurtured by dominant Eurocentric views held in Queensland’s white society. Raymond Evans represents many of these writers who have con-
ducted a radical revisionist perspective to give rise to new politico-historical and socioeconomic truths. In spite of the difficulties such writers face, their work must not remain inscrutable, and their views and methodologies have to be evaluated and scrutinised otherwise misconceptions lead to the reconstruction of myth rather than reality.

Apart from clearly delineating his own revisionist position, Evans' explicit criteria in writing this book are to relate to his reader how his own political consciousness was raised and how the discipline of history could be used to reconstruct, and narrate, the past from the perspective of 'race relations'. This means that he has used his historiography to place into his historical narrative what he considers as 'the excluded' (i.e. Aborigines — or, as he also refers to them, Indigenous people — Chinese, Afghans, Japanese and others). History, to Evans, is something which exits, as he declares, 'We were never lulled into complete ignorance...[because]...we knew of Aborigines if not about them'. This history, Evans justifies, is in the archives, and in other peoples' minds, and can be liberated by research. Evans' work shows great similarity to Frank Stevens' writings, but more acutely the history of the 'underdog', or inclusionism. Although Frank Stevens was not a symbolic interactionist, he saw, in the study of the Aboriginal past, questions relating to industrial relations and international labour laws. Evans also sees similarities between 'race' and other social structuring in which conflict emerges.

Not until the creation of modern sociology (from Compte, Saint Simone and Durkheim) can we say that race and ethnicity were the subject of empirical and descriptive interest to scholars. American sociology too, underlined the importance of race, as Evans points out from his personal experiences as a student of American studies, in producing important challenges for modern society and in particular, a concern of modern governments. The Aboriginal past, unlike what Evans and his epigones would have us all believe, is neither the history of 'race' relations, nor is it the history of violence between whites, Chinese, Kanakas or Maccasans. Australian social history, like either Aboriginal or British history, is about 'coming to grips with the roots and unprecedented effects of capitalist commercialisation and industrialisation'.

Modern sociology provides the historian with a set of tools which highlight visionary and imaginative approaches. This is so, not only with old subjects such as 'nationalism' but also in modern emergent patterns, which have their origins in a social and historical context. The study of 'race' in history is one such subject. It is a relatively old subject, especially when we think of issues like slavery, prejudice against European Jews and more recently issues where modern states have segregated groups on the basis of their racial origin. In effect race has been of interest to historians but not as a subject having causal links to underlying forces such as capitalism, nationalism and revolution. Normally the subject of race has been something of an effect of capitalism, or earlier, as with Marx, the subject of the nature of the Roman slave state. But Evans, like his epigone Henry Reynolds, reminds the reader that Aborigines are historical victims. Society to Evans is a struggle that Aborigines have not been able to win due to their textual exclusion. But, in the true Hegelian sense 'social integration' is possible and history provides that stepping stone. Similarly, although implicitly, as western historians have both misrepresented and omitted Aborigines from the text, so the 'orientalist' critique applies in Australia as in Palestine.

In the essay 'The owl and the eagle', which forms a chapter in the book, we gain the clearest conceptualisation of Evans' implicit histories of 'exclusionism'. An unspeci-
fied ‘colonialism’ is the cause of ‘race’ conflict, he begins, ‘at any given zone’ but it is ‘white colonisation’. Metaphors rooted in American histories of F. Turner are used to depict a no-go zone, like Churchill’s homeric simile, the ‘Iron Curtain’, which for so long provided a western materialist view of Russia. Evans begins the essay by following the close of Queensland’s transportation in 1839. Opponents to the migration of Chinese and Pacific Islanders to tropical plantations reacted in print. Reconstructions of these events have been disingenuous and so much so that ‘one still finds a dominant historiography ... unmoved about the ongoing significance of the issue. Like Aborigines of ‘Humpydung’, or the first Asian indentured labourers ... race relations study often finds its impact muted by suppression, or else banished to the periphery — to its own ‘coolie land of Gisher’. The writer attacks Crowley. Crowley tried to convey an empathy, but in Evans’ view a latter reading revealed a lacking in contemporary strength when Evans wrote. Compare this, however, with the statement of Gordon Reid, writing seven years later, in his A nest of hornets (about frontier violence in central Queensland) that Black-White conflict on the frontier — that ‘bitter and bloody contest’ — was ‘the fundamental event in Australian history following British annexation’.

Evans claims that these two statements make a startling contrast. He continues his underlying belief that history is most important when it is denied: again, his resort to Hegelian assumptions that redemption is possible with the acceptance of his point of view. He may certainly have added that he was using an unfair comparison of a teleological nature to gain his reader’s acceptance.

Moreover, the history of the ‘underdog paradigm’ is more clearly seen when it comes in the most gruesome form. This is classical ‘symbolic interactionism’ because news is best portrayed in its most extreme, or reductionist form. This theoretical approach implies a social action theory, where society’s past exists independently of its individuals (i.e. in the archives) and action is needed to get it out because the current reconstructors of the past misrepresent the perspective of appropriateness. Furthermore, ‘dispersal and killing became the established method of dealing with the blacks in Queensland ... as it did to some extent elsewhere’, according to Reid. ‘The Killings [Reid claims]...continued long after there was a need for it; and the hatred of blacks remained long after the killing had stopped’. These claims are used all the time but are never catalogued in any comprehensive historical research. This interpretive reconstruction further confuses the reader to accept the vulgarised view of Black/White relations.

This chapter ends as it started, with implicit assumptions about historians and writers who misrepresent ‘race relation’ themes. For example, Evans claims that some writers downplay the ‘significance of race relations’ when they write about ‘the intensity and quantity of race riots; the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal, Melanesian and Japanese women; the rape fears of the white community concerning black and Asian men.’ But the notion of Aborigines as victims is only one way to portray ‘the underdogs’ — as people who can’t speak for themselves.

In the chapter entitled ‘The mogwi take mi-an-jin’, Evans delivers bad news in the form of parallelism between invasions of Aborigines’ living sites by the British and post World War II events. Evans complains that more should have been made of the find of a brass neck piece. He continues by emphasising a similarly important event to many in Queensland when a 1940 society celebrated the pastoralisation of the Darling Downs
with Aborigines brought in from Woodenbong (in New South Wales) to perform for the occasion. This is not so much an event of importance, but one of importance to Evans, who uses the celebration and peripheral 1940 knowledge to show his readers and the writers of the status quo how to write history properly. As a historiographic lesson, this chapter serves not only to highlight the deficient records of the time but it does so by indicating that Captain Fyans failed, in 1835, to report on a population size which was later assumed to be over 3000, in 1897. Incidentally, colonial censuses in Queensland of any kind did not begin until 1861. Aboriginal populations of Queensland were only estimated in 1881. This colonial count had its own problems of census-taking because the census was conducted from police returns, and neither the police nor State collectors had an idea about how to define an Aborigine, which I am sure would be a trite question to Evans. Historians can philosophise about how other colleagues and students should study topics selected by others, but historiography cannot select the questions historians ultimately ask themselves. Evans is rightly critical of both what and how historians do when they choose to reconstruct an event in the past. Nevertheless, Evans, like Reynolds and other writers he defends, has no monopoly on textual or epistemological correctness.

The selection of topics, the paucity of secondary and primary material on and by Aborigines, and information on their employment (by other than recognised writers with historical backgrounds such as Elkin, Gale and Berndt and Frank Hardy) are steeped in making assumptions based on myth and not verifiable sources. After the Queensland protection Act 1897, reporting becomes better. Most of problems Evans raises are the same as those of students who come to the issue of the Aboriginal or Chinese past in Australian history. They have massive preparation to do before designing their historical questions in tackling their chosen historic event. In spite of these difficulties, it was the British who surveyed the coastal regions and established a settlement at Moreton Bay, and thus began the incorporation of Aborigines into Australian history. However distasteful that might be to Queensland historians, it represents a starting point. In a similar way the British and European missionaries and settlers set up the relief and ration depots and ultimately the missions. The causes and effect of what happened, nevertheless, cannot simply be explained by 'race relations' alone, even though different races came face to face. Anthropologists argue that culture was more important than race, and this aspect has tended to dominate historical as well as modern political relations, otherwise we would know more about the paradoxes of Aboriginal identity.

Other historians argue that colonial government attitudes are far more important than race or violence, both of which sprang from causes already mentioned. The British set up the colonial administration, the penal colony and, following their disastrous experiences in Sydney Cove, Tasmania and Port Phillip, they might have been expected to have done a more humanitarian job of setting up better relations with local Aboriginal groups. That, given the dominance of the historical tide towards a rush for economic colonies and the surge towards late nineteenth century imperialism, it could not have been any different. Evans acknowledges that much of the Aboriginal past cannot and will not emerge, but that in itself is insufficient to promote historical ideologies such as adding to Aboriginal beliefs that their past is bound up in a history which totally lacks a linkage with the points I make above. This 'false consciousness', if you will, breeds forms of populist notions of 'oral evidence' being represented as authentic
historical sources. The epilogue crosses ground not already mentioned in the book but it rightly sees race relations as an alternative to ideas where the privileged are given dominance in reconstructing a past being replaced by ‘Aboriginal stewardship over Aboriginal history’, a truly unacceptable proposition, and one tried unsuccessfully by the Germans in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The coming of Europeans to Queensland has its origins in British history as a starting point and the effects of that cause involved Aborigines. Although Evans has already mentioned some anomalies in reconstructing the Aboriginal past, Aborigines have eluded many of the things most historians take for granted: Aborigines do not enter history easily other than as abstractions (i.e. as shadowy figures and without biographies, a mistake from which Evans suffers). Not until very recent times is there the barest information of a biographical nature that historians can use when reconstructing the Aboriginal past. Much of the information, as Evans points out, is scattered in government documents which Queensland historians do not catalogue. Few if any writings exist on topics chosen by Aborigines, and to impose good practices of today on previous historians is unfair. When data sources do exist it is rare for much of the sources to be aggregated material such as reports from Protectors and so on, and most events such as massacres are more myth than reality. Stories range far and wide for almost every Aborigine where every Aboriginal person has their own private massacre in their mind.

