Aboriginal History

Volume twenty-four 2000
Aboriginal History Incorporated

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Aboriginal History is a refereed journal that aims to present articles and information in the field of Australian ethnohistory, particularly in the post-contact history of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, will be welcomed. Issues include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, resumes of current events, archival and bibliographic articles, and book reviews. This volume of the journal is formally dated 2000, but is published in 2001.

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Preface

As the front cover indicates, this edition of *Aboriginal History* is dedicated to Kwementyaye Perkins, about whom more is said in the Introduction. On behalf of the editorial board I thank Eileen Perkins and her family for permission to accord Kwementyaye this mark of respect, and also to use his portrait on our cover. The photograph is from Peter Read’s collection, and so I record our appreciation for his making it available.

The list of other people to thank is similar to that in the three preceding volumes of the journal. As reviews editor, Luise Hercus has again collected a wide-ranging set of book reviews. Dick Barwick has again done us proud with the front cover. Tikka Wilson, our designer, has once more done her usual magnificent job with her complex role in the production process. Bernadette Hince has again relieved me of an onerous burden by working swiftly and surely through the unenviable task of copy-editing. Peter Read, the chair, and all other members of our editorial board, have the production team’s gratitude for their continuing support and advice. Finally, all the authors of articles, obituaries, notes and book reviews, and also the panel of article referees, deserve much credit for making this volume a worthy tribute to Kwementyaye Perkins.

It is worth noting that the people connected with the journal are not paid for their contributions. All are volunteers and have given their thousands of hours of personal time and effort because of their commitment to the journal and to the cause of serious ongoing research and publication in the ever-broadening field of Aboriginal history. It is little short of a miracle that a high quality journal like this is regularly produced under such circumstances. That it does happen is testimony to its importance to all those involved.

Kwementyaye Perkins, who was the original inspiration for *Aboriginal History*, would have been delighted that so many would voluntarily give so much of their time to a cause that he held dear. He would also have been pleased to know that this volume not only commemorates his eventful life and work but is exactly the sort of publication he had in mind when he suggested that Australian historians should ‘do something about Aboriginal history’.

Ian Howie-Willis
Managing Editor
Introduction

This volume of *Aboriginal History* commemorates the contribution of Kwementyaye\(^1\) Perkins (1936–2000) to what was once called Aboriginal advancement. When Perkins emerged as an activist for Aboriginal rights in the late 1950s, Aboriginal ‘advancement’ was the polite, non-controversial word in vogue for granting Aborigines (and also Torres Strait Islanders) the same range of freedoms that all other Australians enjoyed. It was Perkins more than anyone else who ensured that ‘political movement’ was the term that over the next decade supplanted ‘advancement’. Under his leadership the demands of the Aboriginal political movement became ever more confident, more strident, more vociferous, more articulate and more assertive about achieving its goals. As a result of his influence, the Aboriginal political movement transcended the category ‘Aboriginal’ as he and his contemporaries forced it into the mainstream of Australian state and national politics. After Perkins strode on to the national stage in 1965 by leading the ‘Freedom Riders’ through northern New South Wales, Australian politics could never be the same again. It was to be but the first of his many grand symbolic and often controversial gestures that followed over the next 35 years.

This volume of the journal includes three obituaries for Kwementyaye Perkins by three professional historians who knew him well. Their testimonies to him suggest something of the breadth of his contribution to Australian politics generally and to the Aboriginal political movement in particular. Gordon Briscoe’s memoir recalls how he and Perkins shared a large part of their childhood together in Adelaide in the St Francis Anglican home for boys of part-Aboriginal descent. Gordon, several years younger than Kwementyaye, followed him into professional soccer then Aboriginal politics and eventually university studies. As Gordon’s obituary indicates, Kwementyaye’s agenda was the broadest possible: he not only wished to make Aboriginal politics a national issue but also wanted to change non-Aboriginal society. Niel Gunson’s obituary recalls how Kwementyaye was the critical influence behind the establishment of this journal in 1977. Kwementyaye was not just the only Aboriginal member of *Aboriginal History*’s foundation 16-person national committee. As Niel points out, he had been the very inspiration behind the journal’s foundation several years earlier. In her memoir Ann Curthoys, who participated in the Freedom Ride, recalls how Kwementyaye and that now legendary event affected his, her and their fellow riders’ lives, and also beyond them, the Australian political landscape. She concludes with a lament that is peculiarly apt for Kwementyaye Perkins — ‘he is no longer around to provoke, irritate, and inspire us all’.

\(^1\) Previously known as Charles.
Volume 24's subject matter ranges far and wide across Aboriginal Studies and Australia, as befits an edition dedicated to the memory of Kwementyaye Perkins. Robert Foster writes on the colonisation of Aboriginal labour. Karl Neuenfeldt and Kathleen Oien discuss music and Aboriginal identity. Frank Bongiorno — in examining the work of the poet Bernard O'Dowd — examines the link between Aboriginality and the development of historical consciousness. Pamela Smith considers aspects of Kimberley district history in two articles, the first on Aboriginal resistance to the invasion of the Sturt Creek basin and the second on labour relations on pastoral leasehold properties. Minoru Fiokari revisits the Gurindji walk-off from Wave Hill through oral history. Murray Johnson re-examines the debate over the 'Talgai skull' in Queensland. Bob Petersen considers early Aboriginal education in New South Wales. John Morris explores Tiwi memories of the whites who lived among them while shooting buffaloes. In a tribute to the late Isobel ('Sally') White held over from Volume 23, Isabel McBryde uses the instance of the travels of the Diyari and other peoples to show how humans and trade goods moving across a landscape follow cultural as well as geographical routes, and how these cultural routes are interpreted again in new values and meanings as 'heritage'. Geoff Gray traces the history of anthropological investigation among southeastern Australian Aborigines. Brian Egloff explores the legal aspects of Aboriginal fishing on the New South Wales south coast. Stephanie Anderson uses French historical sources to re-examine the encounters between Tasmanian Aborigines and members of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition. Finally, Benjamin Smith probes the idea of a 'tribal resurgence' on Cape York Peninsula.

The diversity of Volume 24's articles reflects the complexities of Aboriginal history. Aboriginal history cannot be reduced to the simplistic assumptions that have characterised much public debate over Aboriginality since the rise of 'Hansonism' in 1996. Perhaps Hansonism was a sign of a general hardening of hearts in 'middle' Australia in the years since the Keating Labor government set up the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991. Hansonism was soon followed by the emergence of a wider 'Right' revisionist opinioneering on Aboriginal history. The debate continues and voices for the Right abound. Every issue relating to Aboriginal history calls them forth. They are heard most notably in 'opinion pieces' by self-appointed experts in the major dailies. Here, to take a recent instance, commentators from the Right proclaim that, because Lowitja O'Donoghue seems to have been placed in the Colebrpook Home by her white father, she was of neither the 'stolen' nor 'removed' generations of Aboriginal children. The Monash historian of Aboriginal society, Bain Attwood, protests that little of the history written during the past 20 years or so by historians has been read beyond the academy. Instead, public debate is increasingly dominated by writers who have no historical training, who have never practised as historians or who are new to the field of Aboriginal history. Many are journalists ... who have fashioned themselves as specialists in Aboriginal affairs and who seem to assume that history is little more than a form of journalism and so something they can readily do.²

Readers of and contributors to this journal are unlikely to disagree with Attwood.

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However, neither his views nor theirs are likely to deter those seeking to denigrate the Aboriginal political movement, of which Kwementyaye Perkins was a paramount champion.

Meanwhile, the monthly journal Quadrant provides a forum for such views from the 'Right'. In its April 2001 edition, for instance, its editorial denied the notion of a 'stolen generation'. Using semantic and legalistic technicalities, it justified excluding O'Donoghue from either the 'stolen' or 'removed' generations. It seemed oblivious of the possibility of a broader 'big picture' — that by whatever name we call it, the experience of O'Donoghue and other part-Aborigines who grew up separated from their families in orphanage-type institutions was, in the late Kevin Gilbert's words, 'a rape of the soul so profound'.

Wishing to 'do more' for Aboriginal History, this journal would like to see debate widen. In forthcoming editions Aboriginal History will accordingly explore a range of historiographical issues. Starting with an examination of the discourse on genocide in Volume 25 (2001), the journal will go on to consider further issues in subsequent volumes. These will include perspectives on Aboriginal history of the 'new conservatism'; historians of Aborigines in the public arena; myth making in Aboriginal history; and Aboriginal history in the context of historical theory. Aboriginal History invites prospective authors to participate in the debate by contributing articles on historiographical issues. A guide to the issues being covered may be obtained from the editor by email at: ian.willis@anu.edu.au or iwillis@ozemail.com.au.

Extreme hostility for the Aboriginal political movement is hard to explain. Unfortunately, as Attwood observes, the views often aired in Quadrant and the opinion columns of the daily newspapers pass for history but remain uninformed by the large and continually accumulating body of scholarly writing on Aboriginal history. That is not the fault of either historians of the Aborigines or the journals to which they contribute. Unlike journalists and newspapers, historians and historical journals do not generally court controversy, nor is controversy their currency. Their obligation is to explore, assess and present the infinite complexities of the past that the articles within this volume of Aboriginal History so clearly reflect.

Fortunately, the hostile commentators have not gone unchallenged. The political scientist Robert Manne, editor of Quadrant before it began attacking the Aboriginal political movement, has recently published a long essay, In denial: the stolen generation and the right,3 exploring the motives of the revisionists who deny the notion of 'stolen generations'. Meanwhile the historian Inga Clendinnen contributed a long article4 to the May 2001 edition of The Australian Review of Books in response to earlier articles by various revisionists. Her theme is that 'to be able to judge the morality of historical events, one must never lose sight of the intentions of the people involved in those actions.5

5. Ibid.: 6.
Kwementyaye Perkins appreciated the value for Aborigines of an expanding volume of historical writing. He told Niel Gunson when approached for advice on what Niel might do to help the Aboriginal cause, 'You're an historian. Do something about Aboriginal history!' It was advice that this journal was proud to take in its formative years, and continues to heed.

Ian Howie-Willis
Managing Editor
Introduction

By the close of the nineteenth century Aboriginal people were the principal source of labour in the South Australian pastoral industry. The value of their labour derived from the unique type of relationship that developed between Europeans and Aborigines on pastoral stations. This paper examines the contribution of two hitherto neglected aspects of government policy in the shaping of these relationships: the systematic distribution of rations, and the protection of Aboriginal customary rights on pastoral lands. That pastoralists considered these factors significant is demonstrated in the final section, which examines how they successfully resisted government attempts to regulate the employment of Aboriginal people and disturb the status quo.

The significance of Aboriginal labour

When the colony of South Australia was planned, the possibility that Aboriginal people might be a significant source of labour was never seriously contemplated. It was, after all, a colony based on Wakefieldian principles where labour would be imported along with capital.  It was Aboriginal land that the colonists wanted; if Aboriginal labour proved valuable, then this was a bonus, but it was not an expectation. There was, however, an expectation that Aborigines would learn ‘habits of useful industry’. Children at the Native Schools in Adelaide were given vocational training, with boys taught agricultural skills and girls instructed in the domestic arts. Some attempts were made to put young men trained at the schools into apprenticeships, and girls into service, but most found the isolation unappealing and preferred to return to their communities. These early attempts at ‘training’ Aboriginal people had more symbolic than practical worth.

The first serious engagement of Aboriginal people in the colonial economy occurred during the Victorian gold rush of the early 1850s when a massive labour exodus created an unexpected demand for Aboriginal labour. Where pastoralists had been driving Aboriginal people off their runs, they now offered them good rations and sometimes even wages, if they would shepherd their sheep. For a period of time during the 1850s many pastoralists, particularly in the southern parts of the colony, were heavily reliant on Aboriginal labour.4 By the end of the 1850s, as European labour returned and fencing reduced the demand for shepherds, the need for Aboriginal labour diminished. Henceforth, the significance of Aboriginal labour in the southern settled districts was marginal; not only were their numbers small, but they competed with a much larger pool of European workers.

The story was very different in the north and west of the colony. In these areas, where European labour was more difficult to attract and the economic viability of the industry was more marginal, Aboriginal labour grew steadily more important until, by the 1890s, most observers agreed that it had become essential. In 1891 a government inquiry was held into the best ways to develop the colony’s pastoral lands. While the issue of Aboriginal labour was not central to the investigation, a number of central Australian settlers were questioned on the matter. A station manager from the MacDonnell Ranges, asked if the stations could be worked without Aboriginal labour, expressed the general view when he answered ‘No; probably not’.5 When Frank Gillen, a telegraph officer at Alice Springs, was asked a similar question, he replied, ‘I do not know what they [the squatters] would have done without them’.6

Similar views were expressed by witnesses before the 1899 Select Committee inquiry into a proposed Aborigines Bill. Christopher Wade, a sheep farmer of Strangways Springs, suggested that the pastoral industry in the ‘outside districts’ would have to be abandoned if the Aborigines ‘died out’ — unless ‘coloured immigration’ was introduced.7 In the more temperate climate of the south, with its larger pool of white labour, settlers could forgo Aboriginal services and skills, but this was not the case in the ‘outside districts’. Despite the early unwillingness of some, relationships between Aboriginal communities and pastoral stations became the rule, largely because the relationship offered squatters a source of labour that suited the conditions of the industry.

The characteristics of Aboriginal employment

In 1892, Sub-Protector Besley noted that in the northern districts most cattle and sheep stations employed ‘from one to a dozen’ Aborigines, some of whom were paid ‘from 10/- to 25/- per week’ with which they bought food, clothing and tobacco for their relatives and friends on the station.8 In 1899, the pastoralist Alfred Giles described what he said was the usual arrangement on most pastoral stations in the north:

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All stations employed a number of blackboys, varying perhaps from three to a dozen, and there are few of such stations where a small tribe of the unemployed are not permitted to encamp — these mostly consisting of the wives and relatives of the employed boys. The numbers of these unemployed vary considerably. Today there may be a dozen, to-morrow fifty or one hundred.9

In 1901, the issuer of rations at Anna Creek reported that there were eighty-five able-bodied Aboriginal people on the station of whom twenty were ‘constantly employed and found useful as boundary riders, &c.’, seventeen were ‘old and infirm’ and fifteen were children.10 While the numbers varied considerably from station to station, the pattern was broadly repeated; a core of people in relatively constant employment, together with a camp of relatives who provided the station with a ready source of labour for a variety of other station tasks.11 When not in employment, those in the station camp secured a subsistence from a mixture of sources: food provided by those in work, government rations if they were available, and traditional bush foods.

In 1899, the pastoralist John Hogarth described the ways in which Aborigines were employed on his property. ‘A number’, he said, were employed all year round as stockmen and boundary riders and, although paid at a lesser rate than their white equivalents, they received more rations. Others on the station were employed putting up fences, while at shearing time, twenty five to thirty were employed, including women who helped ‘at wool scouring and such like’.12 Task-oriented work was a common source of employment on stations. In the 1890s, vermin destruction was a task often carried out by Aborigines. In 1895, for instance, Hogarth reported that Aborigines on the station were paid 3d per rabbit scalp.13 Early in the following year Robert Bruce at Coondambo reported that in the months of November and December he had paid out £104 for rabbit scalps, and added that the Aborigines there were also ‘first class wild dog destroyers’.14 The station’s need for labour varied seasonally and according to circumstances, as Hogarth put it, ‘he might require twenty blacks at one time, thirty at another, forty at another, and so on’.15 The presence of camps on pastoral properties provided station managers with a labour pool that could be drawn upon as needed.

The employment of Aborigines in the pastoral industry has often been described as slavery.16 In 1992, Bill Thorpe offered a more sophisticated analysis, suggesting that

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8. Aborigines Department, Correspondence files, GRG 52/1/1892/106, 25 March 1892. While there are numerous references to Aboriginal people being paid wages, cash would rarely have changed hands. Instead employees would have drawn against their ‘wages’ to purchase goods from the station store. This is evident, for instance, in the ledger books of Mumpeowie Station during the 1890s. Beltana Pastoral Company, Mortlock Library of South Australiana, BRG 133/36.

9. South Australian Register, 20 December 1899.


13. GRG 52/1/1895/120, 25 March 1895.


it was 'a related but distinct form' of slavery, which he termed 'colonised labour'. In the first instance, writes Thorpe, colonised labour derives from 'the seizure of a territory and its people by a major power ... in order to dominate and exploit the colonised territory and its people economically, politically and culturally'. Secondly, colonised labour is 'subordinate to all other forms of labour'. Thirdly, the colonial relationship, 'like slavery, is suffused with force'. Fourthly, and most importantly, 'the colonised worker is both desirable and undesirable'. This is in sharp contrast to 'the slave worker' who 'is always valued for his or her labour':

The value of slave labour to the slave owner is such that, firstly it comprises an 'investment of capital in human resources' (Saunders 1982: xvii) and, secondly, it is constantly employed. In contrast, the colonised worker 'is alternately valued as a labour commodity but also devalued, employed and unemployed, paid but mostly unpaid, integrated but mostly marginalised'. This is an eminently appropriate description of the unique character of Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry. In South Australia, the emergence of this sort of labour relationship was facilitated by the practice of distributing rations, and the fact of Aboriginal rights on pastoral lands.

The systematic distribution of rations
In the early years of settlement the government regularly gave out items of food and clothing to the Aborigines as demonstrations of good faith, rewards for good conduct, and inducements to adopt European ways. During the 1840s, as settlement spread and violence became commonplace in frontier districts, the practice of distributing rations was systematised. As new districts opened up, the government would begin distributing rations — usually at a police station — with the aim of gaining some control over the local Aboriginal population. The rations were regarded as a form of compensation, replacing the subsistence that European occupation was progressively denying the Aborigines and, theoretically, removing the temptation for them to attack European stock and property. We see the rationale articulated in 1852 in discussions concerning the establishment of a depot in the north. Following a series of attacks on Hayward's station near Lake Torrens, the Protector wrote:

This appears to be the time for establishing the feeding station for the North. The settlers are all short of men to attend their flocks & the Natives are quite aware of the fact & much disposed to take advantage of it. The feeding station would be a means of keeping them quiet.

A depot was established early in the following year and the newly appointed Sub-Protector was instructed to 'induce the wild natives from the hills to live at his station, and by keeping them some time in contact with himself and the police, so far civilize them, as to render them not only harmless but useful to the settlers'. As this example

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.: 98.
20. The system of distributing rations to Aboriginal people in South Australia in the period up to 1861 is discussed at length in Foster, 1989.
22. Ibid., pp. 70–71.
ABORIGINAL LABOUR AND THE SA PASTORAL INDUSTRY

shows, it was hoped that the system would not only concentrate local Aboriginal populations, but would also facilitate surveillance.

With the advent of responsible government in 1856 interest in Aboriginal welfare plummeted and the post of Protector — a Colonial Office creation — was abolished. For the next few years the distribution of rations remained one of the few administrative manifestations of government interest in Aboriginal welfare. By 1860, however, community concern over the increasingly parlous condition of Aboriginal people, especially in the settled districts, led to the establishment of a Select Committee to inquire into their condition. The inquiry found that the government had been negligent in its administration of Aboriginal people and that, at the very least, it had a responsibility to provide for their physical and material wellbeing. The Commissioners made a variety of recommendations regarding health, education, legal status and general welfare, but the only tangible outcomes of the inquiry were the re-establishment of the Protector's Office and a substantial reorganisation of the system of distributing rations.

Reorganisation after 1861

In 1861 Dr John Walker was appointed the new Protector of Aborigines. The appointment of a medical practitioner reflected the generally pessimistic tone of the Select Committee's report which was underpinned by a belief that the Aborigines were 'dying out'. Following a tour of inspection in 1863, Walker submitted a report on the general condition of the Aborigines in which he made a number of recommendations. While he believed that in most cases the Aborigines were generally well supplied with food, there were cases where people were in great want. 'Sometimes', he suggested, 'the season or state of the weather' made fishing and hunting difficult, 'sickness or disability' made it difficult for people to provide for themselves, and dependants such as the elderly and young children suffered when their families could not provide for them. It was for these cases, he wrote:

that feeding depots have been formed, and unquestionably much good has resulted from their establishment, but the number of them is insufficient for the requirements of the Aborigines throughout the colony.

It was on the basis of this assessment that Walker recommended the establishment of new depots throughout the colony.

Before Walker's appointment there were 14 ration depots in the colony; six years later (in 1867) there were 58. Over the next 50 years the number of depots gradually declined, but there were always more than 40 depots. What was put into place was a

Map 1 Southern South Australia, 1860
Map 2 Southern South Australia, 1878
Map 3 Southern South Australia, 1897
Map 4 Southern South Australia, 1915

- Pastoral Station
- Police Station
- Mission Station
- Other (Protector, Post Office, Telegraph Station, etc.)
rudimentary social welfare system that, it was envisaged, would provide Aborigines with the basic necessities of life until such support was no longer needed. That is to say, until they found their niche in the colonial economy, or 'died out'.

While the policy was developed largely in response to the condition of people in the southern settled districts, it was also extended to the northern and western pastoral districts. As had been the case before 1860, most of the ration depots in the south were police stations (Map 1). One of the most significant features of the new system was that in the outlying districts managers of pastoral stations became the usual issuers of rations. In 1867 about a third of the 58 depots throughout the colony were pastoral stations, and almost all of these were in the northern and western pastoral districts.27 The contrast between 'north and south' was even more stark in 1897 (Map 3). Of the 48 depots in operation, more than half were in the northern pastoral districts, and 18 of these were under the control of station managers. Of those in the southern districts, all but a few were located at police stations.28 The pattern continued into the early part of the twentieth century, the overall number in the south, usually under the control of the police, gradually dwindling, while the numbers in the north, mostly under the control of station managers, remaining relatively stable (Map 4).29 It is important to note that the settlers selected were those in the 'outlying' districts, essentially the districts beyond Goyder's 'line of rainfall', which marked the boundary between country suitable for agriculture, and that suitable only for pastoral activities.30 Given that part of the early rationale of the system had been to remove Aboriginal populations from the runs of the settlers and give the police some measure of control over them, why were they now the favoured sites for depots in the pastoral districts?

The report of the 1860 Select Committee advised against the 'evils' of centralised depots and recommended that in the outlying districts 'well-intentioned' settlers be given the task of distributing rations. By decentralising distributions it was hoped to keep Aboriginal people, as much as possible, in their own districts, rather than concentrating them in towns and settlements.31 These recommendations arose out of evidence given at the inquiry. A number of witnesses, for instance, commented on the value of Aboriginal labour, and observed that good relationships had been established between Aborigines and settlers on many pastoral runs.32 Questioned about whether or not pastoralists would undertake the task of issuing rations, it was suggested they would, although uncertainty was expressed about the consequences, especially whether or not too many would be attracted to the stations that issued rations. It is interesting to note that the matter of Aboriginal access rights on pastoral lands was also discussed in reference to the question of rations.33

27 SAGG, 11 July 1867, p. 665.
28 GRG 52/1/1898/396.
29 It should be noted that while the overall number of depots remained stable, their locations did not. While there was a core of stations that usually issued government rations, depots were established and disbanded as circumstances — the establishment of new stations, the closure of existing ones — required, or in response to emergencies such as localised droughts.
30 T Griffin & M. McCaskill, 1986, p. 16
32 Ibid.: 4, 9-12, 19.
The Select Committee inquiry shows that the government was well aware of Aboriginal people’s access rights on pastoral lands. Given this predicate, the distribution of rations at pastoral stations was a cheap and logical means by which the government could avoid the ‘evils’ of centralised distribution and keep Aboriginal people in their own districts. Furthermore, the policy would virtually ensure that relationships would develop between Aboriginal people and the pastoralists who gave out the rations; a potential benefit of this would be to draw Aboriginal people into the pastoral industry.

The ration scale

When the government began to issue rations in the 1840s, they were issued to all-comers once a month — the rations being 4 pounds of flour per adult with half that for children, together with an annual distribution of blankets. During the 1850s, when Aboriginal labour was vital, the issue was restricted to the sick and the infirm. Instructions given to the issuers of rations in October 1859 entrenched this principle, directing them to give rations only to ‘the sick, the old, the infirm, orphan children and women with infants under twelve years old’. The able-bodied were not to be given rations if it was believed that they could obtain work, or subsist by fishing and hunting. While this was the principle, and continued to be so well into the twentieth century, no one had any doubt that the rations were shared among the relatives of those who received them.

The daily food ration was 1 pound of flour, 2 ounces of sugar and half an ounce of tea, with the issues being made once a week. Why these rations and why this scale? The answer seems to lie in the working man’s ration that became standardised by the early nineteenth century. According to Michael Symons in his book One continuous picnic: a history of eating in Australia, ‘The itinerant workforce ... were paid in rations. Handed out on Saturday nights in unreliable measures and supplemented by spirits and a final cheque, their food earned the name, ‘Ten, ten, two & a Quarter’, that is 10lb flour, 10lb meat, 2lb of sugar; 1/4lb tea’. The items and the scale were similar to the rations issued to Aborigines by the government, with the obvious difference that there was no meat. The absence of meat is explained by the fact that flour, tea and sugar could be transported over large distances without spoiling, while meat could not be.

Symons points out that the basic meal made from these working man’s rations was ‘a damper, a fry of meat and pots of tea’:

The damper was flour and water, without leavening. The meat was salted pork, corned beef and then slaughtered mutton cooked without aging. The tea, though taken with plenty of sugar, generally lacked the refinement of milk.

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33. Ibid.: 9-18, 44-50. These points were raised in the evidence of Major Warburton, the Commission of Police, and by JT Bagot, the newly appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands.
35. Ibid.: 76-77.
38. Flour could, of course, ‘go off’ and sugar could turn into the equivalent of rock candy, but as a rule they were transportable and had a relatively long shelf life.
This was the basic diet for breakfast, lunch and dinner. By the mid-nineteenth century this was probably also the basic diet of Aboriginal people who became reliant on government rations — supplemented by native game and plant foods.

In addition to the staple of flour, sugar and tea, other items of food were issued on an occasional basis — usually as medical comforts. Rice, Walker instructed, was not to be part of the ordinary issue, but given only as a medical comfort — issued in place of flour and with a doubling of the sugar ration. Sago was also issued occasionally on the same principle. Meat could be given as a medical comfort but required the authorisation of a medical practitioner. Though not issued in Walker’s time, tobacco later became a regular ration item. Instructions to issuers in 1878 indicated that tobacco was to be considered a ‘regular’ ration but given out only as a reward to the able-bodied for good conduct or service, or as a comfort for the aged and infirm.

The dependency dilemma

The distribution of rations provided the government with a dilemma. The system was revamped and expanded because it was apparent that people were starving — the occupation of the country by pastoralists making it impossible for Aborigines to survive entirely on traditional resources. Yet at the same time the government had no desire to make Aboriginal people dependent on rations, and it wanted to encourage them into the colonial economy. Protector Hamilton summed up the situation in one of his reports for 1875:

Their hunting grounds are now greatly diminished as agricultural settlement progresses, thus depriving them of their natural food. Another circumstance is ... that, except at certain times of the year, such as shearing time, the Aborigines experience great difficulty finding employment. As runs become fenced their services appear to be less in demand, and their peculiar habits of life unfit them for a sudden change to the heavy and continuous work of ordinary labourers.

The system now in force for the protection and support of the natives has been in operation about fifteen years; its merits and failings have therefore been tested by experience.

In ministering to their physical necessities and alleviating the hardships of their position it has accomplished a good deal, but it seems to have failed in checking the high rate of mortality ...

The practice of supplying food and clothing, except in exchange for an equivalent in labour, is objectionable in its tendency to pauperise by leading to improvident habits and indolence.

The basic ration of flour, sugar and tea was at best a starvation diet. As the local issuer of rations at Tarpeena reported in the winter of 1868, ‘when they have no flesh to eat one pound of flour is not sufficient nourishment for one day for any man or woman, particularly when the weather is cold’. The Aboriginal custom of sharing the rations among one’s relatives, regardless of age or infirmity, meant that in practice the issues

40 Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Correspondence files, GRG 35/1/791/1863, 9 March 1863.
41 South Australian Government Gazette, 20 March 1879, p 797.
42 Ibid., 18 March 1875, p 506.
43 Ibid., 20 August 1868, p 1145.
were even more parsimonious than the figures, on the surface, indicated. The govern­
ment never intended it to be more than a supplement, or a safety net. The instructions
issued in 1859 stated that rations were not to be given to 'able-bodied natives if there is
reason to believe they can get work or can obtain their subsistence by fishing or hunt­
ing'.44 Protector Walker, as has already been noted, reiterated the principle when he
reorganised the system of ration distributions in 1863. The expectation that Aboriginal
people would continue to rely on traditional resources to supplement or replace paid
employment is a crucial point. In the pastoral districts, it was predicated on their right
to live traditionally on pastoral lands. What emerged was a subsistence strategy based
on maintaining an equilibrium between paid employment, traditional resources and
rations.45

Aboriginal rights on pastoral lands

On 1 July 1851 fourteen-year pastoral leases came into operation in South Australia,
replacing the previous system of issuing annual licenses.46 When acceding to this
system in New South Wales a few years before, the Colonial Office endeavoured to
ensure that Aboriginal rights were not unduly injured. In a Dispatch to Governor
Fitzroy, Earl Grey wrote:

I think it essential that it should be generally understood that leases granted for
this purpose give the grantees only an exclusive right of pasturage for their cattle,
and of cultivating such Land as they may require within the large limits thus
assigned to them; but that these Leases are not intended to deprive the natives of
their former right to hunt over these Districts, or to wander over them in search of
subsistence, in the manner to which they have been heretofore accustomed, from
the spontaneous produce of the soil, except over land actually cultivated or fenced
in for that purpose.47

Acting on instructions from the Colonial Office, Lieutenant Governor Young
ensured that South Australian pastoral leases had extensive clauses ensuring the pro­
tection of Aboriginal rights. The leases gave Aboriginal people unimpeded access to
pastoral lands, including 'springs and surface waters'. It ensured their 'unobstructed
right' to 'use occupy dwell on and obtain food and water' as well as to:

make and erect such wurlies and other dwellings as they have been heretofore
been accustomed to make and erect and to take and use for food birds and ani­
mals ferae naturae in such a manner as they would have been entitled to do if this
demise had not been made.48

It was made clear that if the lessee should 'break or infringe any of the covenants reserv­
ations exceptions conditions provisions or agreements ... the demise hereby made and
the term hereby grants shall cease determine and be void'.49 In essence, these

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44 Report of the 1860 Select Committee, appendix, p ii
45 A similar situation applied in the southern districts, but the more intense nature of settlement
rapidly reduced the availability of, and access to, traditional resources.
46 Peter Donovan, 1995. 'In the interest of the county': a history of the Pastoral Board of South Aus­
47 Grey to Fitzroy, 11 February 1848, Historical Records of Australia, Series I, vol. XXVI, p 224.
48 Lease of Waste Land of the Crown of Michael Martin and John Bradford, South Australian
Department of Lands, Pastoral Lease no. 226, 1 July 1951, p 1.
provisions guaranteed those Aboriginal people whose country was occupied by pastoral leases, the right to continue living on their land 'in such a manner as they would have been entitled to do' if the lease had not been granted, provided they did not interfere with the stock or property.