Even with some weaknesses covered, the book is produced for student purchase, with good bibliography displayed, footnoting and an index. These are all qualities that make the book a useful teaching text.

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Massacre myth, by Rod Moran, 262 pp with photographs. Access Press, Bassendean, Western Australia August 1999 $35

If a book could be judged by its cover, Massacre Myth would take the prize! The black cover with the words ‘massacre myth’ in yellow lettering outlined in red, suggesting dripping blood or melting figures, is a dramatic introduction to yet another version of the story about the killing of Aborigines near the Forrest River Mission in the East Kimberley in 1926.1 The cover and title suggest a horror story with more than a hint of fantasy, just as Moran would want his audience to read the event. Moran’s opening paragraph sets the tone of the book, drawing on language which conjures up images of hostile and wild Aborigines living in ‘Australia’s wild far north-west’. In it he sets the scene to discredit Reverend Ernest Gribble of Forrest River Mission, who publicly drew attention to the killings, and challenges the findings of Magistrate George T. Wood who,

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1. Others who have written about this event include Randolph Stow, To the Islands, Penguin, 1958 and Neville Green, The Forrest River Massacres, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995. There have also been a number of articles on the topic in newspapers and magazines.
in 1927, undertook the Royal Commission of Inquiry into alleged Killing and Burning of Bodies of Aborigines in East Kimberley and into Police Methods when Effecting Arrests. Moran states that his interest in the topic developed after he met James St Jack, one of the police constables implicated in the killing, and later other members of the St Jack family who gave him access to James St Jack’s memoirs and other material relating to the event. Massacre myth is clearly an attempt to redeem the policemen implicated in the killings.

The killing of groups of Aboriginal people which is now referred to as the ‘Forrest River Massacre’ followed the spearing of Frederick William Hay of Nulla Nulla cattle station in May 1926. The story is really a dreadful tale of blatant killing and burning of Aboriginal people within living memory. It is definitely not a fantasy, but a series of events which were subject of the Royal Commission which found

That in June, 1926, four aborigines met their death and their bodies were burned near Gotegotemerrie; and that three aborigines met their death and their bodies were burned at Mowerie; that the aborigines were at the time in the custody of Police Constables Regan and St Jack, assisted by Special Constables Patrick Bernard O’Leary and Richard John Jolly, accompanied by civilians Leopold Overheu and Daniel Murnane and trackers; that the aborigines met their death at the hands of one or more of those members of the police party, but there [was] not sufficient evidence before the Commission to establish definitely the actual perpetrator or perpetrators of the murders.

That four aborigines met their death and were burned near a place called Dala about the end of June, 1926, while in the custody of Constables Regan and St Jack, and that the only persons responsible for those deaths were Constables Regan and St Jack.²

The Royal Commission further found that Tommy, an aboriginal worker with Leopold Rupert Overheu at Nulla Nulla station, and who was a prime witness, was last seen in the company of Overheu and that the evidence before the Commission disclosed no proof that Tommy was killed by Overheu as it was alleged. Mr Wood, who conducted the Royal Commission, commented briefly on the practice of arming and supervision of armed native trackers.

What is of concern is not just Moran’s role as apologist for the perpetrators of the killings, nor the way he discredits Reverend Ernest Gribble, the Aborigines of the Forrest River Mission and others who drew attention to the killings. It is Moran’s role in perpetuating the myth that the killings did not occur, and the way in which he mounts his dubious argument to support this position. Moran’s argument slips from the findings of the Royal Commission that at least eleven people met their deaths while in the custody of the police in at least three locations near Forrest River Mission, to the denial of the allegation that ‘on some accounts, up to 300 people were systematically massacred’. He concludes:

The case has so many anomalies in it that, on the balance of probabilities when the evidence is thoroughly examined, the so-called Forrest River massacres did not exist.³

² Report of Royal Commission of Inquiry into alleged Killing and Burning of Bodies of Aborigines in East Kimberley, and into Police Methods when Effecting Arrests, p xv.
³ Report of Royal Commission, p xxxii.
The existence of anomalies in the available evidence alone cannot lead to a denial that the events did occur, or even that they could have occurred.

*Massacre myth* raises a number of significant historiographical questions. Whose story does it tell? For what purpose? Which version of the event or events are we to believe? What is the truth?

In preparing this review I revisited Green's Forrest River Massacre and the Report of the Royal Commission in order to find some orientation through the jumble of 'facts'. I also reviewed my own notes on references to killings of Aborigines and non-Aborigines from the initial contact period in the East Kimberley and environs (including the areas across the border with the Northern Territory, formerly South Australia) from the mid-1880s and around Roebourne from the mid-1860s. This was a sobering exercise. What I observed was a pattern of conflict entrenched in the encroachment of Europeans into these regions with their stock. The records from a variety of sources, including primary documents from the Colonial Secretary's Office, Aborigines Department files and Police Department files, some of the earliest documentary evidence from these areas, show clearly that Europeans and their stock entered Aboriginal territory, appropriated the waterholes, desecrated the land and important places. Aboriginal people in their turn at first actively resisted and then adapted to the presence of Europeans. There is ample evidence that Aboriginal people continued to hunt and gather on their lands and soon included the cattle as a food source. It is encroachment on particular territory, cattle killing and conflicts over women that precipitated the confrontations and killings.

The documentary sources record the manner in which conflicts occurred when the police were involved in pursuing so called 'native offenders' who attacked and killed stock or people in what were described as 'depredations'. The harshest reprisals against Aborigines followed the killing of a European. When this happened the police constables and their native assistants were joined by 'special constables' who were sworn in for the task of 'hunting down' and 'dispersing' the Aborigines. 'Special constables', who were engaged when the police needed additional assistance, had the authority to arrest and carry out police duties and, according to Marchant, were no more than 'retaliatory gangs of settlers operating with the dubious sanctions of the law'. Native assistants engaged in this work were usually armed. This is precisely what happened after the spearing of William Elay at Nulla Nulla.

In 1886 or 1887, following the spearing of John Durack in the Ord River area, about 120 Aborigines were alleged to have been rounded up and a large number of men, women and children killed. The Commissioner of Police, after another European spearing in the region in 1888, instructed the Police 'to disperse the collections of natives, many of whom are quite innocent of the murder if not the police may become the aggressors, and in the event of bloodshed, ugly questions may arise'. The historical record indicates that police and their native assistants regularly used firearms against Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley, contrary to official police instructions. In December 1922, A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Perth, in a letter to the

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5. 18 August 1888, Commissioner of Police to Hon. Colonial Secretary, Acc 527, 2323/1888, Public Records Office of Western Australia.
Hon. Minister for the North-West, referred to the Police doing their duty 'according to the time-honoured methods instilled into the Force from the earliest days of the State's history', that is, using armed native assistants to round up Aborigines in their camps. Neville registered his strong disapproval of these methods which he considered would 'only antagonise These uncivilised people, force them to regard us as their enemies, and postpone our chance of making them law abiding, useful people for many years to come'.

As late as 1935, even after the Wood Royal Commission of 1927, police in the East Kimberley were still using firearms to 'quieten native camps' when in pursuit of Aborigines wanted for questioning.

The killing of Aborigines in the events following the spearing of William Hay at Nulla Nulla must be seen within the context of the culture of violence in which the police and settlers lived in the 'frontier-land' of the East Kimberley. By 1926, the 40-year history of clashes between Aborigines and police would have entered into the folklore of the region and this is what the young police constables St Jack and Regan would have imbibed as part of the orientation to their work. The official position of the Police Department is documented in the evidence given by the Commissioner of Police to the Royal Commission on the Police methods in dealing with Aborigines, particularly in tracking and arresting suspected offenders.

Another aspect of the culture of violence is the secrecy or silence associated with the activity. While the police journals record some of the more blatant examples of apparently indiscriminate shooting of Aborigines, there are hints that that is not the whole picture. The silences in the texts need to be acknowledged and examined. Commenting on the evidence of Constables St Jack and Regan, Commissioner Wood commented:

"[It] is not only interested evidence, but contains discrepancies that could not possibly have crept in had the journals they kept been truthful records of their movements. The question now arises — Could any reasonable man come to any conclusion other than that the murders of the natives and the burning of the bodies were the work of members of the police party?"

The answer is quite clearly stated in the findings of the Royal Commission and denied by Moran.