When the form of the pastoral lease was being worked out in 1851 there was relatively little public discussion regarding the clauses protecting Aboriginal rights. What there was related to the feasibility of coexistence. Archdeacon Matthew Hale, who had recently established the mission at Poonindie, pointed out that some Aboriginal forms of land use were 'diametrically opposed to the interests of the white occupiers of the country'. While he did not oppose the clauses, he was concerned that the rights of both parties were clearly spelled out. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, Charles Bonney, who was drafting the clauses under the direction of the Lieutenant-Governor, expressed similar concerns. On 3 June 1851, he wrote to the Colonial Secretary regarding a letter from a settler who raised objections to the proposed reservations. Bonney observed: 'There is undoubtedly a difficulty in making such reservations ... when the customs of the natives are directly at variance with the purposes for which the country is occupied by the holders of the runs'. Bonney argued that 'the only mode of meeting this difficulty that I can suggest is to compensate the natives for what they lose by any restrictions which it may be found necessary to impose upon them'. He went on to suggest that supplies of 'provisions and clothing' might be provided to Aboriginal people at regular intervals as compensation for them being deprived of 'their means of securing food'. The Lieutenant-Governor, however, held his ground and a few weeks later Bonney was defending the reservation clauses in a report on the subject of Archdeacon Hale's letter. Explaining the motives for the insertion of these new provisions, Bonney wrote:

With regard to the difficulty pointed out by Mr Hale in reconciling some of the customs of the natives with the interests of the occupiers of runs, I am aware that in the Port Lincoln district this difficulty may arise. But whether it may be found expedient or not to allow the full exercise of these privileges, I think such reservations should be inserted in the leases as will give the Government complete control in the matter.

I am of opinion that the knowledge that the Government is in possession of this power and that the runs are liable to be resumed for the use of the natives, will be sufficient to ensure the forbearance of the white people, and to render them rather desirous of conciliating the natives in order that no necessity may arise for the exercise of these powers.

The reservation clauses were in all pastoral leases issued after 1 July 1851, but was any notice taken of them? Given that they were an imposition of the British Colonial Office did they become a dead letter?

49. Ibid.
50. Colonial Secretary's Office, Correspondence files, State Records, GRG 24/6/1851/1581, 9 May 1851.
51. GRG 24/6/1851/1662, 3 June 1851.
52. GRG 24/6/1851/1885, 24 June 1851.
The pastoralists could have been expected to regard the new leases, with their clauses guaranteeing coexistence, with some hostility, but they were received with hardly a murmur. The likely reason for this is that their introduction coincided with the gold rush, and the accompanying exodus of European labour. At the very time that Aboriginal rights on pastoral lands were enshrined in the leases, the pastoralists — desperate for labour — were inviting Aboriginal people onto their land. While they may have regarded the conditions of their leases as an imposition, the coincidental benefit of Aboriginal labour gave them no reason to oppose the conditions.

While no leases were ever forfeited on the grounds that Aboriginal rights were infringed, the government did occasionally remind individual pastoralists of the conditions of their lease. In 1876, for instance, missionary Meyer, at Kopperamanna, complained to the government that Mr Lewis of Cowarie Station was driving Aborigines off his run. At Meyer’s suggestion, the pastoralist was reminded of the conditions of his lease. Lewis claimed that the allegations were ‘utterly false’, adding, ‘the blacks are now camped at sundry places on the run unmolested by me or anyone on the place’. There is no evidence to either confirm or refute the missionaries’ allegations, but it is significant that Cowarie Station later became a ration depot. Over the course of the nineteenth century there were very few recorded disputes regarding Aboriginal rights on pastoral leases. A reasonable interpretation might be that this was because the rights were generally ignored. However, a closer examination of the evidence suggests another interpretation, that many pastoralists respected Aboriginal access rights because they were beneficial to them.

The impact of European pastoralism on Aboriginal subsistence

Despite the fact that Aboriginal people continued to have rights on pastoral lands, European occupation of key water sources, combined with the stocking of the country, severely reduced their ability to support themselves from traditional resources. This process can be seen in especially stark relief during drought years. In 1864, for instance, a drought set in that lasted four years. The drought, combined with the overstocking of the country, had a devastating impact on the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges. Writing from Yudnamutana in the northern Flinders Ranges the pastoralist JB Hughes graphically described the impact of the drought:

In ordinary years the natives have an ample supply of food in the numerous animals indigenous to the country. This year the terrible drought has been fatal to those animals as it has been to the sheep and cattle of the squatters. Wallabies, euros and kangaroos are lying dead in all directions. Those that remain are so reduced in number that they have become a rarity in districts that generally teemed with them ... they no longer afford the natives the supply of animal food on which they heretofore depended. As blackfellows have pathetically told me, ‘Euro no food now — big one tumble down ...’

The natural severity of the drought is greatly aggravated by the flocks and herds of the squatters which have utterly consumed or trodden out every vestige of grass or feed within miles of water. The aborigines have therefore but two

53 GRG 52/1/1876/405, 21 October 1876.
resources – they are compelled to crowd around the dwellings of the squatters and beg for food, or to ... prey upon the flocks and herds.54

As the Protector noted of the Northern Districts in 1867, 'the almost total absence of native animals, and the failure of other resources' had placed 'a very large number of Aborigines in most trying circumstances, and dependent upon the generosity of the government'.55

During another drought in 1884, Nathaniel Phillipson, the owner of the Cordillo Downs Station, requested government rations. Now that the country was stocked, he wrote, it was nearly destitute of kangaroos and emus and, because of the drought, there were no vegetables to fall back on, 'the stock having destroyed everything in the vicinity of the waters'. As a consequence, the Aborigines were in a starving condition but, because there were so many, the station could not afford to support them. Recommending Phillipson's request, the Sub-Protector in the district pointed out that there were 190 on the station, 100 able-bodied adults and children and 90 old, sick or infirm. He observed that they did well in good seasons, but suffered badly during droughts. The able-bodied, he pointed out, had enough trouble obtaining food for themselves, and consequently the people dependent on them suffered.56

The correspondence files of the Protector's Office contain abundant testimony of Aboriginal dependence on rations, usually articulated when depots were closed or shifted. In 1897 the issuer at Mount Serle wrote to the Protector complaining that the Aborigines at the depot were 'bold and threatening' and refused employment rabbit hunting at the pay scale he offered. To teach them a lesson, he wrote, he was going to suspend the issue of rations for a month. The Protector sought the advice of a local government official and was told that the issuer was new to the district and did not understand the situation. The Aborigines, he reported, were experiencing a hard time during the drought, there was very little work for them and they had become dependent on government rations.57

The nature of the rations themselves was also important. A couple of years earlier at the same station, the issuer complained that while he had plenty of flour, he had 'no sugar or tea, please forward tea & sugar [and] tobacco to serve out with the flour'. He underscored his request by heavily underlining his plea. It was no use, he added, 'telling them I have no tea & sugar, they expect their usual ration every week'.58 The point here is that the rations were important not only because they were a supplemental source of food, but because they were desirable commodities — literally, attractive and addictive.

The significance of government rations to European pastoralists

In his report for September 1868, the Protector noted that settlers were disappointed when the government refused to give them rations to distribute, adding 'great jealousy exists between those who have Aboriginal depots and those who have not, and I am

55. SAGG, 11 July 1867, p 665.
56. GRG 52/1/1885/10, November 1884.
57. GRG 52/1/1898/15, 21 December 1897 & 5 February 1898.
58. GRG 52/1/1896/23, 15 January 1895.
exposed to the charge of partiality when duty renders it necessary for me to refuse compliance'. What then was the advantage of having government rations?

At the simplest level, rations provided pastoralists, who were forbidden by law from driving Aboriginal people from their properties, with the means of controlling them. In 1888, the overseer at Poonaruna Station, on the Warburton River, requested rations. The trouble, he wrote, was that the Aborigines passed back and forth over his run to get government rations at Cowarie Station. There were over one hundred and fifty individuals in the group and they sometimes killed his cattle for food. The fact that they did this, he added, did not surprise him because they were in 'great straits' as a result of the drought. If he had rations it would be a 'means of keeping them in a central position and near the station, where they would not do so much damage'. From his point of view, it was better that they were near the station where he could keep an eye on them, and where he could provide for them, rather than have them out of sight and killing his stock because of a desperate need for food. The logic of the distributions in this case is very near to that which underpinned the system when it was introduced: provide an alternative subsistence hoping, thereby, to remove the need, through sheer hunger, to attack European stock and property.

While in the case of Poonaruna Station, rations had the negative benefit of neutralising a source of conflict, they also had positive benefits, being used to attract, maintain and control an increasingly valuable source of labour. In August 1898, the owner of Dalhousie Springs wrote to the government asking if he might have rations, claiming that his station was a 'principal camping place for natives — they come into the Springs and hunt and collect nearby'. He said he fed those who worked, and often those who did not. The police were disinclined to support the request, saying the only ones on the station were those employed as shepherds or in general duties. In another letter they pointed out that the station was worked almost entirely by black labour, there being only two Europeans on the property. A former manager of the station said that the owner refused to allow him to employ whites and that his 'greatest trouble and complaint was the scarcity of blacks upon the run'. A ration depot, the owner believed, would materially assist 'in keeping a few able-bodied blacks about the station'. In other words, even though rations were not distributed to the able-bodied, the fact that they were distributed to their dependents helped attract able-bodied labour to the station.

When the owner of Cootanoorina Station applied for government rations in April 1893 he made no attempt to disguise the economic advantages. He noted that he employed 'a number of black boys' on the station who were paid wages and received station rations, but he wanted the government rations for the eight old men and women on the station. His problem, he wrote, was that 'it is no use to put Blackboys on a well

59. GRG 52/1/1868/387, 30 September 1868.
60. Despite the fact that the conditions of their lease made it illegal for them to drive Aboriginal people off their properties, there is no doubt that some pastoralists did drive them off. The evidence is not strong enough to make a judgement about the numbers who abided by the conditions and those who did not.
61. GRG 52/1/1888/320, 18 October 1888.
62. GRG 52/1/1898/396, 29 August 1898.
by themselves whilst these old blacks are on the place, for as soon as I send rations out to the boys, they all go out to the well & eat all the rations in a day or two, consequently the boys instead of doing their work have to go hunting for food until the next rations are sent out’.63 If the dependents of the workers were not supplied with rations, the work on the station was likely to suffer.

The police were well aware that government rations were being used to subsidise the cost of Aboriginal labour. In 1905, the Mounted Constable at Innamincka observed, ‘depots are not always applied for and worked for the benefit of the Aborigines themselves but often to run a station cheaply on black labour (and Government rations).’64 As this passage implies, the distinction between government rations and station rations would often have been meaningless.65

In their defence, pastoralists often portrayed their relationship with Aborigines as a compassionate, if not philanthropic, one. ‘The pastoralists’, said John Warren in 1899, ‘were the best friends the natives had’; not only did they provide them with employment, but they ensured that the old and infirm did not perish from starvation.66 They argued that they were doing the government a favour, and that the task of distributing rations was a burden. They complained that they were often out of pocket when supplies arrived late and they had to draw on their own resources. They resented bureaucrats castigating them for filling out returns incorrectly.67 Their most common complaint was the situation they faced during drought years when sometimes hundreds of people would be drawn to their station with the knowledge that government rations were available. Drawing attention to just this circumstance at Coondambo in 1896, Robert Bruce observed ‘there is no thanks and no end of trouble attached to this business’.68 In 1900, Bruce requested a smaller supply of rations, saying that he did not want to be a permanent depot because it attracted too many to the station. He only wanted enough for the ‘old, infirm, and sick, who occasionally visit the locality, the able-bodied being usually employed getting their own living rabbiting, etc.’69 Bruce’s experience suggests that pastoralists were quite capable of ‘manipulating’ the distributions to manage the numbers on their properties.

Commenting on the relationship between Aborigines and pastoralists in 1899, John Egerton-Warburton described the two groups as ‘mutually dependent on one another’70. The changes wrought to the land by European pastoralism made it impossible for Aboriginal people to rely solely on traditional resources, while the marginal nature of the country made it difficult for pastoralists to operate effectively without cheap but efficient Aboriginal labour. The preceding examples highlight why there was ‘great jealousy’ between those who were given government rations and those who were not — supplying rations to the dependents of those who worked assisted in

63. GRG 52/1/1893/123, 24 April 1893.
65. An effort was made to search pastoral station records to investigate this relationship, but the records in the public domain were too few to make the task meaningful.
67. Adelaide Observer, 24 February 1866; 9 August 1884; 23 August 1884; 23 June 1900.
68. GRG 52/1/1896/53, 11 March 1896.
70. Ibid., 30 September 1899.
both securing and maintaining one’s workers. Those who had government rations were effectively having the cost of labour subsidised, those who did not had to supply the additional rations out of their own supplies, or risk losing their work force.

The significance of Aboriginal rights on pastoral lands

In the early years of settlement pastoralists would almost certainly have regarded the presence of Aboriginal people on their land as an imposition. Over time, however, as the value of Aboriginal labour became more and more apparent, the fact that Aborigines had the right to hunt and gather on pastoral lands had positive advantages. At the most fundamental level, it enabled an Aboriginal presence on pastoral properties, thereby securing a source of labour. Furthermore, the fact that Aborigines were not only permitted, but expected, to continue exploiting traditional resources had other advantages. Like government rations, it subsidised the cost of labour. Most importantly, because the people were in their own country, it meant that their services could be engaged or dispensed with at will, without risking their permanent loss.

A report from the issuer of rations at Cowarie Station on Lake Eyre in the summer of 1879-80 provides a good insight into this aspect of station life. It had been an ‘exceptionally good season for the natives’, he wrote, they ‘have been able to roam all over the country, and obtain an abundant supply of food’, which consisted of ‘fish, rats, lizards, and ‘waddaroo’ (a long white root, something like a parsnip), supplemented by four or five different herbs’. While he reported that he was distributing rations to ten or eleven people, most of the fifty or sixty Aborigines there, including the aged and infirm, were ‘out on the run’, a number which included his stockriders. The Diamantina was in flood, he wrote, ‘and some of our black stockriders have deemed it a suitable time to have ‘a spell and walk about eat fish’.71

This account highlights an important feature of station life, that the Aboriginal people associated with stations continued to maintain many features of their traditional life and their traditional association with their country.72 It was not uncommon for pastoralists to favourably compare the lives of Aboriginal people on their stations, to the lives of those on missions. Defending pastoralists against claims that Aborigines on northern stations were being mistreated, Ben Rogers wrote:

There are blacks on all the stations north of the Hergott, and they are treated far better than most of the whites by the Managers of stations; their work is light, chiefly fetching horses in the morning or some other light work. They are well fed, dressed well, and have plenty of time on their hands, so that they are a very lively people, and spend a great part of their time dancing and singing. You will see none of this at the mission station; quite the reverse, sulky miserable wretches, no life in them whatsoever, in fact they are nothing else but slaves, and the sooner this is altered the better it will be for blacks and whites. I am certain that if the missionaries had not interfered with the rites of the blacks they would have been far more peaceably inclined.73

71. SAGG, 12 February 1980, p 543.
73. South Australian Register, 2 April 1890.
Unlike missionaries, pastoralists were not particularly concerned about how Aboriginal people lived their lives, as long as it did not interfere with the work on the station.

Not only did the conditions of pastoral leases permit Aboriginal people to continue their associations, it often suited the pastoralists that they were continued. The seasonal round of employment on stations in the north meant that there was usually a quiet time of the year, usually summer, and it was during this period that their Aboriginal employees often went off to attend ceremonies. A central Australian settler explained it this way:

The aboriginal must be free to come and go as he pleases. It will not matter to him how many papers are signed — when the spirit moves him he will take his departure, either to attend a ceremony or to have a spell in his own fashion.74

Another pastoralist, underlining the importance of this freedom, claimed that all but a few of the ‘fairly civilised’ Aborigines ‘go away on a holiday during the summer months, when they occupy their time as of old in hunting, fishing, corroborreeing, and sleeping’, but, he noted, they always returned when the cooler weather set in.75 Furthermore, if there were periods when the Aboriginal people in the camps were away hunting and gathering, these were times when wages did not have to be paid or rations distributed.

Rations and coexistence

While food was the basic ration, the government periodically distributed a range of other items, the most significant feature of which was that they were intended to assist Aborigines in exploiting traditional resources. To assist their fishing, the government distributed netting twine, fishing lines and fishing hooks as well as canoes or boats. These items were distributed at ration depots along the River Murray, the Coorong, in coastal regions, as well as in the Lake Eyre Basin. The canoes were not only intended for fishing but to assist Aboriginal people in accessing hard to get to terrestrial resources. As the issuer at Wellington noted in 1865:

The blacks cannot now procure bark canoes as they could in former years. The want of boats is very much felt at Wellington where the tribes are divided, living on both sides of the river; and in bad weather I have known the sick, aged and infirm to be almost starving for two or three days, because they had not a boat to come across and get their rations. The boats are also required for fishing and shooting; they cannot use their nets without the assistance of a boat, and they cannot cross the swamps and lagoons to shoot duck or swan except in a boat. The blacks on the Coorong are quite as bad if not worse off, as their living mainly depends on fishing and shooting.76

Canoes became a commonly distributed item: in 1874 alone, nineteen canoes were supplied at depots along the Murray and the Lakes.77

A similar logic prevailed when the issuer of rations at Innamincka, Mounted Constable Power, requested two canoes for the Aborigines of his district. Writing in Novem-

74. *Adelaide Observer*, 2 December 1899.
76. SAGG, 23 March 1865, p 266.
ber 1883, Power pointed out that the Aborigines’ principal food in summer was fish, which they caught in ‘waterholes on Cooper’s Creek’, but things were more difficult in winter, especially when the creek was flooded. Canoes, he argued, would ‘enable them to cross and re-cross the creek in search of food’. The inability to get across the flooded creek also increased the temptation to interfere ‘with the cattle who crowd thickly on the sandhills’. The upshot was that canoes would assist them in accessing the resources of the Cooper’s Creek region and reduce the potential for conflict.

Axes and tomahawks were other items regularly distributed at ration depots throughout the colony, principally to assist in cutting firewood. While firewood was sometimes distributed at depots in the more established districts, it was cheaper for the government to provide people with the means of cutting their own. It was also acknowledged that tomahawks and axes were necessary to help cut and shape the materials with which they constructed their wurlies, or dwellings. The final category of items that were issued were cooking utensils and cutlery, notably quart pots, or ‘billies’, pannikins and spoons. All of the items discussed here were being distributed by the 1860s and many were still being distributed on pastoral station in the 1960s. The government, by distributing these items, was actively assisting Aborigines to support themselves from traditional resources.

Pastoralists defend the status quo

By the late nineteenth century, Aboriginal people were almost universally acknowledged as the principal source of labour in the pastoral industry. Their value, as such, was underpinned by the regular supply of government rations and their continued right to hunt and gather on pastoral lands. Pastoralists were well aware of this and, when a Bill was put before parliament in 1899 which threatened to undermine this equilibrium, pastoralists and their supporters successfully opposed it.

In 1899 South Australia’s first, all-encompassing, Aborigines Bill was brought before parliament. Drafted by Justice Dashwood, it was modelled on the Queensland Aborigines Act of 1897. Dashwood was the Government Resident of the Northern Territory and freely admitted that the Bill was mainly designed to meet the frontier conditions of the South Australian-administered Northern Territory. The provisions of the Bill that caused the most controversy were those intended to regulate the employment of Aboriginal people. Clause 8 required that anyone employing Aboriginal people have a permit signed by the Protector, which would have to be renewed every twelve months. Clause 9 stipulated that every such employment agreement contain details of the nature of the employment, conditions of accommodation, remuneration, and so forth. Clause 10 provided for the Protector to supervise the conditions of employment. Clause 11 made it an offence to have Aborigines on, or about, one’s premises, while Clause 12 made it an offence for Aborigines to be removed from their districts without permission.

78. GRG 52/1/1884/8, 1 November 1883.
79. SAGG, 20 August 1868, p 1145.
When the Bill was debated in parliament, the first speaker, John Stirling, expressed the prevailing sentiments when he argued that it would have ‘a deterrent effect on the useful employment of Aborigines in Central Australia’. The provision which made it illegal to have Aborigines about one’s premises was strongly opposed. Stirling pointed out that it was the rule, rather than the exception, that Aborigines came onto the station and ‘camped around them’, but this provision would require him ‘to get a licence for each of them’. The clause, he said, ‘would certainly tend to drive the aborigines away from the stations’.82

Ebenezer Ward regarded it as part of a ‘socialistic programme’ to prevent lessees from employing black labour; the government, he said, ‘would not allow the importation of Chinese, coolies, or kanakas, red, brown, or copper-colored laborers, and now even the blacks were to be disbarred’.83 The slippage in Ward’s logic between indentured labour and Aboriginal labour is revealing. Coolies, he argued were the working strength of India: they may be superior to black labour, but ‘those who were here before the whites had a right to be employed if they were willing to work’.84 How, he asked, would the Territory ever be developed without such labour?

John Warren expressed his surprise that, in the face of the leases which the pastoralists held, ‘it should be proposed that the blacks must be driven off their country’. The leases ensured Aboriginal people’s rights to be on pastoral lands:

Yet under the Bill lessees allowing natives on their premises would be guilty of an offence, unless they had obtained permits. If the Bill passed all the present leases would have to be withdrawn and fresh ones substituted.85

As Warren, like many of the opponents of the provisions pointed out, the nature of Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry was often intermittent and task-oriented, and getting permits would be more trouble than it was worth.86

Frederick Basedow, while wanting to protect the Aborigines, agreed with the speakers who believed that the Act would have the effect of undermining Aboriginal employment and driving Aborigines from stations. He quoted a letter from Kempe, the Manager of Peake Station, who said he had an average of 68 Aborigines on his station, 30 of these were old and infirm and received government rations, while the remainder were employed ‘as rabbiters, some as stockmen, etc.:’

Should the proposed Bill become law the immediate effect on this run would be the discontinuance of the issue of Government rations (which are carted and issued to the aged and infirm blacks free by the station), and the discharge of the bulk of the blacks now employed in rabbiting etc., and under the harboring clause all unemployed blacks would have to be hunted off the run.87

In other words, not only would the provisions of the Bill undermine the existing labour relationships on the stations, the ‘harbouring’ provision would make it impossible for stations to continue the practice of distributing rations on behalf of the government.

82. Ibid., pp 37–8.
83. Ibid., pp 41–2.
84. Ibid., p 42.
85. Ibid., p 57.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p 66.
A number of speakers pointed out that the provisions in the Bill were directly at variance with the conditions of their pastoral lease. Samuel Tomkinson, for instance, quoted a letter from the pastoralist Charles Davies who pointed out that he had ‘employed as many of our natives as most people’, and added:

I have always been under the impression that our blacks had a pre-emptive right to camp wherever they choose on the Crown lands if they do not interfere with the workings of the stations. It will be a sorry day for the blacks, especially for the Gawler Range ones, if the proposed Act is passed, and it might well be intituled ‘An Act for the Prevention of the Employment of Aborigines’.  

Objections on these issues saw the Bill referred to a Select Committee for further examination.

In the evidence presented during the Select Committee, pastoralists and their supporters continued to argue against the provisions relating to the employment of Aboriginal labour. Christopher Wade, for instance, pointed out the inconsistency between the conditions of their lease and the ‘harbouring’ clause. It was a ‘cruel clause’, he said, ‘yet by our leases the aboriginal must not be disturbed’.  It was, he added, ‘a Bill to deprive the nigger of his bread’. When it was pointed out to him that, as the law stood, ‘a native can come up and sit by a spring and you have no power to order him off’, he agreed and said that was what the leases provided, and if the proposed Act was introduced, he would be obliged to ‘hunt the poor devils’. It would become a ‘practical impossibility’ to employ Aboriginal labour and it would almost certainly ‘compel him to employ white labour’. The pastoralist John Bagot also pointed out the inconsistency of the provisions with the conditions of their lease:

According to the conditions of our pastoral leases we are compelled to allow the blacks to camp without any let or hindrance at all natural waters, and permit them to engage in their ordinary pursuits of hunting wild animals. Under this clause, however, the blacks would have to be driven off from these places, and they would have no spot to go to at all. If they were driven off ... the Commissioner of Crown Lands could interfere on the ground that there was an infringement of the pastoral lease.

When asked by the Chairman, ‘Is that not a dead letter now?’ he reiterated his point by saying, ‘No; there is a provision in the pastoral lease that the blacks are not to be hunted.’

Even some of the missionary supporters who had actively sought an Aborigines Act opposed this aspect of the Bill on the grounds that it would disrupt the labour relationships that were in place. Walter Dalton, the Secretary of the Aborigines Friends Association, said that he had been on sheep stations in the Port Lincoln district and had seen nothing but good relationships between Aboriginal people and their employers. He believed that no Aborigines would be employed if the clause was passed, and added, that while the existing relationship was of benefit to employers, it was of

88. Ibid., p 70.
89. Report of the 1899 Select Committee, p 16.
90. Ibid., p 17.
91. Ibid., p 40.
92. Ibid.
greater advantage to the natives'. Not only were the provisions likely to deprive Aborigines of employment, but also of their traditional resources. Donald McLean, a Queensland pastoralist who had previously worked in South Australia, put it this way:

Take the outside country. The blackfellow knows where he can get good fishing and shooting, and so he comes to the waterhole at the station. I do not think it would be at all practicable to enforce this clause; it would be very unfair to the natives to keep them at a distance from the place where their natural instinct leads them to go and obtain food.

McLean added, that the 'blacks have a claim on the country just as we have, and if we shut them out from our waterholes we are doing wrong.'

The Select Committee’s report recommended the withdrawal of the Bill, and proposed a drastically watered-down alternative in which most of the restrictions on the employment of Aboriginal labour were removed. Instead of requiring employers to have licences for each of their Aboriginal employees, it recommended the issuing of certificates to 'reputable persons' authorising them to employ Aboriginal labour. The only labour provision that met their approval was the one prohibiting the removal of Aboriginal people from their districts ‘unless stringent provisions’ were made for their return.

The Labor government responded by shelving the Bill. It was not until 1911 that South Australia passed its Aborigines Act. On this occasion the pastoralists had no objection to it because it contained no provisions that threatened the existing employment relationships in the pastoral industry. Sections 12 and 13 made it an offence to remove an Aboriginal person from his district without the authority of the Protector. Section 27 allowed a Protector or police to inspect the conditions in which Aboriginal people were employed, while Section 28 made it an offence to entice Aboriginal people away from their employment. The provisions pertaining to employment licences and ‘harbouring’, which the pastoralists had objected to so vehemently in 1899, were omitted.

Conclusion

The system of distributing rations to Aborigines on pastoral stations, complemented by the fact of Aboriginal rights on pastoral leases, facilitated the ‘colonisation’ of Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry. The practice of distributing rations assisted pastoralists in securing and managing a source of labour that was cheap and skilled, and which they could draw upon when needed and release when surplus to demand. The fact of Aboriginal rights on pastoral leases meant that Aboriginal people not only could but were expected to rely on traditional resources when employment was unavailable. While pastoralists sometimes complained of the responsibilities of having Aboriginal people on their runs, and having to distribute rations, these factors nonetheless constituted a significant government subsidy to the cost of labour. Testimony to the value of

93. Ibid., p 43.
94. Ibid., p 49.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., p 5.
97. An Act to make provision for the better Protection and Control of the Aboriginal and Half-caste Inhabitants of the State of South Australia, no. 1048 of 1911.
this relationship, from the pastoralist's point of view, is that they successfully resisted attempts to change it and, coincidentally, were probably responsible for ensuring the preservation of coexistent rights on pastoral leases.

The benefits to the government were considerable because it constituted an exceptionally cheap and largely 'hands-off' form of administration. As long as pastoralists were willing and able to distribute rations, and Aboriginal people could continue living in, and off, their country, the government had no need to appoint additional protectors or police in the districts, nor establish government-supervised reserves. The government effectively made the employers of Aboriginal labour their guardians — the absence of any meaningful regulations controlling the nature of that employment might be regarded as their reward for this service. From an Aboriginal perspective, the consequences were mixed. In contrast to their southern brethren, who were increasingly concentrated on missions, Aboriginal people in pastoral districts were able to maintain traditional associations with their country, without the censorial control of missionaries. The offset to this was that private citizens, notably station managers, were handed considerable authority over the lives of those Aboriginal people on their stations.

The significance of the system that emerged — this balance between employment, rations and traditional resources on pastoral lands — is underscored by the fact that it endured for almost a hundred years. In its report for 1956, the Aborigines Protection Board explained the principles by which relief was distributed to 'necessitous Aborigines':

> Supplementary rations are supplied to aborigines at many depots throughout the State. These rations are issued to almost all the natives including able-bodied, where they are not employed, and the aborigines are expected to hunt for native game to supply a large portion of their diet. This particularly applies to some detribalised or the near primitive natives and those residing on the pastoral areas.98

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‘Our home, our land ... something to sing about’: an indigenous music recording as identity narrative

Karl Neuenfeldt and Kathleen Oien

Identity is no museum piece sitting stock-still in a display case, but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life (Galeano 1991: 125).