Massacre myth is a poorly written yet disturbing book which should shake us out of our complacency as historians because it draws attention to the importance of veracity and transparency in the exercise of our discipline — Moran's language and approach raise many questions for me about his motives for writing the book, and the truthfulness of his telling. Under the cover of investigative journalism Moran apparently sets out to deny a series of events — the killing and burning of Aboriginal people — which were acknowledged to have occurred. He also sets out to discredit the evidence of Aboriginal people and their supporters which, in the findings of the Royal Commission, was given more weight than the evidence of the policemen implicated in the killings.

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6. 15 December 1922, A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Perth to The Hon. Minister for the North-West, Acc 653, 655/1922, Public Records Office of Western Australia.
This book reminds us yet again of the power of the written word and our responsibility in its use which Inga Clendinnen elegantly encapsulated in her work on the Holocaust narratives:

Historians take the large liberty of speaking for the dead, but we take this liberty under the rule of the discipline, and the rule is strict. There are many who would use the images of the Holocaust for their own purposes, some sinister, some trivial, all deforming. If the people of the past are to be given a life beyond their own, beyond the vagaries of fashion and of political exploitation — if these particular dead are not to be surrendered to those terrifying children the neo-Nazis, strutting in their stylish black, living in a fantastical history of their own invention — historians must receive and represent the actualities of past experience in accordance with our rule, with patience, scepticism and curiosity, and with whatever art we can muster — provided always that the art remains subject to our rule.

The enterprise is not impossible, merely quixotic. Historians are the foot soldiers in the slow business of understanding our species better, and thereby extending the role of reason and humanity in human affairs. We must do more than register guilt, or grief, or anger, or disgust, because neither reverence for those who suffer nor revulsion from those who inflict the suffering will help us overcome its power to paralyse, and to see it clearly.8

If anyone should want to read Massacre Myth, please remember to contextualise it — the events in their context and the book in its context.

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Djabugay country: an Aboriginal history of tropical North Queensland by Timothy Bottoms. xxii + 138 pp. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards N.S.W. 1999 $24.95

Djabugay country is a brief yet thorough account of Aboriginal history in a region best known as an internationally desirable tourism destination, the Cairns–Atherton–Port Douglas triangle. Timothy Bottoms follows the Stanner and Reynolds tradition in viewing this history from the ‘other side of the frontier’, i.e. the Djabugay rather than the White Australian perspective. The social, historical and political relevance of this book is supported by a foreword by Djabugay elders and a preface by Noel Pearson, as well as an afterword by Henry Reynolds.

The history is presented in four chapters relating to significant eras in the transition from Djabugay homeland through dispossession and suppression to a revived sense of identity and pride and burgeoning self-determination. The first chapter, ‘Journeys of the Gurra-Gurra (Ancestors)’, illustrates the close link between a people, a country, spiritual life and social rules by reference to Djabugay ‘stories’ and their associated landmarks. The second chapter, ‘From Bama Bulmba to far north Queensland (1873–1912)’, describes the European intrusion and the gradual realisation that white people were ‘here to stay’. We get an impression of how every step of European progress in settlement, transport — particularly the Cairns–Kuranda railway — and

land cultivation meant, to the Djabuganydji, destruction of homeland, food supplies and spiritual links. The third chapter, ‘Mission Days (1913–1962)’, paints a stark picture of dormitory life on Monamona mission, the loss of language and culture, and other far-reaching effects of the infamous ‘Aboriginals Protection Act’ in the interest of assimilation. However, the chapter also conveys a sense of community and achievement among the mission population, which is shattered when the mission is closed, leaving the Djabuganydji homeless on their own land. The last chapter, ‘This side of the railway tracks (1963–1997)’, relates the now largely successful fight to regain the right to reside on their land, to own their land, and to have safe and sanitary housing, in the face of apathetic or obstructive officialdom. The fight is supported by a growing new sense of community and attempts to revive the Djabugay language and culture, culminating in the acclaimed Tjapukai Dance Theatre.

This book is very thoroughly researched and copious quotes from newspapers, government records and oral history as well as photographs and maps piece together a documentary style history. Bottoms draws particular attention to the linguistic dispossession (p 18) of the Djabuganydji and uses both English and Djabugay place names. A glossary of relevant Djabugay words is provided, with a simple and accurate guide to their pronunciation.

Considering this meticulous approach it is puzzling that no more than one short paragraph (p 70) deals with a group of people who did not live on Monamona mission but ‘were living close to a traditional lifestyle, able to maintain the Stories and language’. This was to be the saviour, in many ways, of traditional knowledge of the Djabugay. These people were descendants of the survivors of a massacre (p 39), but we learn nothing about their apparently crucial role as guardians of Djabugay culture. This is particularly surprising as Gilpin Banning, the head of this group, was the main source of information for a grammar of the Djabugay language researched in the late 1970s. A manuscript of this grammar was used by Michael Quinn (referred to on p 93) for his Djabugay language lessons, but Bottoms does not mention this. Nevertheless, as an account of what might be termed ‘mainstream Djabugay’, this book is an important addition to our understanding of Aboriginal history.

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References


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Whilst engagement in sport is rightly known as a great leveller, in this book review I choose to focus on education as being an even more effective leveller indeed. But of course education is more than this. It also allows people to deal critically and creatively with reality and to discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. When the uneducated participate in learning programs, they come to a new awareness of self, have a new sense of dignity and are stirred by new hope.

The world famous educationalist Paulo Freire of Brazil contends that the illiterate are marginalised from the dominant society and are 'submerged in a culture of silence of the dispossessed'. When they are educated they come to a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves. Often they take the initiative to change the society that denied them participation.

Paulo Freire further adds that lethargy and ignorance are the products of economic, social and political domination and of paternalism of which the dispossessed are victims. It became clear to him that the whole educational system was one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence. Clearly the experience of Aborigines is on a par with that of the dispossessed of whom Paulo Freire writes:

Cultural action through relevant learning programs and affirmative action became necessities if Aborigines were to cast off the shackles of the 'culture of silence' and to open the way to a new future. What forces shaped the future of Aboriginal education? The answer lies in the history of Aboriginal and white contact over the last two hundred years.

Although increasingly forced to adapt to Anglo-Celtic values, if they were to survive, Aborigines had a depressingly inadequate education, marked by inequality of opportunity and participation. The developmental patterns of Aboriginal education are characterised by four broad periods of government policies. These periods are identified successively as protection, segregation, assimilation and integration eras.

Throughout the periods of protection, segregation and assimilation very little effort was expended in the provision of adequate schooling for Aborigines and it was not until the late 1960s that concerted attempts were made to redress the many decades of neglect and apathy. At this time education research uncovered glaring problems, such as under-representation of Aboriginal children in secondary schools and over-representation in slow learner classes; non-attendance at school; later starting of schooling and earlier exit than their white counterparts; lack of knowledge and skills to compete with other Australians, and poorer prospects of employment. Aboriginal adults had little contact with schools, with over half the population aged forty-five or more having no education at all.

By 1968, most Aboriginal children in Australia were being educated at least to primary level in State schools staffed by qualified teachers with adequate educational facilities. In 1973, a national conference, 'Teacher education in the Aboriginal context', was held. It was the first time a significant number of Aborigines took the opportunity to present their views and proposals. This event was the catalyst to a new era in Aboriginal education. Teacher education courses in various institutions gave priority to Abo-
original education and white trainee teachers were educated about Aborigines and encouraged to facilitate change. Projects to train Aborigines as teachers and teacher aides were set up. 'By the mid 1970s, Aboriginal education was the fastest growing and most innovatory area in the whole field of education in Australia'.

In the early 1970s, The National Aboriginal Education Committee and the State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups were very influential in establishing programs. These programs were implemented by support and funding from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Schools Commission and Commonwealth Education. Some of these programs were enclave support systems, pre-tertiary and bridging courses.

In her introductory chapter, Mary Ann Bin-Sallik aptly identifies the salient features of the thirteen stories of Aboriginal women and in her own words, 'though these women come from different backgrounds and experiences, and each chapter is unique to its author, there are many common threads running through their stories'.

Mary Ann Bin-Sallik invited some 60 high-profile Aboriginal woman to contribute to this book. It is amazing that there were so many highly qualified women when one considers how recently improved educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians began to be introduced.

These women — with their stories of their individual journeys to reach their educational goals — took full advantage of the opportunities offered through special entry to university, enclave support programs and pre-tertiary and bridging courses which came into effect through the strenuous efforts of the National Aboriginal Education Committee and the State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups in the early 1970s.

Their stories tell of their personal sacrifices, aspirations, and triumphs, assisted by the support of family and friends with an abundance of humour to help them along the way. These women are role models for the next generation of Aboriginal students who in turn will find the way made easier by these impressive trail-blazers.

This book is recommended as a motivational resource for schools, colleges and universities especially where Aboriginal students are enrolled.

Pearl Duncan


This book demonstrates aspects of the important relationship between the people of Wreck Bay, new South Wales, and their environment: this is illustrated delightfully by the story of Uncle Boekel and his strategy for removing bees from their hives, told on page 14. This theme is pursued further throughout the work through knowledge of plants.