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives (Frith 1996: 124).

Introduction

In his introduction to the volume Questions of Cultural Identity (1996) Stuart Hall rejects the essentialistic view of cultural identity as a collective or ‘true’ self, fixed within a unified community of shared history and ancestry. Rather, Hall says, identities are ‘never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions’ (1996: 4). Further, he observes, ‘precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies’ (Hall 1996: 4). Thus an identity construction enunciated through artistic expression such as music contributes to the production and maintenance of a cultural discourse, while simultaneously residing within it. Or, as Frith puts it, music ‘describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind’ (1996: 109).

This analysis focuses on how identity is constructed within and through the textual and cultural production of a CD recording, examining process as well as end-product. The ‘enunciative strategies’ utilised in this identity construction are drawn from four kinds of artistic expression: song lyrics, promotional and informational materials, interviews and public sphere journalism.

The recording Our home, our land occupies a particular textual space (Muecke 1992) and constitutes a particular kind of indigenous Australian ‘identity narrative’ (Martin 1995). It consists of twenty-four predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander songs emphasising the relationship between indigenous peoples and their land. In a sense it provides a socio-cultural and musical soundtrack and memorial following on from two momentous events in the struggle for the recognition and implementation of indigenous Australians' land rights: the 1992 High Court Native Title in Common Law decision (the 'Mabo' Decision) and the 1993 Native Title Act. Its dedication reads 'This CD is dedicated to the Meriam people and the plaintiffs in the Mabo case: Eddie (Koiki) Mabo, Father Dave Passi, James Rice, Celuia Mapo Salee, and Sam Passi'. The recording was released in 1995 under the auspices of The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia (NIMAA), and the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA). CAAMA is based in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and has a record company with a large catalogue of indigenous artists, comprehensive distribution networks, and a state-of-the-art recording studio. The recording presents different musical styles performed by diverse indigenous and non-indigenous, female and male, group and solo artists from across the nation.

The recording's variety highlights three important factors underlying this analysis: there are multiple indigenous (and non-indigenous) identities in Australia; indigenous identities as constructed and produced within popular music discourse are often collaborative, and sometimes contentious; and the recording and the individual indigenous songs are self-representations, albeit presented within a predominantly Western popular music aesthetic. Notwithstanding the recording's multiplicity of identities, collaborative and contentious nature, and claims to self-representation, the songs revolve around a recurrent trope in the discourse of identity for both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians: the relationship between the past, space and culture.

The notion of identity narratives

There is a particularly useful perspective which aids in understanding the recording and its songs as unique discursive and enunciative examples of indigenous musical artistic expression. Martin's (1995) analysis of 'the choices of identity' seeks to understand how identity is produced and constructed as a narrative by key individuals and groups. It can be usefully extrapolated to examine in this instance a music-mediated identity narrative as a textual production designed to memorialise a particular period and particular events in Australian history.1

According to Martin (1995), the goal of identity narratives is to encourage positive change in a group's access to power and its individuals' life-chances. This is accomplished by fashioning a different (often counter-hegemonic) discourse in response to a dominant discourse in two main ways: the selection of particular cultural traits; and the emancipation of amnesia (the active un-forgetting and un-silencing of what has been forgotten or silenced). Identity narratives are often devised and directed 'in order to create and mobilize [groups] towards the attainment of particular political goals' (Martin 1995: 5). Martin cautions however they should not be reduced simplistically to 'expressions of social homogeneity or representations of immutable realities' (1995: 7). He con-

1. See Boyer (1990) for reflections on different modes and types of memory (short-term, long-term, and flashbacks), as well particularly valuable insights on what constitutes 'tradition' (the repetition or reiteration of facets of particular phenomena via social interaction).
tends identity is about neither homogeneity nor permanence, and citizens usually have either a choice of identity narratives or the option to refuse them all together. The identity narratives on offer at any one time remain in flux and open to negotiation and contestation although often presented and defended as unchanging and sacrosanct.

There are three key 'pillars' of identity narratives which may ebb and flow in influence or relevance but are commonplace. Martin identifies these as relationships with the past, space and culture. In respect to the past, Martin observes: 'Collective memories frequently have special chapters for traumatic events, that is real or imagined events the relation of which in the identity narrative confers them a particular weight (sometimes in glory, more usually in horror)' (1995: 12). Attitudes and behaviour in the present are often explained and legitimated by reference to traumatic events in the past.

In respect to space, Martin asserts it appears in the narratives as 'the place where the necessities of life are available; where communities are able to sustain themselves and reproduce themselves, and have been doing so for a long time' (1995: 12). Importantly, it is a place where power is wielded in a particular way by particular people. As well, space is a place where a particular pattern of sociality prevails, and where customs thought to constitute 'a good life' (such as music, dance and story telling) are not only accepted but encouraged.

In respect to culture, Martin suggests the selected traits 'are frequently related to practices that gave the milieux where individuals grew up a particular flavour, and carry a strong affective load' (1995: 13). This selective affectivity is at the expense of other traits which — for whatever reasons — are judged peripheral to current socio-cultural or political conditions and ambitions. An essential component of identity narratives is choosing emblems which embody or symbolise group cohesiveness and uniqueness. Martin maintains: 'relationship to time helps to make these emblems look perennial; relationship to space offers them a field in which they can be displayed' (1995: 13). Identity narratives can transform cultures by the selection, valorisation, and mythologisation of particular traits and artefacts. Martin also maintains poets as culture brokers, of which songwriters/musicians are a particular type, are among the key individuals whom a group calls on 'to preach the gospel of identity' (1995:11), proclaiming not only that a group is unique but also that its history and its members' abilities and endeavours must be asserted and defended.

Finally, Martin argues identities in and of themselves do not exist. Rather, they are produced and constructed in and by means of identity narratives. The identities of individuals and groups are imagined through the discursive and enunciative process of narrativisation, albeit often with demonstrably invented yet fiercely defended socio-cultural, aesthetic, and political boundaries. In summary, Martin states: 'the identity narrative channels political emotions so that they can fuel efforts to modify a balance of power; it transforms the perceptions of the past and of the present; it changes the organization of human groups and creates new ones; it alters cultures by emphasizing certain traits and skewing their meanings and logic' (1995: 13). Overall, an identity narrative

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2 Martin's uses of the terms 'past', 'space' and 'place' are distinctive but can be extrapolated to the indigenous Australian context in general terms if noted they are contingent terms open to interpretation.
strives to engender a fresh interpretation of the world in order to change it. Indigenous popular music in Australia provides a compelling example of how such a narrative can be imagined (and maintained) through music.

Music, identity and Indigenous popular music

Before examining specifically how Our home, our land produces and constructs an identity narrative, it is useful to note briefly in broad terms the relationship between music, identity and indigenous popular music. Seeger notes: 'music is one of the ways that communities establish themselves and try to survive; music is also one of the tools other people use to try to dominate them. Whatever is happening, music is often serious as well as beautiful, urgent as well as transcendent' (1997: 22). Frith argues music and identity are inextricably entwined. He maintains it is not how a people is reflected in a particular piece of music or a performance which is most relevant but the reverse. The total experience of music — both hearing and literally feeling it — can only make sense if understood by social actors as constituting both a subjective and collective identity. For Frith, this conjoined subjective and collective identity pivots on two premises: ‘identity is mobile, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being; [and], our experience of music — of music making and music listening — is best understood as an experience of this self-in-process’ (1996: 109). Thus music and identity are both simultaneously performance and narrative, highlighting the dialectic relationship between the social and the individual. Frith believes because of music’s mutability, affectivity and ease of dissemination, it is the cultural form best suited to cross boundaries. It can not only help redefine the past but also help define space and culture in the present.

The role of indigenous popular music in shaping identity for indigenous and non-indigenous Australians has been explored by a range of writers. There are music orientated works which contribute particular perspectives on the music, songs, videos, personalities and politics of a commercially small but culturally and creatively important genre. As well, there are literature orientated works which help locate the emergence of indigenous popular music within the wider discourse of post-colonial writing. In the context of indigenous popular music recordings as a unit of analysis, Dunbar-Hall (1997b:38–9) provides a particularly germane perspective: ‘The album [is] a composite statement to which individual songs are contributing elements ... songs, while still capable of signifying at their own level, assume wider meanings from an understanding of their positions and roles in larger structures. At the same time, meanings of those larger structures are the result of the contributions of their contents and the relationships between those contents’. The relationship between music, identity and indigenous popular music, as in other genres, is determined by the provisional and unpredictable interaction of social actors, processes and end-products. The music, songs, personalities and politics of Our home, our land analysed below provide cogent examples of how indigenous (and non-indigenous) identity is narrativised within an


unique musical discourse and textual production and explicitly and implicitly around the 'key pillars' of past, space, and culture.

**Analysis and discussion of Our home, our land**

The recording *Our home, our land* originated from ATSIC's initial idea to commission a single song about native title and land rights, performed by a number of well-known indigenous artists. Eventually it was decided an entire compilation recording would be produced, and would include a commissioned main (title) song; licensed tracks already recorded elsewhere by well-known indigenous and non-indigenous artists; and new songs from indigenous artists not previously recorded. The last were chosen within the format of a song contest, by a panel of judges from ATSIC, NIMAA, and CAAMA.

According to Richard Micallef (1997), former CAAMA music manager and executive producer of *Our home, our land*, the main objective of the project was one of communication, not commercial viability, although ATSIC and CAAMA, as the two main producers of the recording, had different communicative aims. ATSIC intended the recording and its accompanying cover-notes to present information on the Native Title Act, the Indigenous Land Fund and current social justice measures (ATSIC 1995: 12), and encouraged people to seek further information (telephone numbers for ATSIC's Office of Public Affairs and the Indigenous Land Corporation were included in the cover-notes). CAAMA, on the other hand, felt its ultimate objective was the production of a high quality recording to be broadcast primarily to indigenous communities. In doing so, it hoped to encourage the role of indigenous media as a source of information about indigenous cultural events (e.g. the song contest); to inspire other indigenous songwriters and musicians to write and record; and to inspire indigenous media organisations, large and small, to follow CAAMA's lead in developing music production from its broadcasting service, thus increasing the number of independent indigenous music labels around the country.

Micallef acknowledges *Our Home, Our Land* has not been an outstanding commercial success. This, he says, is due to several factors. There is a tendency for indigenous products to be compartmentalised, and receive recognition and airplay primarily with alternative or marginalised broadcasters. The music industry is fashion-based, and few if any of the songs on the recording fit easily into an AM radio commercial broadcasting niche. As well, CAAMA's 'remote' location (Alice Springs) means: 'no amount of national promotion is enough in an in-your-face industry like popular music if you are not based in Melbourne or Sydney' (Micallef 1997).

The lack of indigenous representation in the mainstream media (Bostock 1996; Goodall et al. 1994; Langton 1993) not only contributes to marginalisation of indigenous expressive culture; it also limits indigenous voices within the hegemonic discourse. Indigenous constructions of identity narratives inevitably become counter-hegemonic, because they are placed in 'political' or 'ethnic' slots within the mainstream. They may be further distorted by broadcasters who cull from these narratives, utilising them to manipulate current mainstream biases. For example, one of the songs appearing on *Our Home, Our Land* is 'Original Aboriginal'. It was written and performed by song contest winner Dave Quinlan, who was in Long Bay Gaol in Sydney, New South Wales, at the time of production. Because he was not allowed to leave the gaol for a day to record in a studio, CAAMA arranged for recording engineers and producers to come into the gaol
and record Quinlan there. Media commentator and entrepreneur John Laws used this as an opportunity to attack ATSIC for what he saw as an irresponsible use of funds: ‘But when Quinlan won, with a song called Original Aboriginal, it was decided the recording studio would go to him. And it did. At enormous expense, I’m sure. So, thanks to ATSIC, the criminal got his day of glory and the taxpayer got to pick up the cheque. Nothing surprises me any more about these people’ (Laws 1995: 39). Laws repeatedly alleges ATSIC is overfunded, mishandles money, and does not represent the best interests of its constituents. In implying this project’s $100 000 budget is robbing outback indigenous people of crucial medical facilities and supplies, Laws presents himself as a proponent of anti-bureaucratic practicality, and Aborigines as pawns who are being taken advantage of by their own leaders.

Micallef sees irony in Laws’ attack, not only because the song in question was, in fact one of the cheapest to produce, but also because ATSIC and CAAMA were aware that recording this song was in line with recommendations of The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnston 1991). Further, the producers felt this negative media attention contributed to the continued marginalisation of indigenous artistic production, because it may have limited the recording’s air time on commercial AM radio.

Nonetheless, both ATSIC and CAAMA count Our Home, Our Land as a success overall because a number of objectives were achieved. First and most obviously, a high quality recording was produced. Second, the involvement of indigenous media at all stages of the project ‘helped to bond the indigenous broadcasting sector for a period of time’ and brought ‘a unified voice out of disparate communities’ (Micallef 1997). Third, Micallef claims the song contest was an inspiration to indigenous musicians nationwide: the producers received 120 entries, and had to narrow them down to the eight which eventually appeared on the recording. These contest winners not only had their songs recorded and produced for appearance on this recording, but came out of the project with high quality master tapes, over which they retained licensing and publication rights.

Micallef stresses the importance of process over end-product in the Our Home, Our Land project. He describes initial discussions between ATSIC, NIMAA and CAAMA as ‘a tennis match of ideas’, and points out the producers preferred a grass-roots approach, which meant extending song contest deadlines, and using indigenous community radio as much as possible to promote the song contest and broadcast the recording. According to Micallef (1997): ‘The process of making this album was a sort of identity narrative for the musicians, songwriters, and indigenous radio stations. It gave birth to itself as a beautiful narrative. If you open the doors and say ‘come in with your stories’, you get all these wonderful stories that give everyone involved a better realisation of what it is to have an entitlement to your land’.

Overall, the recording consists of 24 separate tracks, three of which are versions of the title song. Licensed tracks were solicited from established indigenous and non-indigenous artists including Yothu Yindi, Sunrize Band, Coloured Stone, Christine Anu, Shane Howard, Blackfire, Blekbala Mujik, Warumpi Band, Amunda, Paul Kelly, Kev Carmody, Neil Murray, and the Mills Sisters. Indigenous contributors are linked to particular places or regions; for example, Sunrize Band from Maningrida, the Mills Sisters from Thursday Island, Phil Moncrieff from Western Australia, Minnie Read from South Australia. The title song is noted by its author Lou Bennett as being ‘written for all Aus-
tralians. Anyone and everyone who walks on this land needs to know the history, to fully appreciate their home'. Only three of the songs on the recording were actually recorded at CAAMA Studios (the commissioned title song, and two contest winners, ‘Angerwuy’ and ‘Big Mountain Wilpena Pound’), because it was often impossible to get musicians to Alice Springs to record. If recorded away from CAAMA, efforts were made to use indigenous recording facilities.