The first 16 pages set the context for the botanical information to follow:

How to use the book (1 p)

Busy life at Wreck Bay. (6 pp)

People demonstrate their knowledge of the environment especially relating to fishing. Later in the book, they detail some connections between resources, for example 'When
those [coastal bearded heath] berries come out, then it is time for the bream to come’ (p 41).

Childhood memories. (4 pp)
These snippets give a picture of the continuing but changing life conditions for people at Wreck Bay, including Uncle Boekel.

Map
A full-page regional map featuring the Booderee National Park might have included an insert showing the location of the region within Australia for the benefit of outsiders.

Primarily, this is an ethnobotanical resource book listing 15 year-round resources followed by seven for spring, six for summer, two for autumn and three for winter. A full page is given to each resource, featuring a primary colour photograph of the plant, common name, botanical name, brief notes on habitat and appearance as well as uses (food, medicine, dye, fibre, tool) listed under symbols (including toxic warnings). Another smaller photo shows a feature of the plant or its use. All photos are good quality and show the subject clearly. I especially like the snake whistles page and others where photos include a human presence.

Margin notes quoting indigenous local knowledge illustrate the people’s enjoyment and commitment to their resources; and school children’s black and white line drawings scattered throughout add vigour beyond a regular botanical text. For further reading six books are listed in the areas of botany and ethnobotany in southeastern Australia and about the Wreck Bay community.

Finally, the index to plants lists plants by both common and botanical names to aid those without specific botanical knowledge.

Without a doubt this book is a valuable resource for students and the general community who would like to add to their regional knowledge of indigenous culture.

Daphne Nash
Canberra


A group of Aboriginal men (and a boy) wrapped in substantial cloaks holding superbly crafted weapons illustrate the front cover of _Continent of hunter-gatherers_. The scene is not the conventional central Australian or Arnhem Land representation of Aboriginality; it emphasises solidarity, permanence, and material wealth, and stands for the view of Aboriginal Australia which is central to Lourandos’s work. On second glance, however, the picture is a photograph taken in the late 1850s; some of the men are wrapped in blankets, not possum skin, the edges are blurred and the background is ill defined, women are elsewhere and pieces of European clothing are visible at the cloak edges. The image is itself a construction of a world which we are initially to accept as present and unproblematic.
Continent of hunter-gatherers is both a conservative work and a self-styled radical one. It is radical in its desire to present ‘new perspectives’ and align itself with a ‘revisionist anthropology and archaeology of Australian Aborigines’ (p 1). It is conservative in its adherence to the idea of a singular Australian prehistory in the format of a large continent survey.

The work emphasises the complexity of hunter-gatherer social relations and their capacity to generate and regulate economic production. This is contrasted with traditional approaches which, Lourandos argues, emphasised ecological dependency, stability and egalitarian social organisation. It also varies from more conventional histories in its concentration on what it sees as the nature of hunter-gatherer societies and their evolutionary development; it is therefore much more programmatic than comparable continental surveys.

Beginning with a general overview of ‘hunter-gatherer variation in time and space’, including a chapter on Australian Aborigines, Lourandos argues strongly for the capacity of hunter-gatherer societies to achieve high levels of social and economic complexity through the uncoupling of technological capacity, population growth and environmental materiality from the prime movers of social change. In the early 1980s these arguments in concert with Thomas’s (1981) critique caused a major reassessment of the range of interpretative possibilities used in Australian archaeology. The ‘intensification debate’ reflected an interest in the reconstruction of social relations from a record which had until then, as the argument goes, tended to biogeographic or culture-historical explanations. Some twenty years later we can see that this ‘new’ approach is bedevilled by a problem which is often present in historical reconstructions of Aboriginality and the past, namely the reliance on the idea and construction of a ‘traditional’ or ‘pre-contact’ Aboriginal system. Unlike other disciplines which can argue the nature of this world in and out of existence via the close reading of the colonial texts, Australian archaeology seems unable to avoid the problem of past forms and their reflection of ‘Aboriginality’ as an essential historical and contemporary category.

Although acknowledging that anthropological and ethnographic accounts may be relatively late observations of societies already substantially changed by colonisation, Lourandos appears to assume that these observations, in all their varying contexts, are viewing the same thing: a unitary and pristine system. The use of contemporary anthropology for this purpose is necessarily selective but not unproblematic. For instance, while acknowledging the complexity of the role of women in contemporary Aboriginal society, Lourandos presents them as largely absent items of labour, exchange and possession, units in the games which ‘big men’ (p 35) play in their quest to control the processes of social production and reproduction. Even if more contemporary accounts are charting a recent change in the role of women in Aboriginal society, Lourandos’s model of gender relations requires greater justification as a feature of generalised Aboriginality than is offered in the work. The support of the model is dependent on the possibility of polygamous marriages among the Tiwi and relatively recent observations in Arnhem Land. The possibility of polygamy in a kinship system does not equal the actuality in practice, and as Keen’s (1982) work makes clear, is dependent on features of the clan structure and kinship which vary even between the Yolngu and their close neighbours the Gidjingali.
At a more theoretical level the problem with an account of prehistory which starts with an ethnographic world view is the curious irony that the archaeology is articulated with this ethnographic picture by dissolving its temporality into the timelessness of the ethnography. This suits the explicitly evolutionary and/or progressivist framework of much archaeological writing in Australia. As closure is approached the archaeology becomes the teleological development of the ethnographic record and the ethnography becomes a grab bag of analogies for the archaeology. The approach is self-fulfilling in that the further away we move from the perceived ‘richness’ of the ethnography, the less can be explained in its terms, demonstrating in an elegant inverse its significance as an end point. At the other end of this temporal extension Australian archaeology has filled the (Pleistocene) gaps by contrasting ‘nature’ as the original state with ‘culture’ (in the ethnography) as the end stage not ‘culture’ at various points along trajectories of transformational sequences as suggested by Williamson (1998: 147). An alternative approach would be to pull the relationship between both records apart, highlight the disjunctions, and hopefully open the possibility of alternatives which problematise progressivist narratives and static tableaus equally.

The main body of *Continent of hunter-gatherers* is a series of four extended regional studies (tropical north, arid and semi-arid, temperate southern Australia and Tasmania). Each is subdivided in turn into Pleistocene and Holocene sequences. On either side of these sections are chapters devoted to original settlement and chronology and artefacts and assemblages. Both these chapters, included to fit the conventions of the genre, are fairly conservative summaries of the record — Lourandos favours the radiocarbon chronology in the former and a typological approach in the latter.

What makes *Continent of hunter-gatherers* distinctive in its field is the attempt to designate the nature of Australian hunter-gatherer prehistory in terms of a series of socially determined ‘prime-movers’. One of the most disappointing aspects of the work is that the exact nature of these elements is not made clear. Terms like ‘socio-cultural’ or simply ‘cultural responses/changes/factors’ (p. 152) may be informative at a level of general theory but are less so for particular instances in the archaeological record. This is especially evident when arguments, as in this case, are made for a causal hierarchy between the primary elements of society/culture and the secondary economic, technological and demographic factors. Reminiscent of the systems theory popular in the archaeology of the 1970s, where black box units bearing labels like ‘technology’, ‘economy’ and ‘ideology’ were connected via cybernetic feedback loops, this approach can disguise weak or seemingly arbitrary sets of explanatory conjunctions behind the language of ‘systems’ relations. It is also disappointing that the opportunity is not taken to engage the persistent criticism that socially orientated approaches do not engage with the complexity of the archaeological record which substantially underdetermines the model (see Williamson 1998) nor with more contemporary discussions about knowledge systems and the disciplinary practices which support them.

The application of a single model across the totality of a continental archaeology is not an insignificant intellectual achievement and emphasises the fact that archaeology is also as much about interpretation as excavation. The result in *Continent of hunter-gatherers* is, unfortunately, an archaeology as exasperatingly totalising as the old-fashioned environmentalism and culture-history to which Lourandos’ approach is strongly responding. The programmatic nature of the work and the need to engage actively with
Lourandos’s arguments, combined with its relatively limited exposition of the underlying evidence, make the work’s appeal to a wider readership problematic.

In the final analysis we are left with the impression that the originality and achievement of Lourandos’ arguments are either not well served by the format of a continental archaeology with its attendant constraints on detail and argument, or too well served by these limitations.

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References


‘That’s my country belonging to me’: Aboriginal land tenure and dispossession in nineteenth century western Victoria, by Ian D. Clark. xi +200 pp. paperback. Heritage Matters, Beaconsfield, Victoria, 1998 $35

This is a timely publication for it deals in great detail with the rich primary source material and the numerous secondary sources available regarding clan and tribal boundaries in western Victoria at a time when all Victorian Koori communities are seeking such information as they prepare native title claims or seek regional agreements.

That’s my country belonging to me is in fact Clark’s previously unpublished PhD thesis, which was completed in 1992. He describes his work as a ‘historical geography of dispossession’, in which his aim was ‘to reconstruct Aboriginal tenure and dispossession ... [in] western Victoria’. Not since archaeologist Harry Lourandos’s pioneering work along similar lines in the 1970s has there been academic research so strongly focused on identifying the western Victorian clans and establishing their spatial distribution. My study of frontier relations in the Western District which was undertaken contemporaneously with that of Clark’s necessitated investigation of clan composition, numbers and location, and the results are tabulated in A ‘distant field of murder’: Western District frontiers 1834–1848, Appendix 1. My interest, however, was more in obtaining this information as an aid to understanding the nature of frontier contact in the district. Clark made it a main focus of his work, the large number of maps he includes demonstrating how much greater is his knowledge of Aboriginal boundaries than that of any-
one who has gone before him. Clark states that while his work ‘may be seen as a companion to Lourandos’s work’, the scope of his study is ‘much wider’ and ‘exhibits important differences of opinion’. Both heavily depend on the journals and notebooks of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson, who was ordered by Charles Joseph La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, to obtain information on the ‘number, location and disposition’ of the Western District Aborigines. On his leisurely journey across the district between March and August 1841, Robinson collected names of what he called tribes and sections, their size, names of members, age and gender composition, and as much detail as possible of the extent of territory. His information varies in quality and consistency, making it in many cases very difficult to be definite about Aboriginal spatial boundaries and the relationship between groups.

What distinguishes Clark’s work from that of any other researcher working on the human history of western Victoria is his extensive use of the findings of linguists regarding the Indigenous languages and dialects of the region as an aid to establishing tribal and clan boundaries. In this regard the result of his work has been far-reaching and significant, forcing a rewriting of history, changing the very names by which District residents, Koori and non-Koori alike, refer to Western District tribes. The Gunditjmara have become the Dhauwurd wurrung; the Jarcourt, the Djargurd wurrung; the Chaap wurrrong, the Djab wurrung; the Coligan, the Gulidjan.

The first half of Clark’s book is concerned with the reconstruction of western Victorian clan organisation. He ‘uncovers’ (his word) 249 clans (as opposed to Lourandos’s 170) and all but ten of these he has been able to place within the region’s ten language groups. As well he critiques Lourandos’s earlier reconstruction. He draws heavily on the notes of the Chief Protector yet George Augustus Robinson’s original list of clans submitted to La Trobe in 1842 — and collated from the same notes used by Lourandos and later Clark — has 151 sections only and this includes some repetition.

In the second half his aim was ‘to analyse the dispossession of the Aboriginal clans ... in the 1830s and 1840s by showing how clan organisation was affected by dispossession and consider how “traditional” spatial organisation shaped Aboriginal experiences of dispossession’. Where possible he profiles the experiences of particular clans but admits that it is beyond the scope of his study to reconstruct the geographies of dispossession in the region at the level of clan, tribe or ‘nation’. What he claims is that he has achieved ‘a quantification or a foundation on which historiography can proceed to construct dispossession at a clan, tribe or “national” scale’. He admits that knowledge of some clans and tribes is particularly rich, but of others it is scant. Using clans about which there is the most evidence, he shows how dispossession proceeded in these cases and the extent to which Aboriginal local organisation affected and shaped frontier relations.

He examines the evidence regarding such aspects as ‘Resistance to forced removal and relocation’, ‘Wanting to die in one’s own country’, ‘Ensuring a continuous association with land’, ‘The impact of “foreign” Aborigines in western Victoria’, and how Aborigines saw the invader — as ‘Ngammadjidj or foreign invader?’ Such research is particularly difficult given the scattered and fragmentary evidence. Two examples demonstrate how one can be led astray even after many years of careful research. In the section on the ‘Impact of “foreign” Aborigines in western Victoria’ Clark discusses the case of Sydney Bob who was assaulted, had his kidney fat removed and was left to die by
Aboriginal attackers at Woodford. Clark locates Woodford as near Warrnambool and states that the killing of Sydney Bob was to avenge the killing of one of the Woodford Aborigines by Sydney Bob. Police files, however, make it clear that the murder occurred on Woodford Station, much further west — nearest town Dartmoor. The clansmen involved were definitely not from a Warrnambool clan. Of more significance is the story of Bradbury. According to Clark, Bradbury was an Aborigine from Sydney who deserted his white employers and chose to live with local clans, leading them in their attacks on white people (Foster Fyans is given as the source). This is a case where the truth is stranger than fiction. I know of only one incident in which there is any mention of him being involved in an incident with Aborigines. In November 1842 the Portland Mercury described how a party travelling from Portland towards Port Fairy came across a group of Aborigines headed by Cold Morning. They disappeared after a shot was fired by Bradbury. In this incident Bradbury was not leading the Aborigines: he fired at the Aborigines. In fact no such incident occurred. A member of the group travelling to Port Fairy, Cecil Pybus Cooke, wrote to the newspaper to correct what had been written. No Aborigines had been seen by the party. After crossing the Fitzroy River, Bradbury had commenced loading his pistol which unfortunately had gone off, shattering his hand. Cooke suggested that Bradbury had made up the story of an Aboriginal attack 'through fear of his master's displeasure'. The actual relationship between Bradbury and local Aborigines was far more in keeping with the strong Aboriginal antagonism towards those outside the clan, particularly those from a distance, which has been remarked on by many observers of Aboriginal behaviour. Local Aborigines murdered him in 1845, taking no pains to conceal the name of his murderer.

That's my country belonging to me: Aboriginal land tenure and dispossession in nineteenth century western Victoria is a significant study which should be read by all for whom it is important to know about Aboriginal boundaries in western Victoria.

Jan Critchett
Deakin University


The portrait on the front cover of Is That You, Ruthie? reveals a vitality within Ruth Hegarty which sets her story apart from similar memoirs. Winner of the 1998 David Unaipon Award for unpublished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, Is That You, Ruthie? is both an engaging narrative and a valuable social history of Aboriginal children raised on missions last century.

Is that You, Ruthie? is the story of Ruth Hegarty's life as a 'dormitory girl' on Queensland's Cherbourg mission. In 1930 Ruth's grandparents brought their family voluntarily to Cherbourg from Mitchell in southwest Queensland. Once on the mission, however, the family was split, the children sent to the dormitories and the parents
remaining in the mission camp. ‘Like a rag our family was torn into pieces’, Ruth’s mother later told her. As a baby, Ruth stayed with her mother, but once she reached school age they were separated, and Ruth grew up a Cherbourg ‘dormitory girl’ until 1951.

It is Ruth Hegarty’s warmth and positive outlook which define her story. She certainly does not shy away from the horrors of mission life, describing in detail the forced separation from her mother, the discipline, the humiliating treatment of the disabled, the physical violence and the sexual abuse. Yet she chooses not to lay blame:

We were fed, clothed, had a roof over our heads, but was that enough? Could this system ever take the place of loving, caring parents? It was a terrible thing to be torn away from the arms of a young mother, who knew that her hope of ever having anything to do with her child again was shattered at that moment. She had to pretend in her heart that this was best for her child, even while she carried around a heavy load of guilt.

Hegarty also draws out the positive memories of her childhood, such as outings, concerts, games, and friendships:

I suppose with the strict discipline that was always in place ... any sort of fun or mischief helped us to forget it for a time.

Ruth Hegarty dedicated Is that you, Ruthie? to the other Cherbourg ‘dormitory girls’, acknowledging that her story draws on their memories as well as her own. It remains, however, a personal memoir and not a history of Cherbourg mission. Where necessary, Hegarty relies on historian Thom Blake to provide historical detail. Her book adds to Aboriginal social history, giving valuable insights into the difficult paths many of the ‘dormitory girls’ were to take outside the institution, as well as the experiences which led many of these women to become community leaders. She also helps to elucidate her peers’ dependence on the ‘authorities’:

I see myself as a child who was held back by all the rules and restrictions ... Even after the mistakes we were glad to go back to the dormitory, it became a haven of protection for us. It was hard to break away from a place that kept us dependent on it, virtual prisoners.

Hegarty’s story differs from the typical memoir in that she does not tell her entire life story. Rather, she concentrates her sharp memories only on her time at Cherbourg mission and her experiences as a domestic servant. Hegarty satisfies the reader’s curiosity about her life after Cherbourg by weaving into her story insights about the impact of her childhood on later life. Her focused and richly detailed narrative complements a number of published life histories of her contemporaries, such as Rita Huggins’ Auntie Rita and Evelyn Crawford’s Over my tracks.

At just 141 pages this is a short book, written in a clear and unaffected style which would appeal to teenagers and adults alike. Indeed, Is That You, Ruthie? would make a valuable resource for students of Indigenous studies, providing teachers with an engaging tool for informing teenagers of one of the bleaker aspects of recent Australian history.

Melissa Lucashenko’s Hard Yards is a novel which might also appeal to some teenage readers. By comparison with Ruth Hegarty’s deeply personal and touching story, however, Hard Yards adds little to our understanding of contemporary Indigenous culture. Lucashenko won the 1998 Dobie Award for her first novel, Steam Pigs. Her second
novel, *Hard Yards*, is the story of Roo Glover, a street kid in Brisbane who mixes sporting success with extreme disadvantage and personal tragedy. Lucashenko relies on the gratuitous use of slang and obscenities, as well as contemporary issues such as black deaths in custody, to provoke interest in an otherwise implausible story.