Although several of the songs refer directly to the Mabo Decision, or are tributes to Eddie Koiki Mabo himself (‘Mabo’, Yothu Yindi; ‘Respect for Eddie Mabo’, Rygela Band; ‘Koiki, Father Dave and James’, Peter Yanada McKenzie; ‘Mabo’, The Mills Sisters), the rest of the tracks on the recording refer more or less directly to indigenous peoples’ relationship with the land, from a range of perspectives. These include: traumatic events in the past (‘Forgotten Tribe’, Coloured Stone; ‘Solid Rock’, Shane Howard; ‘Stricken Land’, Blackfire; ‘Angerwuy’, Raven; ‘We Shall Cry’, Warumpi Band; ‘Tjap-wurrung Country’, Neil Murray; and ‘This Land’s Worth More Than Gold and Silver’, Phil Moncrieff); celebration of the victory for land rights (‘Land Rights’, Sunrize Band; ‘Nitmiluk’, Bliekbaa Mujik; and ‘From Little Things Big Things Grow’, Paul Kelly/Kev Carmody); people’s attachment to their country (‘Big Mountain Wilpena Pound’, Artooarapana Band; and ‘Nukkanya’, Paul Kelly); celebration of indigenous culture (‘Kulba Yaday’, Christine Anu; ‘Yolngu’, Frances Williams; ‘A Little Drop’, Minnie Read; and ‘Original Aboriginal’, Dave Quinlan); and, indigenous self-determination (‘Climbing the Mountain’, Amunda). Due to the diversity of artists and thus their diverse community and individual identity affiliations, there is arguably a sense of multiple indigenous identities being acknowledged rather than a monolithic one being constructed. Such diversity reflects to some degree the pre- and post-colonial variability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, which was often ignored when overriding legislation or policies lumped them together. Each community would have had particular relationships to past, space, and culture and music would have helped to articulate and reinforce those relationships.

The fact ATSIC had a particular political agenda — communicating information about native title — and set about creating a ‘theme’ recording, did not render its artistic production strained or difficult to achieve. Micallef (1997) points out three-quarters of CAAMA bands write songs about land as a matter of course and ‘half their songs are about their land and their country’. Given the different communicative aims of the two main producers, it was agreed these two organisations would handle different aspects of media promotion: ATSIC would provide information on Native Title and land rights issues, and CAAMA would focus on the logistics of production, the implementation of the song contest, and the recording process and participation of the artists.

Our Home, Our Land’s title song is featured three times, at the beginning, middle and end of the recording. Although the song lyrics do not deal with native title or land rights issues specifically, they set the general themes for the recording: indigenous people’s connection to the land and the interplay of past, space, and culture. The appearance of three different versions of the song provides a physical framework for the recording, as well as a thread of continuity throughout it.

The placement of these three tracks illustrates the balance and tension between the political, artistic and cultural agendas in this project. The first version (track 1) sets the
tone for the recording as a whole: a large collaborative effort. It was recorded at CAAMA Studios in Alice Springs by songwriter Lou Bennett of Tiddas, along with a number of other well-known indigenous and non-indigenous artists, including Sally Dastey and Amy Saunders of Tiddas, Kev Carmody, Archie Roach, Ruby Hunter, Bart Willoughby, Buna Lawrie, Sammy Butcher, Shane Howard and David Bridie. Although the lyrics contain a political message ('Now you're listening not just hearing the tears/ Of a people who've been shouting out for years'), the relatively slow-paced, relaxed performance, use of acoustic guitars, and vocal harmonies create an atmosphere of calm but optimistic political and artistic accord.

The second version of the song (track 10) is more overtly political: the instrumental background is overdubbed with excerpts from speeches made by plaintiffs in the Mabo case (including Eddie Koiki Mabo himself), Lois (Lowitja) O'Donoghue, former ATSIC Chair, and former Prime Minister Paul Keating. Micallef mentions he was initially reluctant to include these speeches on the recording — particularly Keating's, in which he admits European Australians were responsible for murdering and discriminating against indigenous people — because of their political overtones: 'After all, this is supposed to be an artistic production, not out and out propaganda ... We're a creative company, we want to talk to people through emotions. Now I'm really happy it's there [referring to Keating's speech], because ... it marks the high point of Aboriginal reconciliation in Australia' (Micallef 1997).

The third version of the title song (track 24), appearing at the end of the recording, can be seen as the most 'culturally traditional' of the three versions. According to Micallef, Buna Lawrie (of Coloured Stone) was inspired during the process of recording the original song, to translate Bennett's lyrics into Yirgala Miming, an Aboriginal language spoken in South Australia. Lawrie performs this version solo, to the accompaniment of didjeridu and clapsticks.5

This song is emblematic not only of the recording as an end-product, but also the process of its production, which from inception to composition to recording is represented as an organic movement, culminating in the establishment of an holistic identity narrative. Micallef points out Lou Bennett, when approached by ATSIC and CAAMA, said she was already thinking of writing a song 'about land', and produced a demo tape with guitar and voice within three weeks of being commissioned. Musicians and producers were flown to Alice Springs to record the song at CAAMA studios for three days, and according to Micallef, the producers changed Bennett’s original song very little, other than to bring in more performers. Micallef (1997) describes those three days as very positive, because the musicians and producers knew they were in an indigenous facility: 'singing and writing and being creative ... as part of a team. What was really important was gathering the people together: the process, rather than the product'.

Micallef (1997) describes the recording as a 'narrative, an identity package, the whole of which says more than the sum of the parts'. The emphasis on process in the production of this recording resonates with Martin's notion of the past, space and cul-

5. Given that the didjeridu was not part of the 'traditional' culture in Lawrie's homeland area in South Australia, its inclusion highlights the mutability of emblems (not just musical ones) employed in identity narratives.
ture as three key 'pillars' of identity narratives. The physical and cultural 'space' of CAAMA studios was felt by the musicians to be a place where they, as indigenous artists, could be culturally sustained and creative: it was a positive space from which a current identity narrative could — and would — flow, weaving together the themes of process, collaboration, and reconciliation.

These themes are highlighted in the recording cover-notes, which include two pages of photos taken during the recording session featuring the various artists involved, and in the eponymous video/documentary featuring the title song, video and documentary being integral formats for promoting indigenous commercial and cultural agendas (Magowan 1996). Shot in the studio during recording (and integrating footage from other sources), this video/documentary is mostly a self-referential piece, described by Micallef as created primarily to document the process of production. Done in black and white, the footage from the recording sessions chronicles musicians and producers, indigenous and non-indigenous, working together. Although performers are shown only within the confines of the studio, they are filmed looking up, and off into the distance, which places the artists beyond those four walls, and onto the 'land' to which the song lyrics refer.

This video illustrates how the words of the song's chorus ('Our home is our land where we stand together') serve as a bridge between the subject of the song and the process of producing an end-product. Further, the 'affective load' in this narrative is one which cements the current creative process with indigenous historical and mythical pasts. Songwriter Lou Bennett comments the song will 'make our old people cry. It's one of those songs that hit you in the heart' (ATSIC 1995:12), alluding to the suffering of indigenous people in the history of colonial and post-colonial contact. The words of the chorus, 'We sing our home... we dance our land... where we stand together' refer to traditional indigenous relationships with country — it is not enough just to live on the land, one must continually recreate and maintain it through ceremony, which includes singing and dancing.6

Conclusion
The wide variety of indigenous identity discourses and identity affiliations revealed on Our Home Our Land highlight the complexity and inherent selectivity of deciding not only what is contemporary 'indigenous identity' but also which musical styles might represent it. Arguably the artists reflect the diversity of indigenous cultures and represent particular linkages being made (through different musical genres) to different but not dissimilar notions of past, space, and culture. For example, there are artists from all over Australia and from remote, rural, and urban communities; there are artists who use English as their primary language and others who use it as an additional language; there are seasoned performers and novices. However, there is an underlying notion informing the CD and that is the notion of diverse, non-essentialistic, changeable identities (personal, group, musical) which can collectively be labelled 'indigenous'.

The addition or subtraction of indigenous instrumentation or language does not automatically render one or the other either less or more 'authentic' as an expression of

identity. A stress on diversity helps confound the ever-present (and often highly profitable) caricatures of touristic, political or talk-back radio images of what constitutes a ‘real’ or ‘unreal’ indigenous Australian. The songs on the CD may be intensely local in content but they also may be national in context because they highlight commonalities of experiences and aspirations shared by many indigenous Australians. They also may be transnational in the sense of pointing out similarities (in impetus and responses) among other indigenous peoples in settler colonies.

The CD and the processes of its textual and cultural production represent an identity narrative which situates indigenous people in the present, while simultaneously connecting them with their ‘past’. Just as indigenous ‘traditional’ songs are used to ‘sing the landscape’ of Australia, the songs on this recording are used to sing its ‘humanscape’. As a historical document it chronicles a particular time when public debates centred on the nature of ethnicity, race and the nation; notions of cultural affiliation; and the politics of place. In terms of creativity and culture the process of making the CD may well have superseded the end-product in terms of commerce, but that dynamic is also an integral but often overlooked (or misunderstood) aspect of the performance aesthetic.

Our Home Our Land’s celebration of the recognition and implementation of Native Title in Common Law and land rights achieves a level of poignancy when considered in juxtaposition to the ensuing moves at federal and state/territorial levels to diminish or reverse ground gained. However, rather than attacking dominant discourses which have a history of denigrating or marginalising indigenous voices, this project has inserted its end product into the arena within which these discourses move. The recording arguably achieves its aims to inform people about Native Title, encourage indigenous media organisations, inspire indigenous musicians, and celebrate what has been achieved thus far collectively. It provides an answer to implicit questions permeating contemporary Australian debates about where indigenous voices should be ‘located’ and how they should be ‘heard’: not only do those voices belong on the land, which is their home, but they are equally ‘at home’ within the mainstream.

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Aboriginality and historical consciousness: 
Bernard O’Dowd and the creation of an 
Australian national imaginary

Frank Bongiorno

If he is not a poet, he has in him the elements of poetry...
He has many very good qualities and many very bad ones; and in the contrarieties
of his mental constitution there is much to remind us of the peculiarities of the
people of our own race.
R Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* (1878) xviii

WHILE Senator Keating was discoursing on Wednesday at the Australian Natives’
Association Conference at Bairnsdale, on the advantages of technical education to the
Australian natives, an odd figure, garbed in a military uniform, appeared at the door­
way of the hall. Though not a member of the association, the visitor was undoubtedly
an Australian native. A huge medal, hanging from a string encircling his swarthy
neck, set forth that he was of Royal birth, being no other than ‘King Bobbie of Bunder­
wall.’ With many broad and amiable grins, and much scraping and bowing, he
advanced into the hall. A great roar of laughter and some cheering greeted his appear­
ance, and the president ordered his removal. As, however, he respectfully uncovered
his head, and evinced much interest in the proceedings, he was accommodated with a
seat, and allowed to listen to the speeches of his white compatriots.
*Argus*, quoted in *Steele Rudd’s Magazine*, November 1905, p. 1009

Here, and here only in an age of iron,
The dreamers are proved right;
No armies underlie these rolling fields,
No lost loves haunt the night,
Nor can the farmer, turning with his spade,
Bring shard or helm to light.


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1. The Australian Natives Association was a nationalist benefit society established in Melbourne
in 1871. Its membership was restricted to (white) men born in Australia. The term ‘native’ was
frequently used in reference to such men (and women) in order to distinguish them from
immigrants.
Australian cultural historians have recently given considerable attention to the ways in which some white Australians have appropriated and incorporated Aboriginal culture in their efforts ‘to assemble a national identity’. In much twentieth century Australian historical writing, the development of nationhood has been understood as a process of maturation or ‘growing up’, in which colonists come to terms with their environment and define themselves in relation to the mother country. Until recently, white Australian images of Aboriginal culture have not figured prominently in these accounts. Within the tradition of imperial history, there was an emphasis on the ways in which colonists reconciled their British imperial identity with a sense of being colonial and therefore at the margins; in radical nationalist writing, the stress was on the ways in which Australians differentiated themselves from the parent culture. Indeed, it is only in recent times, as historians have embraced a more critical understanding of the nation-state, that the manner in which white Australian myth-makers have appropriated Aboriginal culture has entered discussion of Australian national identity. This revisionism has occurred as part of a larger post-colonial awareness of white Australians’ status as colonisers and even invaders, while the ubiquity of images of Aboriginality in contemporary representations of the nation has also kindled interest in this issue. The invention and promotion of such images involve an appropriation of the Aboriginal presence in a manner that ‘permits the Australian national imaginary to claim certain critical and valuable aspects of “the Other” as essentially part of itself’. As Denis Byrne has shown, this project has as its end the production of a ‘deep nation’ based on the assimilation of a “detached” version of Aboriginal culture’ derived from the ‘natural history, ethnology, antiquarianism and archaeology’ of the colonisers. Aboriginality becomes a constituent in a larger complex of sounds and images that signify Australian national identity, a process in which some Aboriginal people might now sometimes be complicit, but which they cannot control.

This process did not begin yesterday; it has a history. Tom Griffiths has recently drawn attention to what he calls ‘European rituals of place or “land rites”’, which ‘aimed to secure the land emotionally and spiritually for the settler society’. He argues that these ‘land rites were most overt during the early decades of the twentieth century, the very period when acknowledgement of the violence and illegitimacy of the European invasion of Australia was most strongly suppressed and denied’. This article is a study of one writer’s contribution to European ‘land rites’. Bernard O’Dowd’s activities as a nationalist poet and radical intellectual have already received considerable attention, but there has been little recognition in this work of his attitude to Aborigines, nor of the connections between his attitudes to race and his nationalism. This is somewhat surprising in view of O’Dowd’s well known opposition to the White Australia policy. Indeed, O’Dowd’s hostility to racial discrimination poses peculiar problems for an

4. For an excellent overview of these themes, see Attwood 1992.
understanding of his nationalism, as so much historical writing on Australian nationalism has assumed ‘racism’ (however defined) to be its corollary.9

National history, landscape and the ‘native’

Bernard Patrick O’Dowd (1866–1953) was born at Beaufort in Victoria and raised as a Catholic by Irish-born parents, who immersed their son in the Celtic ballads, myths and legends of their ancestors. It was an upbringing calculated to foster an awareness of both the power of myths and legends, and of the dearth of ‘magic’ in conventional colonial attitudes to the Australian landscape, at least in comparison with the rich cultural capital he had inherited from his parents.10 In this respect, there are striking similarities between O’Dowd and the New Zealand public servant and writer Edward Tregear. In a biography of Tregear, KR Howe describes his subject as ‘a sensitive and highly imaginative boy who steeped himself in medieval legend and Celtic mythology’.11 This could just as easily be a description of a youthful O’Dowd. Both men were involved in the freethought movements in their respective countries, and both joined the Theosophical Society, suggesting a common interest in comparative religion and mythology.12 Tregear is remembered today for his contribution as a public servant to New Zealand’s state experiments and his investigations of the origins of the Maori, whom he believed to be descended from the Aryans of India. Howe argues that through his writings on this latter subject, Tregear aimed to give ‘meaning and identity to the past and present of a new land’.13

With his ‘discovery’ that Maori were Aryans, Tregear’s New Zealand was no longer ‘songless’ — that hostile barren land without history which once he had peopled with princes, kings and deities inspired by classical and Arthurian legend ... His adopted country now had an imaginative and historical landscape ... Tregear filled a desolate land with people, history, mythology and culture that he could understand, relate to, and willingly embrace. It was a feat of intellectual occupation, possession and control.

Tregear had ‘figuratively domesticated a whole country and its original inhabitants’, making of New Zealand ‘his emotional, spiritual and cultural home’.14

O’Dowd, as we shall see, was engaged in a similar act of knowing and possessing. According to his biographers, his reading of the work of Baldwin Spencer and FJ Gillen on the central Australian Aborigines and RB Smyth’s The Aborigines of Victoria (1878) helped to nourish an imagination preoccupied with the problems of living in a ‘new country’ (new, that is, to European colonists) that also had a much longer natural and human history.15 Indeed, he considered the writings of Spencer and Gillen ‘as signifi-

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cant to the philosopher and as inspiring to the poet as they are important to the scientific man', 16 while Smyth, another favourite of O'Dowd, had hinted at a common Aryan heritage for black and white Australians, emphasising the similarities between 'the legends of the natives' and 'the folk-lore of the Aryan or Indo-European race'. 17 There was a powerful cultural nationalism at the heart of both Tregear's and O'Dowd's activities, a desire to show that '[t]he antipodean environment and both its old and new societies were fit subjects in themselves for artistic expression'. 18 The attempt to place the 'native' in world history was an integral part of this project.

Brian Elliott, virtually alone among literary critics and cultural historians, has noticed O'Dowd's appropriation of Aboriginal culture (or at least Aboriginal culture as it was represented in the writings of Spencer and Gillen), and stresses his pioneering role in the use of the concept of the 'Alcheringa' (or 'dream times'). 19 In this respect, he portrays O'Dowd as an ancestor of the Jindyworobak poets of the 1930s–1950s, who sought to use Aboriginal culture to create an Australian poetry infused with 'environmental values'. Elliott, however, who was himself a Jindyworobak, is committed to the idea that the Aborigines and the Jindyworobaks, in their relationship to the land, shared in 'a mystical experience ... which may be designated for both the white and the black, though with different implications, as Australian site-magic': there was 'sharing, and therefore universality'. 20 As David Carter has remarked, this understanding of the relationship between Aborigines, Europeans and the land has been influential in recent representations of the nation, but it 'carries its own form of blindness ... Aboriginality is performed for the benefit of non-Aboriginal Australia'. 21

O'Dowd's principal concern was the construction of a national culture for the settler colonies rather than the understanding of Aboriginal society as a living presence. He appeared to accept the idea common among his (European) contemporaries that it was the desert Aborigines, those portrayed by Spencer and Gillen and assumed to be primitive and uncontaminated by civilisation, who were now 'real' Aborigines. This view, which often involved a dismissal of the cultures of so-called 'degraded blacks' living in more closely settled areas, depended on an acceptance of Social Darwinism. There is, moreover, no evidence that O'Dowd had any interest in regional cultural differences: such recognition would have been foreign to his purposes in appropriating Aboriginal culture. Yet Aboriginal people were a living presence in the Ballarat district in which Bernard grew up. Victor Kennedy and Nettie Palmer remark in their authorised biography that young Bernard was frightened by 'the handful of blacks who wandered into the settlement' of Beaufort 'with their dogs and strange weapons'. Later they supposedly 'drew him into their circle', and he brought water to their camp from the family home. Their 'ancient chief', whom Bernard remembered affectionately as one 'King Billy', called him 'Yarrum-Yarrum' (little water-carrier). 22 Yet, like many of his

16. Tocsin, 7 September 1899.
contemporaries, it was to the interior that Bernard later looked for an authentic Aboriginality.

O'Dowd's problem was how imaginatively to possess a landscape which he knew had been previously possessed (both imaginatively and otherwise) by Aboriginal people. As we shall see, this was one of the aims of his long poem, The Bush, in which O'Dowd's 'ideal nation was inseparable as a concept from the landscape which sustained it'. Anthony Smith has seen this project of attaching a poetic to the landscape as a crucial dimension of the process of nation formation. Intellectuals, he argues, create 'new "maps" and "moraleities" through the uses of landscape and golden ages of a rediscovered and reconstructed communal past'. One of their typical modes of behaviour is the creation of 'poetic spaces', the endowment of a particular physical entity 'with poetic and historical connotations, or rather with an historical poetry'. Educator-intellectuals seek to turn 'bare nature into poetic history'. This might also involve the transformation of particular historical features (he cites Stonehenge as an example) into symbols of nationality. Uluru has been pressed into the service of Australian national identity in this manner over the last few decades; and, since the coming of the Europeans to Australia, both the bush and the desert have served the myth-making purposes of nationalist writers and intellectuals.

O'Dowd turned to both bush and desert in his effort to create a national imaginary. As Roslynn D Haynes has recently shown, by the 1890s the desert 'had succeeded the Bush as the actual frontier' in Australia, although it suffered some serious disadvantages as a potential symbol of national identity, being 'neither profitable nor picturesque' in the eyes of most colonists. O'Dowd, however, always on the lookout for materials with which to construct an Australian pantheon, invested great symbolic significance in Chambers Pillar, a prominent central Australian rock formation, where he claimed to commune (in spirit) with his 'Comrade' and 'Comforter' (apparently a woman living in Western Australia):

When She and I meet (almost nightly, indeed in holiday times and on north-wind days almost daily also) it is usually in the vicinity of Chambers' Pillar in Centralia: for not only is it a convenient half-way house in our separating desert, but there is something so sacredly and intimately Australian in the virgin solitude, something so unspoilt and unspoilable in the native aura of the place, that here surely is the Olympus of the Australian dispensation, where the gods we make by our virtues and our powers shall abide and cherish us for ever.

O'Dowd never actually visited the place, but Chambers Pillar featured in The report of the Horn Scientific Expedition to central Australia (1896), which was edited by Melbourne University biologist Baldwin Spencer and read by O'Dowd. (It was apparently

26. O'Dowd, 'Morgana Mine and Other Realities', in O'Dowd 1944: 267. It was first published in 1907.
27. For details of the Horn Expedition of 1894, see Mulvaney and Calaby 1985; Morton and Mulvaney 1996. The expedition has now been widely recognised as an important moment in white Australian perceptions of both central Australia and the Aboriginal people. It was concerned with geology, biology and anthropology.
Alfred Deakin who arranged for O'Dowd to have access to the Parliamentary Library's copy.)28 There is a photograph of the formation in the anthropology volume (Pt IV). In Spencer's narrative in the introductory volume, 'Through Larapinta Land', the importance of the pillar to the local Aborigines attracts some comment:

The blacks have a rather curious myth to account for the origin of the pillar. They say that in what they call the Alcheringa (or as Mr. Gillen appropriately renders it the 'dream times'), a certain noted warrior journeyed to the east and killing with his big stone knife all the men, he seized the women and brought them back with him to his own country. Camping for the night on this spot he and the women were transformed into stone, and it is his body which now forms the pillar, whilst the women were fashioned into the fantastic peaks grouped together to form what is now known as Castle Hill, a mile away to the north.29

This was the first mention of the 'Alcheringa' (and of 'dream times') in the report, and, indeed, 'in European writings about central Australia'. It was also, according to Barry Hill, an important moment in European understanding of 'the fundamental connections between place and human settlement in Australia', in its notion of a 'body' being a 'pillar'.30 The passage evidently had a considerable impact on O'Dowd's imagination, inclined, as it was, towards any 'intimation of a local classical past preceding or congruent with the Aboriginal presence'.31 Chambers Pillar becomes Olympus; the Alcheringa, an Australian golden age. In 1947 O'Dowd made large claims about his own role in popularising the term 'Alcheringa':

I think I was the first to put 'Alcheringa' into our literature & have no doubt, aesthetically, that mine is the apt pronunciation ... My house in Moonee Ponds was 'Alcheringa', & thus pronounced by a myriad postmen &c, often before the new 'poets' were born. As it's our local Garden of Eden, Saturnian age &c. &c. it deserves a worthy pronunciation, & I claim that, both by analogy with 'churinga' & similar words, and by usage for a 1/4 century anyway, & by the chrism of dignity mine fills the bill.32

A striking feature of this passage is O'Dowd's assumption that the term is ripe for appropriation by white Australian writers: the 'Alcheringa' is 'our local Garden of Eden' (my emphasis) and the manner in which the word is pronounced should be decided by reference to considerations defined by European Australians, who he assumes have acquired ownership of the term and concept via his own pioneering effort. O'Dowd's naming of his own home 'Alcheringa' dramatises this sense of ownership, metaphorically domesticating Aboriginality for the use of suburban Australia.

In a study of the place of the Dreamtime in Australian anthropology and culture, Patrick Wolfe has argued that 'the Dreaming complex was an invention of the anthropologists' own culture'. In his view, the growing popularity of the concept both inside and outside the anthropological profession in the twentieth century can be explained by its usefulness to the colonising project of the white settler society. The concept pio-

28 O'Dowd to N Palmer, 31 December 1947, Palmer Papers, National Library of Australia (NLA) MS 1174/1/7326.
30 Hill 1996: 32.
31 Griffiths 1996: 36.
32 O'Dowd to N Palmer, 31 December 1947, Palmer Papers, NLA MS 1174/1/7326.
neered by Spencer and Gillen ‘subordinated dreaming savages to the level of animal nature’. This view has been more recently challenged by Howard Morphy, who emphasises the disjunctures between the anthropological work of Spencer and Gillen and the colonising process. Although Spencer and Gillen’s perspective was shaped by evolutionary biology, ‘[t]he vividness of their data and the detail of their accounts subtly changed the nature of the discourse away from Aborigines as exemplars of early stages of human evolution to understanding Aboriginal religion in its own right’. Their findings in many respects ‘contradicted the evolutionary framework that underpinned their research and challenged the treatment of Aborigines’.  

As we shall see, a similar ambivalence about the Aborigines and the colonising project enters O’Dowd’s writing in the 1890s, prompted partly by his reading of anthropological work such as that of Spencer and Gillen. For O’Dowd, the Aborigines enter ‘national consciousness only when appropriated and integrated with the culture and history of the coloniser’. Far from being part of the national culture in their own right, they are a mystical stone-age leftover, or ‘living fossils’. O’Dowd would not have needed to read the report of the Horn Expedition to formulate such an understanding, but that publication probably reinforced attitudes already held. In his Introduction to the report, the expedition’s sponsor, WA Horn, described the central Australian Aborigine as ‘the living representative of a stone age’ whose ‘origin and history’ were ‘lost in the gloomy mists of the past’. As Griffiths comments, the expedition ‘revealed the richness of central Australian Aboriginal culture only to deny it in the service of Social Darwinism’. O’Dowd, in every sense a child of the age of Darwin, shared the evolutionary perspective of the Horn expeditioners, and, as his most famous poem (‘Australia’) indicates, like them he was attracted to the idea of Australia as a kind of ‘continental museum where the past was made present in nature’:

The cenotaphs of species dead elsewhere  
That in your limits leap and swim and fly,  
Or trail uncanny harp-strings from your trees ...

The ‘primitive’ Aboriginal people were easily assimilated into this perspective.

The influence of the report of the Horn Expedition is registered elsewhere in O’Dowd’s writings, as is his desire to domesticate Aboriginality. In an 1897 article with the title ‘The Dream Times’, published in the Australian Natives Association’s Advance Australia, O’Dowd ridiculed the notion that Australians should confine themselves to the construction of ‘as decent a makeshift antiquity as possible for ordinary domestic purposes’. Australians had in their culture ‘the elements ... of Romance’:

As inevitably as our backblocksmen will make our central deserts blossom as the rose, will our embryonic historians, mythologists, anthropologists, and poets teem the seeming blank of our past with strange sociologies and politics, with themes, powers, and dominations undreamt of by the plagiarising thaumaturgists of European Art.

O'Dowd’s tendency to see himself as both a participant in and a commentator on this process of invention has caused confusion among some literary critics. This dual role is evident in those early stanzas of *The Bush* that have so annoyed even admirers of O'Dowd and the poem. These were filled with references to figures associated with Australian politics, art and literature — many of them friends of O'Dowd — whose identities and activities are, sometimes with considerable skill and humour, conflated with people, places and events from the history and mythologies of other lands. So we find Walter Murdoch as ‘Zenobia’s counsellor’, future scholars restoring Australia’s ‘prehistoric drama’ from Louis Esson’s ‘The Woman Tamer’, and references to ‘Longmore-featured Gracchi’ and the ‘Greek-browed Higinbotham’. Baldwin ‘Spencer sails from Alcheringa bringing/Intaglios, totems and Books of the Dead’, while ‘Herod’s daughter sools her ‘morning daily’/On John the Baptist by the Yarra Bank’. The poet sees these Australians as contributing to a future national historical consciousness, for their young nation ‘is the whole world’s legatee’, ‘a prophecy to be fulfilled’, ‘the scroll on which we are to write/Mythologies our own and epics new’. Meanwhile, O'Dowd erases the Aboriginal presence from the country, accepting the legal fiction of terra nullius so that Australia becomes ‘The Sleeping Beauty of the World’s desire’ who (in Haynes’s words) is ‘passively awaiting the arrival of its princely (and pre-ordained) colonists’. Australia is assimilated to a European utopian vision, while ‘The Bush’ moulds for colonists ‘white ideals to obey’.

Yet there is ambivalence: total obliteration of the Aboriginal presence is not feasible, if only because the Aborigines are required to contribute to the Gothic atmosphere of certain sections of the poem (‘Spectral a tribe round poisoned rations shrieks’). The Aborigines thus become a part of the landscape itself, rather than a living presence in the coming nation; and, as if to dramatise the point, the stanza (20) that mentions the shrieking tribe also contains references to Adam Lindsay Gordon, Robert O’Hara Burke, Ludwig Leichhardt and Barcroft Boake, all of whom either killed themselves or perished in the Australian desert. O'Dowd, moreover, adheres to the lost race convention which, as several cultural historians have shown, was common in much popular writing of the turn of the century. It eliminated any real possibility of an empathetic understanding of Aboriginal culture: they were, after all, probably remnants of some lost white tribe, paying the price for their fathers’ sins.

O'Dowd seems to have viewed his own role as both that of national myth-maker — the kind of educator-intellectual to whom Smith has drawn attention — and also, as his ‘The Dream Times’ article suggests, as a commentator on the business of myth-making. He understood that nations are, to some extent, made in the minds of men and women. Consequently, he supported organisations that defined their role as the fostering of an Australian historical consciousness. Although he was unable to attend the first meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria in 1909, he was ‘in entire sympathy with aims — indeed, considered establishment of some such means of preserving the raw materials of our future noble historical tapestry a civic duty on Australians’.

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38. *Advance Australia*, 1 June 1897.
was also a contributor to Isaac Selby's Old Pioneers Memorial Fund, which campaigned in the early 1920s — unsuccessfully — to preserve the Old Melbourne Cemetery from destruction and have a war memorial built on the site. As Griffiths has shown, Selby appealed to the court of historical authenticity in his effort to preserve the material remains of the colonial past from the crude claims of modern commerce, an argument that O'Dowd, as a socialist, would have found attractive.