Kerry McCallum

*Science and exploration in the Pacific: European voyages to the southern oceans in the eighteenth century*, edited by Margarette Lincoln. xix + 228 h.c., illus., bibliography, index. The Boydell Press in association with the National Maritime Museum, Suffolk, 1998 £35/$A60

This beautifully produced book is a disparate collection of 14 essays held together by their link with James Cook and occasioned by the 1997 Australia–Britain voyage of the replica *Endeavour*. The writing, for the most part, is highly professional and entertaining with a whiff of novelty reminiscent of the curio cabinets that sprang up in the wake of oceanic exploration. We are told that the book was the result of a conference held at the National Maritime Museum to explore the context and the consequences of Cook’s first voyage. With this in mind there is a curious parallelism between *Science and exploration* and a volume entitled *Pacific empires: essays in honour of Glyndwr Williams*, edited by Alan Frost and Jane Samson, published within a year of the former title by Melbourne University Press.

One cannot help wondering if the original conference outline was used for both books. Both feature articles by Glyndwr Williams and Alan Frost. Indeed Frost’s article appears to be identical in both volumes with only the title changed and no cross-reference or acknowledgment. The inclusion of essays in both books on the missionary William Ellis is also curious and one suspects that the original planner in the Maritime Museum possibly had in mind the lesser known William Ellis, surgeon and draughtsman, who published an unauthorised account of Cook’s third voyage. Perhaps there are untapped records in the Board of Admiralty relating to that Ellis. Certainly the missionary is a significant figure in the story of Pacific ethnology though both the authors of the Ellis articles appear ignorant of some of the major work done in that field. Wayne Orchiston, who has written elsewhere on Australian Aboriginal astronomy, and Peter Gathercole, world authority on cultural artefacts, both have chapters drawing on their specialist expertise.

Two chapters are of particular Australian interest. Markman Ellis of London explores the representation of the kangaroo on the *Endeavour* voyage and how ‘the cool, “scientific” tone of empirical observation shows signs of stress or breakdown when the writer is confronted with the unknown’. One wonders if all the early reports refer to the same animal and if some descriptions may have been of wallabies. Even the animal not seen by Banks, but identified in retrospect as a large bat, may have been a wombat! But Ellis has at least acquainted himself with the literature on the local Aboriginal people in examining the naming of the kangaroo.

Aboriginal author Jackie Huggins is the final presenter in this distinguished company. Presumably because she was writing a paper for an English conference, and per-
haps an English audience at large, she chose to inform that audience of the present situation in Australia taking the story from terra nullius to Mabo and beyond. This story is only loosely connected to Cook and many of the generalisations are cries from the heart rather than historical realities. Racial discrimination and racial prejudice may be ‘phenomena of colonialism’ (p 199) in certain contexts but they are really the product of ignorance in whatever society. The colonial experience also taught people to live with one another and to respect alternative traditions. In many areas the worst discrimination and prejudice took place in the post-colonial period with the acceptance of pseudo-scientific theories of intelligence and aggressive assimilation policies.

In keeping with her desire to inculcate a moral lesson Huggins might well have developed the role of Cook’s responsibility in the breakdown of Aboriginal-European relationships. Evangelicals (not just John Wesley as in Neil Rennie’s piece, page 140) criticised Cook for not taking an interest in the moral welfare of indigenous people. The American Protestant missionaries in Hawaii likewise gave Cook a bad press, showing little concern for his death at the hands of Islanders. The LMS missionary Threlkeld and the English Quaker missionaries Backhouse and Walker blamed the ‘benevolent Captain Cook’ for setting a bad precedent in firing upon coastal Aborigines. This and chaplain Samuel Marsden’s negative attitude to ‘civilising’ Aboriginal children, they felt, were the two main reasons for the English settlers having a bad opinion of Aboriginal people.

Of course there is now a considerable literature on Aboriginal perceptions of Cook in myth, narrative and verse, an analysis of which would more aptly justify the ‘new anthropology’ in the title of the chapter in question than its present contents. Though there is really only one chapter of Aboriginal interest, the book has much to offer in a general way.

Niel Gunson
Australian National University


*Yumba Days* is the story of Herb’s childhood during the 1930s which he spent in the Yumba, an Aboriginal settlement in the sandhills on the outskirts of Cunnamulla, in Queensland. Herb’s ancestry was mixed, with his maternal grandmother belonging to the Kooma people and his grandfathers having an Irish and English background. He completed his manuscript for *Yumba Days* at the Australian Council studio in Paris after being selected for residency there in 1998. He is already well known as an author: this is his first book for young readers, but is engaging reading for all ages. His style is simple and direct, interspersed with anecdotes that bring him, his friends and family to life.

The kids talk in a way that modern kids could relate to; Herb’s mate, Gundi, didn’t want to be involved in arguments or fights:

‘I can’t fight! I’ve got this rare disease — one punch could kill me, mate. And I’ve got this crook heart — one hit and I’d be done for. Let’s play noughts and crosses or marbles instead. I can’t ever fight, true mate, real true.’
Despite a childhood spent in poverty, Wharton emerges as buoyant, optimistic and seldom bitter. When recalling the Yumba life, he writes:

Yet even the darkest days were always somehow overcome by hope, combined with the greatest gift of all against oppression — laughter. And education — that was my key to equality, justice, and deciding my own destiny. These things also gave me identity and strength. For if we had cried they would have been tears of blood that flooded the Warrego River.

The Warrego is Cunnamulla’s river.

From here the reader is introduced to the Wharton family’s two-roomed shack, made out of scraps of corrugated iron and bush timber with a dirt floor. The basic reality of it all emerged when Herb wrote his first letters and asked the older Murries what address to use. Their reply was blunt: ‘Who’s gonna write to you, boy? Just put “The Yumba, Cunnamulla” — we all know where it is.’

A strong feeling of community is reflected with the positives which that brings: ‘I can honestly say that during our childhood in the Yumba we were never, never bored.’ Music provided entertainment, with a communally-owned wind up gramophone, guitars and sticks or bones to provide a beat. Despite the difficult living conditions, Herb’s mother was a stickler for cleanliness: ‘Our place was always clean — not so much us boys.’ If Herb didn’t pass muster before school, his mother would stand him in a tub and scrub his legs with soap and mattress fibre. The vastly different perceptions of the white and black worlds surfaced when Herb’s sister, Hazel, was asked to describe the ‘interior decoration’ of her house for a school essay. Lost for words, she wrote nothing. She would have to stay in until she wrote something, said the teacher. Teacher and student stayed put until 5 o’clock, with nothing achieved. On a visit to Cunnamulla I had the privilege of meeting Hazel, herself an author, and today she would have no trouble in finding words to describe any situation.

The sandhills were Herb’s playground which he shared with friends, both black and white. One of them, John, a white kid, became an author and wrote Gough Whitlam’s biography. Herb looks at his own and John’s achievements and ‘wonders what the odds were in them far-off days that two of us kids from that dusty outback playground would grow up to have our books published.’

Not all meetings with white kids went so smoothly. Herb describes one encounter amongst the sandhills and hopbushes where he and his mates ambushed a party of intruders led by a big kid dubbed Moses. Moses’ followers fled, leaving him a virtual prisoner, surrounded by a few hopbushes that Herb’s mob set alight. Moses was finally released unscathed. For Herb, ‘perhaps the fight for land rights began then, for all us Murri kids were convinced we owned that big red hopbush hill … come Monday morning we would be back in school learning more of his whitefella history, while he and most others like him ignored true Australian history.’

Herb was fortunate that he found school ‘an enlightening and entertaining experience’ most of the time and that both his parents realised the significance of education: ‘Mum always emphasised how important it was to learn to read and write. Like Dad, she was continually stressing the importance of learning and getting an education.’ Herb had ability and was one of three students in his class who got between 90% and 100% in their exams.
Learning about his culture and background came from his people. His Aunty Ivy and Uncle Bill would talk around a small campfire at the Yumba, telling the children about Aboriginal history and lore, of ‘How certain winds brought certain messages and how the appearance of certain birds had special significance.’ He learnt hunting and tracking skills from his relatives who were drovers and is thankful for the ‘privilege of learning from both worlds which balances out, I think, the inequality based on colour that belonged to the era of my growing up.’

He had great admiration for both parents. His Dad was a crack hunter and bush cook, which he needed to be to provide for 11 children. His mother, despite her lack of education, stood up to the two policemen who arrested his brother ‘who had been dobbed in by a disgruntled relative.’

He paints a poignant picture of dispossession, of one old, blind woman, removed from her traditional land, who came to the Yumba to live. The people helped her build a traditional gunyah where she passed the time chewing a mixture of burnt leaves and plug tobacco which she called pituri, ‘chanting softly in her tribal language.’ For Herb, childhood highlights included visits to the local cinema to watch cowboy films in segregated seats, and sampling rainbow cake from the local Greek cafe. At about fourteen, Herb was introduced to droving, where he realised part of his education was only really starting. He listened to a story of a cattle rush where four drovers were trampled to death; he was sacked for ‘asking one question too many’. He accepted this with equanimity because it was part of a pattern where being sacked was no real disgrace. He says ‘there were many good bosses that far outweighed the bad ones’, and despite disputes with bosses over the years he ‘remained mates with most of them.’ This includes the boss drover who came to blows with Herb. The boss called on his dog, Bluey, who came running to his master’s side only to take a piece out of his backside: ‘My bloody dog, he bit a piece outa me arse!’

Droving, especially when he was by himself, enabled Herb to feel at one with the country, to ponder its spiritual significance and think about the differences between Christian and Aboriginal Dreamtime interpretations. While admiring science and space exploration, he ‘was aware of how privileged we are to be a living part of mother earth’. This tied in with what he had learnt from his father: ‘And he used to impress on me the need to work in harmony with nature, always conserving mother earth for future generations. He deplored the way people seemed to want to own the earth instead of belonging to it, being a part of it.’

Returning to the everyday world, Herb recalls the resentment of having to carry an identification disk or dogtag and show it before being served a drink. In Queensland, some pubs served Aborigines, while others wouldn’t, but on his first visit to Bourke, New South Wales, his observation was: ‘Down there, everything seemed worse than it was at Cunnamulla for Aborigines’. Today Cunnamulla still has a more relaxed feel about it than Bourke. The one trade-off from such an incident was Herb’s realisation of the power of words, which he used to cutting effect on the publican. He told the publican that ‘he reminded me of his outside shithouse, ugly to look at and stinking inside, so I was grateful that he wouldn’t serve me.’

Herb Wharton has become a successful writer and has travelled overseas. In East Berlin, shortly after the Wall came down, he saw encampments which reminded him of Yumba, reinforcing for him the image of his home to which he had strong attachment,
and the message that discrimination and poverty are universal. He delighted in the sight of sheep corralled on a grassy square near the river in Dresden, Germany, and in the fact that they are used as mowers to reduce pollution. In Australia, he parallels his Dresden image with Parliament House, Canberra, which he likens to a homestead, while the High Court building is like a giant fodder silo. The surrounding beautiful green lawns are just asking to be trimmed by a mob of drought-hungry sheep from the outback. All that water spent on grass, just for decoration ...

He devotes his final chapter to his family history and thoughts of a large family reunion. He emphasises the importance of family links, of knowing about the past and of pride in his family, what it stands for and what it has survived.

Herb Wharton has written a book which is especially valuable for younger readers. It tells the story of an Aboriginal boy growing up to manhood and draws on a variety of experiences, alternately humorous, poignant, absorbing and sad. It is a thought-provoking book with its gentle, low-key approach. It is also an inspiring example of someone who kept thinking, asking questions, and took whatever opportunities were available to him and ran with them.

Judy Kelly
Canberra


Axel Poignant was one of the greatly gifted photographers of the twentieth century. His work with Aboriginal people is unparalleled. In this marvellous book Roslyn Poignant recreates Axel’s 1952 journey into Arnhem Land. Her re-creation of that journey is also a journey of encounter. Some of the people Axel lived with are still alive, and in Encounter they reflect upon those times, their memories today, and their perceptions of the events at the time. Furthermore, they reflect upon this photographic project and the value of remembrance.

Roslyn Poignant was the back-up person in Sydney while Axel was in Arnhem Land. She is the guiding genius of the current book in which she brings together a superb selection of the photos. She interweaves her own words and explanations, Axel’s words (from his diary, primarily), and the words of Lamilami and others with whom Axel lived and whose photographs are included in the book.

Axel hoped to be able to visit relatively uncontacted peoples. He had ‘somewhat idealised’ notions about “traditional” Aboriginal life’ (p. 47). As it turned out, many of the people he encountered were involved with Christianity. As Lamilami would later remember their time together: ‘At night we would sit around the fire, and all the people and all the little children would come and we would conduct a little service And then we would sit around and talk about the life of the Aboriginal people, and Axel Poignant used to write it down’ (p. 25).

Whilst there he photographed the daily life of hunting, cooking and sharing food, as well as the music and story telling of an evening. Then he because involved in cere-
mony. People were arriving, preparations being made, and Poignant was keeping notes in his diary, and photographing as appropriate.

The beautiful detail of the photos tell a story of Axel Poignant as well as of the Aboriginal people. His unhurried camera lingers in exquisite focus and never sentimentalises. Even photos that look like they ought to be sentimental simply are not. This must be due in part to the absolutely pure quality of his technique. But more than that, it must be due to his profound belief in the common humanity between himself and his hosts. I look at these photos and never once do I see people who are representative of the ideas, concepts, or longings of others. In the photos they are wholly and vividly themselves.

Poignant was decades ahead of the times, anthropologically. His venture was intersubjective from the start, as he hoped not only to document but also to engage — to ‘open himself deliberately to the experience, whatever the outcome. To photograph the people without asking them to do anything special’ (p. 50). And yet, Poignant also experienced the tension of needing to produce some marketable photos (p. 153). These tensions become most visible in some of the night-time photos. The lighting makes people look distant, in some of them they have the fixed look of people frozen in an intrusive moment. Axel was not wholly pleased with the process for a variety of technical reasons: ‘difficulty of focussing in the dark — everything and every dog knocks your lamp over or somebody sits right down in front of the lens — time and again I prepared for a shot for about 20 minutes and just as I was going to take it they would all get up and walk away’ (p. 155). This is field work as anthropologists know it, give or take a few technical details, and it highlights the tension of being there to witness the real life of the place and the people, and at the same time documenting what one is witnessing. Without documentation the project becomes self-indulgent; with documentation it is no longer what it would have been without the technological intrusions.

Poignant’s photography was not intended to tell a story, per se, and so the people of his encounter were not figures in a narrative, much less in an allegory. Like some contemporary anthropologists he positioned himself as witness (p. 50). I found some of the most compelling moments of the book in the dialogical exchanges. Roslyn sent back proofs of some of the photos, and people examined them with enormous interest and concentration (p. 51). Axel wrote to Roslyn: ‘To get these and the other prints was of very great benefit to me in my relations with the people up here. Every body seems so much more friendly and co-operative, and a great deal of the initial shyness has gone’ (p. 51).

Roslyn Poignant returned in 1992 and 1995 to work with the families involved in the original project. They discussed philosophical questions of history and remembrance. The photos raised these issue, and people responded with immense seriousness. Listen to Gordon Machbirrbirr:

Now today people are in a new generation. We are living in houses and wearing clothes and all that. But in old time people lived in our culture way, and now I am helping Ros to make this file which is the file we will call Baman, and I think in English [it is] the word we normally call the history of life life history’ (p. 1).

In contrast to the views of some indigenous people who would prefer to keep photos from the past out of the public eye, these people and their descendants chose to share their lives and histories twice over — first with Axel and later with Roslyn. On both
occasions the sharing was both intimate and extended. The encounters and exchanges were understood to extend beyond the immediate intersubjectivities and to be moving out into the world to connect with audiences of strangers. But at the same time, people engaged with meanings that move amongst themselves. The intersubjectivities are cross-generational and thus engage people in their deepest connections. To quote Gordon again: 'and the photo is still there, so that when people look back at the parents that pass away their life is in that picture. What I am saying is, you could see, you could express your feelings and say, 'Oh, that's my father, you know.' It's like a life coming to you. Like you have your life coming back.' (p. 2)

This is a powerful, beautiful and complex work. Its multiple voices, multiple time frames, and mutual reflexivities make for dense and demanding reading. It is unfortunate therefore that the text is extremely hard on the eyes. On the one hand this is a thoroughly enjoyable book, but on the other hand it is terribly exhausting. The photos, however, anchor all the texts, and their unflagging clarity and generosity are priceless gift. This is a book to keep returning to, each time thanking Roslyn, Axel, Lamilami and the rest of them.

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Having grown up in south west Victoria, in a region that Mitchell and his exploration expedition passed travelled through in 1836, it has been impossible to ignore the legacy of Mitchell. His expedition left a noticeable track in the ground and Powell (1969) has noted that for the first generation of western Victorian settlers this track became an object of veneration. Many squatters 'overlanded' into Port Phillip from Sydney by following these tracks (see Bride 1969: 262, 244, 328, 336). One squatter, Colin Campbell (n.d: 1) recalled that prospective colonizers often caught 'Major Mitchell's Australian fever'. Nineteenth century journalist Richard Bennett observed in 1887 that the term 'Major Mitchelling' had been added to 'bush parlance' to refer to travelling through sparsely-populated and scantily-stocked districts (Critchett 1984: 12).

In a critique of the political economic nature of Mitchell's exploration, Robinson and York (1972: 1) considered that the task of the explorer was nothing short of a fore-runner of the squatter, and was to locate good pasture land in the interests of keeping. As such, the explorer was an 'intelligence officer'. They considered Mitchell 'epitomizes par excellence, the authorized role and function of the explorer and illustrates the close relationship between exploration and the ruling class (Robinson and York 1972: 5)'.

Some of Mitchell's contemporaries were critical of aspects of his work. For example, his choice of names was not always welcomed. The editor of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (Vol. xv, Jan–June 1839) was hostile to the name 'Glenelg River':
They had at length come in sight of the river which they were to add to British discoveries and which is henceforth to remain the only trophy of the somnolent secretary for the colonies. We presume that with all his official considerations, the remarkable placidity, combined with the remarkable shallowness of his new discovery, may have involuntarily influenced the gallant Major in his giving it the name of Glenelg.

The editor was also particularly critical of Mitchell ‘distributing his new-found realm among his friends’, something he referred to as ‘bastard canonization’.

George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip from 1839 until 1849, was another who was often critical of Mitchell. In the early years of his protectorship, Robinson travelled extensively throughout western Victoria and when he did so he travelled with Mitchell’s Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia, and his map, in his knapsack (Rae-Ellis 1996: 189). Robinson also had a pack horse at his disposal that had been with Mitchell’s expeditions (Rae-Ellis 1996: 234).

On 21 February 1840, on the banks of the Loddon River, Robinson wrote the following entry in his private journal (see Clark 1998a).

The banks, or bergs, of the river, as Mitchell called them, are covered with grass it is true but so very thin as not to hide the ground. The Major’s Line runs through the width of this plain and he describes it in glowing terms, his usual practice. He came to a level plain resembling a park, hence we call it ‘Major Mitchell’s Park’. The banks of the river Loddon, which was on the E. side, are abrupt but covered with grass. And the river, he said, runs north among some hills, probably to water a country of a fine and interesting character. Now this is all fudge. Better the Major had not published such nonsense as it has occasioned an expenditure of time and money to numerous emigrants who have gone in search of this country of interesting character. The Major’s Eden is another specimen of his puff excellence; not yet located Eden, there it be. The same fate extends the greater part of his Australia Felix.

In the land Mitchell dubbed ‘Australia Felix’ there are some 50 cairns that commemorate his route and many placenames that bear testimony to his expedition. Poynter (1987) claimed at a workshop staged in Dunkeld in September in 1986 in celebration of Mitchell’s sesquicentenary, that ‘it is difficult to grow up in this part of Victoria wholly ignorant of Major Thomas Livingston Mitchell’. My own experiences attest to Poynter’s claim. In the primary school in Ararat that I attended in the late 1960s the school was divided into four sporting houses named in honour of various explorers: Mitchell, Sturt, and Flinders and an early colonist family: Henty. By chance, my older brother was in Mitchell house, so I was as well.

At the 1986 Dunkeld workshop, the late Manning Clark delivered a paper on Mitchell. In this address, Clark spoke on the ‘whole problem of Mitchell and the Australian Aborigine’. He agreed with Poynter that ‘Mitchell was a bundle of contradictions. He was somewhat ruthless to the Aborigines who molested his exploring parties, then he was overwhelmed with remorse and worried. At times, he was so ruthless that his behaviour was the subject of an official enquiry. Yet, that very same man knew the words of the British Colonial Office and he kept repeating them: that they were to treat the natives of New Holland with amity and kindness (Clark 1987: 99)’.

This brief sortie brings us to the fine study by DWA Baker. Whilst others, referred to earlier, have concerned themselves, in passing, with the issue of Mitchell and the Australian Aboriginal people, Baker’s study is the most thorough and detailed analysis
of this complex and controversial relationship. Rather than analyse Mitchell from the problematic that he was a precursor of invasion and destruction (the view taken by Robinson and York 1972), or the paradigm that he should be an object of veneration (the received dogma from the nineteenth century), he presents us with an analysis of Mitchell's relationships with indigenous peoples in Australia.

The expedition of most interest to this reviewer is Mitchell's 1836 journey through what is now western Victoria. Baker's study is broad, he has concerned himself with all of Mitchell's expeditions and it stands to reason that given his broad concerns, local studies may reveal detail that is not considered in such a broad sweep. For example my doctoral research on western Victoria was concerned with Mitchell's 'Australia Felix' expedition in so far as what it revealed about the impact of 'foreign' Aboriginal people in western Victoria, and local Aboriginal reactions to the intrusion of Mitchell's expedition (see Clark 1998b). With regards to the latter, Samuel Carter in August 1842, met some Jardwadjali people at his parents' 'North Brighton' run on the Wimmera River, adjoining present-day Horsham. Carter learned from them that they had seen Mitchell's tracks and were very frightened by them; they took the wheel tracks to be footprints of white men, and the bullock tracks as those of white women (Carter 1911). In July 1841, Chief Protector Robinson, when travelling through Djab wurrung country, came upon Mitchell's track and halted, asking his Djab wurrung companions if they knew who had made that 'road'. They replied, 'white man a long time ago and that black fellow too much frightened and plenty ran away'. Yabbee, aka Billy Hamilton, a Daung wurrung ngurungaeta (clan head), told Assistant Protector James Dredge of 'the dismay he and other blacks experienced when they first saw white men, which, indeed, took place where we are now, and must have been, I should think, Major Mitchell's party, who crossed the Goulburn at this place on their return eastward (Mitchellstown)', (Dredge Jnl 30/1/1840 in Clark 1999).

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Clark, ID., 1998b, 'That's my country belonging to me' Aboriginal land tenure and dispossession in nineteenth century western Victoria, Heritage Matters, Melbourne.
This book was published exactly twenty years after Frank Stevens’s critical exploration of the economic role and conditions of Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australian cattle industries. Stevens had a developing interest in why there should be observed similarities in the type of complaints made against Australian Aboriginal workers and Californian workers of different cultural and ethnic background. Admittedly, the backgrounds of the employees in both contexts differed from that their Anglo-Saxon employers. But Stevens’s curiosity was aroused by the fact that in California workers and employers were essentially members of the same class. When he observed a similar phenomena in Australia he set out to investigate the nature of the ‘native policy’ with respect to indigenous employment in Northern Australia and the complaints made about the Aboriginal disposition and [in]capacity for labour. From observations and interviews he concluded:

That social, economic and political relationships between the two groups [Aboriginal and European peoples] took place in an atmosphere of prejudice as deep as any I had experienced in the United States [Stevens 1974: xii].

Stevens’s field conclusions led him to research the industrial conditions of Aboriginal employment in remote Northern Australia, including public exposure of the employment and living conditions Aboriginal people endured. He was aware that anthropologists had an established interest in the policy arena of colonial administration and indigenous labour relations. For example, in the 1940s the Berndts had made an anthropological study of the circumstances of Aboriginal workers on the Vestey pastoral holdings in the Northern Territory, although publication of the material was withheld for some years.

Since the publication of Stevens’s study, other researchers have published accounts detailing the experiences and conditions of Aboriginal life in the pastoral industry. Anne McGrath’s Born in the Cattle comes to mind particularly. Many of these
recent works have relied on accounts by Aborigines of their experiences, and have consequently publicised indigenous perspectives that have challenged notions of unremitting frontier conflict and the simplification of social relations.

May’s book is a further important account of the context of Aboriginal lives in the frontier pastoral industry; in this case, in North Queensland. She draws on oral history to breathe life into her rigorous critique of how Aboriginal people became part of the cattle industry. But her study, based on her doctoral research, represents an important critical investigation of the structural incorporation of Aboriginal pastoral workers into the wider capitalist economy. In this respect, her study opens new paths for the systematic study of the economic contribution Aboriginal pastoral workers made. Indeed, a key contribution of May’s study is the careful, rigorous and detailed exposure of how Aboriginal workers were systematically incorporated into the North Queensland pastoral industry. Their foundational role was, as she demonstrates, carefully and knowingly supported by other colonial institutions [such as missions and reserves] and specific industrial, social and racial policies.

May places her study in the context of contributions made by other scholars to the question of how indigenous workers became increasingly part of the new economic order. She summarises the kind of Marxist arguments about colonial relations of production used by other scholars to explore the contribution and incorporation of Aboriginal pastoral employees. Indeed, she baldly states that the Australian pastoral industry was possible largely because a poorly paid labour force supported it. But May is also keen to point out that unlike the pastoral industries in other northern states Queensland played a special role.

May is not, however, simply researching Aboriginal involvement in a frontier economy. More importantly perhaps she focuses on the North Queensland cattle industry in order to examine the ‘process of articulation of Aboriginal people with the capitalist system in general and the Queensland cattle industry in particular’ [May 1994: 3]. She writes,

From the beginning of the twentieth century, labour relations in Queensland became a highly complex issue, involving the State, mission officials, the labour movement and international capital to a greater extent than in other parts of northern Australia. Because of timing, Queensland played a crucial role in the shaping of social relations on the frontier: it was to Queensland that a large number of graziers turned, not only for their stock but for expertise, both black and white. By 1901 Queensland administrators believed that they were authorities in the use of Aboriginal labour [May 1994: 8].

This book is an absorbing and essential read. I highly recommend it to all those interested in Aboriginal lives and knowing the facts about the Aboriginal contribution to what is still considered an important, if largely symbolic, Australian industry. One of the reasons May has transformed her doctoral work into the present book must be the importance she sees of Queensland pastoral workers to the establishment and survival of the industry. Yet the historical perspective on the role of Aboriginal pastoral workers May argues, is ignored in current pastoralists’ views which see Aboriginal native title and land claims generally as threatening to critical European economic interests in land.
A colleague at the same University, May is mindful of Henry Reynolds's historical research suggesting that frontier relations moved between confrontation and collaboration between indigenous and European peoples. Her study documents such tension in all its complexities. This is a work of immense importance and value.

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Footnote style

1. Rowley 1971, p. 107; see also Barwick 1981.
2. Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
3. Fison and Howitte 1880, pp. 96-108.
4. Evening Mail, 12 March 1869.
5. Solly to Stokell, 4 March 1869, AOTCSD 7/23/127.

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