**Lemuria, theosophy and Aboriginality**

For O'Dowd, one way in which this romantic national consciousness — an 'indigenous' sense of the past — would be created was by connecting the history of the Australian continent and the Aboriginal people to the history of humanity. Indeed, he saw in Aboriginal cultural practices, myths and legends circumstantial evidence of a secret history of a lost white civilisation of central Australia. His discussion of the Aborigines is connected to a Lemurian myth that historians have seen as characteristic of the 1890s in Australia (and elsewhere). Lemuria was the name which PL Sclater, a zoologist, gave to a lost continent that had once supposedly extended from South-East Asia nearly to Africa. As the Mosaic chronology became widely discredited in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was considerable room for speculation about lost continents and 'primitive' peoples. In this connection, O'Dowd might have been influenced by the ideas of HP Blavatsky, one of the founders of theosophy: Bernard had been associated with the Society, sometimes as a member, since the 1890s. Jill Roe has pointed to Blavatsky's role in popularising the concept of Lemuria through her writings such as *The Secret Doctrine*, although it is likely that O'Dowd would already have encountered the idea in the work of German biologist Ernst Haeckel, who regarded Lemuria as 'the probable cradle of the human race'. Blavatsky believed that Australia had once been 'an inland region on the Mother Continent'. This view gave Australia 'profound importance' in world history. (No wonder it appealed to a cultural nationalist such as O'Dowd!) Blavatsky's view of history was essentially cyclical, and the Lemurians were the third of five root-races that had thus far featured in world history. They were originally 'bi-sexual', and the most mysterious of the root-races: theirs was 'a golden age of elemental religion'.

42. O'Dowd to AW Grieg, 19 May 1909, Historical Society of Victoria, Correspondence [2 April 1909 – 17 June 1910], Box 35/10(a), Royal Historical Society of Victoria Collection, also quoted in Griffiths 1996a: 208.
43. *Report of the Old Pioneers Memorial Fund, 5 July 1926 (Isaac Selby, Secretary)*, in Isaac Selby, Memorandum Book, SN 18, MS 694, Royal Historical Society of Victoria Collection. O'Dowd is in the list of subscribers. He gave £1. He is also in the list of subscribers for 1932 as having donated one guinea.
46. Spence 1932.
48. Samuel Studd (Honorary Secretary, Melbourne Theosophical Society) to O'Dowd, 12 June 1899, HH Pearce Papers, NLA MS 2765/9/1/2. O'Dowd had failed to pay his dues.
For Blavatsky, the Australian Aborigines — or at least some of them — were descended from the Lemurians:

The Secret Doctrine teaches that the specific unity of mankind is not without exceptions even now. For there are ... descendants of these half-animal tribes or races, both of remote Lemurian and Lemuro-Atlantean origin. The world knows them as Tasmanians (now extinct) [and] Australians.

This absurd perspective, which as Jill Roe has shown drew on Social Darwinist ideas for occult purposes, could offer powerful support for colonisation and dispossession. The Australian descendants of the Lemurians, after all, in Blavatsky’s view belonged to ‘a very low sub-race, begotten originally of animals, of monsters, whose very fossils are now resting miles under the sea floors’. She claimed that they had existed for thousands of years ‘in an environment strongly subjected to the law of retardation’, and so had become ‘degraded men’. The Aborigines, she declared, were ‘the descendants of those, who, instead of vivifying the spark dropped into them by the ‘Flames’, extinguished it by long generations of bestiality’. They were thus not merely a doomed race; Blavatsky also denied the Aborigines a full measure of humanity, attributing to them a spurious hybrid quality — part animal, part human. Consequently, she believed Aborigines unfit ‘to occupy the forms of men destined for incarnation in higher intellectual Races’. Indeed, their passing, for her, seemed to provide proof of Karma, since the races whose time was up were being destroyed all over the globe. Esoteric philosophy regarded them as ‘the senile representatives of lost archaic nations’. ‘It is inaccurate’, Blavatsky asserted, ‘to maintain that the extinction of a lower race is invariably due to cruelties or abuses perpetrated by colonists’. The ancient Australian continent could ‘produce no new forms, unless helped by new and fresh races, and artificial cultivation and breeding’.

This type of speculation, which spawned a body of popular literature considerable in size if not in quality, appealed to some white Australians who desired to furnish themselves with a history which had happened on their own continent; theirs was an effort to find deeper roots in the soil, to resolve the problem of being colonial by inventing an ancient history for this continent in which the whites had a part. Yet as John Docker has remarked, Lemuria’s antiquity also

allows for ... the discomforting thought that history is not necessarily a narrative of linear progress ... nations and societies wax and wane in strength and power, they rise and fall, even the mightiest of them, often ending, after some kind of cataclysm, in disappearance or barbarism – when they have to start all over again.

We cannot be sure of the extent to which O’Dowd took theosophical speculation about Lemuria on board, but it did provide a part of the framework he used to understand the Australian Aborigines and their place in world history. He remarked that

[M]any things tend to confirm our instinct of a past ... The singular relics of Easter Island ... taken in conjunction with the Darwinian theory of coral reefs, and the coralline surroundings of so much of our coast line, point to a connection between Australia and some strange civilisation that has weirdly flitted into temporary

oblivion. The customs of our aboriginal tribes often hark us back to some strangely-wise statesman or divine prophet who, unassisted by even an alphabet, winged his devices for securing the greatest good of his race through countless generations of as hopeless brain material as ever this world has owned. The legends of these peoples are full of... startling suggestions of Caucasian — or at least high-grade Turanian — influences...54

Although the theory that Aboriginal people and Caucasians were related had some scientific support at this time, the implication here is that the complexity of Aboriginal society is only explicable if we can find evidence of the influence of the so-called higher races. One is reminded here of the explorer George Grey’s belief that Aboriginal rock paintings he encountered in north-west Australia could not ‘have been executed by a self-taught savage’, and so might have been painted by an alien race.55 O’Dowd invents an ancient history of Australia that does not allow Aborigines to have their own history, although one cannot help wondering how seriously he intended readers to take his suggestion that the Carthaginian,

... degraded by a plutocratic commercialism brutally like our own, and devitalised by the sensuous excesses of the cults of Aphrodite Pandemos, or the maniac mutilations of Adonaic mysticism, is now wandering a craven savage over Centralian sandhills, practising alternately, as in a hideous nightmare of the past, the same excesses and the same mutilations.56

Yet the idea that the Aborigines were somehow expiating the sins of some past great civilisation occurs elsewhere in O’Dowd’s writing. It is a testament to the importance of the lost race convention for him, as well as of the strength of the Hebraic tradition of the desert as ‘not only a perpetual reminder of the Fall’ but also ‘a warning that disobedience to God will perpetuate the curse’.57 The passage quoted above, moreover, reveals O’Dowd’s attachment to the doctrine of reincarnation, which was central to theosophical belief.

O’Dowd was also unable to resist locating the Aborigines within a crude evolutionary framework. In an unpublished autobiographical piece written in the 1880s, he had put in the mouth of a character obviously based on himself the view that ‘there was as great a difference between the Caucasian and the Australian black as there was between the latter and the gorilla’.58 O’Dowd was unable to account for the presence of the Aborigines, except as some dross subsequently thrown up by a strange continent:

The wretched horde whom Europe’s host
In this strange land found
Are but the flotsam of our coast
Mere exudations from the ground.59

54. Advance Australia, 1 June 1897. For the theory that Aboriginal people were related to the Caucasians, see McGregor 1996.
56. Advance Australia, 1 June 1897.
By the late 1890s, probably as a consequence of his reading of the report of the Horn Expedition and the early work of Spencer and Gillen, he had modified his attitude, but something rather stronger than mere traces remained. On the contrary, the older attitude is sharply refracted by the Lemurian myth, as when O'Dowd asked whether ‘our dirty black brother’ is ‘the sole relic of an Atlantean civilisation, which, weighed in the balance and found wanting, had paid the price of extinction, by some great divine tide, for the abuse of its holy trust?’. O’Dowd places Aboriginality at the disposal of the colonial culture: here was ‘a piece of the past on which to build epics and comic stories’.  

In his study of colonial popular fiction, Robert Dixon has suggested that there was acute anxiety at the heart of Australian colonialism, a fear ‘when Englishness is lost there is nothing to replace it; that in Australia, nation, like the interior of the continent, is a nameless blank’. Australia is thus condemned ‘to a state of unstable hybridity — at once English and not English, and yet equally unable to be equated with those other, external identities which make readable its difference from Britain — Aborigines, Asia, the Pacific, Woman’. ‘The lost race’, in this scenario, becomes ‘the unspeakable, unthinkable destiny of the national self’.  

According to Docker, ‘[t]he tale of a lost white civilisation ... is not necessarily comforting’ for Europeans, as ‘[i]t can suggest the instability of all civilisations in history ... there is no guarantee of permanency and superiority for present white society’. The only short story O’Dowd published — ‘The City of Tramps’ (1897) — dealt with such a lost race. In this Gothic tale, O'Dowd wrote about the strange rituals of an army of outcasts assembled in the Australian outback. The desert, in this story, is a threatening place: the Southern Cross glares at our hero ‘like evil eyes’, and he encounters all manner of ‘deadbeats’ in the heart of the continent, ‘male, female and sexless’. The latter assemble in an encampment — a lost tribe of social outcasts — and their dress and conduct clearly announce their barbaric or ‘native’ status: ‘They were nearly all in rags, but arranged with some attempts at gala dress — gum leaves and desert flowers, and crowns of spinifex being common.’ They carried an old one-eyed man on their shoulders, and sang ‘Our Wild Australian King’, which was ‘plentifully interspersed with ‘crimson’ accentuations’, and had ‘a fiendishly brutal and indelicate refrain at the end of each line’. At the end of this procession, the ‘king’ gave his speech from the throne, which was

a wild defiance of civilisation, a hiss of hate against the selfish happy settled folk of the world, a rallying call to the cornered rats of human society, an appeal to the basic anti-religious, anti-moral, anti-social emotions of his hearers, a flaring torch applied to their rebellion against control, to their wildest passions, a call to war, and a promise of spoils.

The author describes a wild orgy, which commenced when a band of naked Aboriginal women appeared on the scene. Poles were erected and covered in gum leaves, and a song and a dance occurred ‘to the frantic delight of the assemblage’. When the Aboriginal women had stripped off all the gum leaves and thus completed the dance ‘the king

59. Bernard O'Dowd, ‘A Synod of Australia’s Olympus; Scene — The summit of Chamber’s Pillar; Time — Sunset. Midsummer; Enter the Muse of Australia’, loose sheet, nd [c1887], in exercise book, O'Dowd Papers, Box 2/7, VSL.
60. Advance Australia, 1 June 1897.
61. Dixon 1995: 72, 198, 64.
distributed these black diamonds among between 20 and 30 seemingly appreciative dead-beats'. Then, an actress and black-and-white artist mounted a boulder and sang 'The Sweater's Song', which was a prologue to 'Canonisation of the Sweater'. This involved lay figures dressing up so that they represented 'several notable members of the Legislative Council, a well-known ex-Mayor of Melbourne, a few Assembly members, several notorious factory owners and factory go betweens, many directors of squating companies, heads of State departments, and quite a number of Government-house people of all the colonies'. Other lay figures, representing their families, sat at their feet, while female members of the 'Tramp City' represented their women-folk. Then, at a signal from the king, the whole assemblage went along the line, knocking down the lay figures, then spitting on them, and finally going through the form of mutilating them. There were many more ceremonies, and the observer was forced to flee when it became clear that he had been designated as the human sacrifice for the night because of his own and his family's past sins against the tramps.

In this tale, white colonial society's reversion to barbarism is understood as 'going native'; the dregs of society behave like savages. As Andrew Lattas has remarked, Australian intellectuals have constructed 'the primitive as that archaic possibility of humanity which threatens claims to modernity or civilisation'. The equation of western civilisation's descent into barbarism with Aboriginality is also the theme of O'Dowd's 'Land of the "Terrible Rite"' (1897). In this poem, as in 'The City of Tramps', the desert is a hellish place, a fitting stage for the performance of 'barbaric' practices:

O'Dowd's subject is the ritual of subincision as performed on and by Aboriginal men which, following RB Smyth and EM Curr, he believed to have a contraceptive function:

They rob the Fate-accursed boy,
Who flinches while its tortures vex,
Of all but merest dregs of joy,
Of Holy Plenitude of Sex.

Can a Tyrian Moses have ushered a race
To that Canaan of Horror and Night?
Have remains of the frenzies Adonic a place
In this savage Malthusian blight?

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63. Tocsin, 23 December 1897.
64. Lattas 1992: 47.
65. Tocsin, 4 November 1897.
66. Curr remarks that the real purpose of 'the terrible rite' was 'to destroy the power of begetting children'. See Curr 1886: 72.
Does a Carthage atone for the breach of a trust
   In the plutocrat days of its might,
With its women reserved as a latrine for lust,
   And its men for the 'Terrible Rite'?

The poet's speculation here is again informed by the lost race convention and the idea of reincarnation: the practices of the Aborigines are linked to the fate of Carthage, which is assumed to have perished as a consequence of its barbarity. The Aborigines are in his view relics of the past, atoning for the sins of the past, but their fate also contains a lesson for white colonial society, the 'alien races in this land' (a choice of phrase that surely underlines O'Dowd's uncertainty about the future of the white race in Australia). In O'Dowd's view, it too is barbarous, with its extremes of wealth and want, its 'harlot cities', and its sweaters' dens. The result is national and racial decline:

   Its ogres rob the ripening maid
   Of power to gift the world with men.

   With Helot joys and scanty crust,
   Its Youth drifts on to middle life,
With heavy swags of wearing woe
   And souring billies full of hate

There is no romanticisation of the 'noble bushman' here; instead, he is a victim of modern capitalism, which threatens to inflict on him and other victims of competitive greed the kind of fate suffered by the central Australian Aborigines:

   While the millstones of Mammon continue to grind,
   And Injustice's locusts to blight,
Can we feel that to savage alone is confined
   The disgrace of the 'Terrible Rite'?

   Ev'ry person, succumbing in childless despair
   In our brutal competitive fight,
Is a victim our hypocrite apathies tear
   With the flints of a 'Terrible Rite.'

The lost race is a 'hybrid' with an 'ambivalent racial and cultural identity':67 colonial capitalism was creating a kind of 'half-caste' tribe — white in its skin colour but black

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(in every sense of the word) in its character, and therefore liable to descend to the level of degradation depicted in 'The City of Tramps'. The representations of Aboriginal society contained in the writings of Curr, Smyth, Spencer and Gillen provided O'Dowd with the materials for an image of the (white/black) 'mob', the kind of barbarism likely to result from the free play of capitalist greed, and (what was for him as well as many other socialists its natural and alarming corollary) racial decline. This is something like the dystopianism of HG Wells, but with a colonial twist.

In 1903, when AG Stephens came to consider 'The Land of the ‘Terrible Rite'" for republication in O'Dowd's first book of poetry (it appeared first in the radical weekly, the Tocsin), he was concerned about O'Dowd's understanding of the purposes of subincision. As there was 'a matter of scientific fact' at stake, he told O'Dowd, the poem 'must accord with the best theory – i.e., must respect Truth. A myth wd. be different. In Curr's day, your verse would have bn. right; but, since we have passed his day, your verse shd. move with the knowledge of the time you write in.'68 O'Dowd replied that he was aware before writing the poem that there were conflicting theories about the purpose of the practice, but he 'was not pretending to write an exact treatise', and so believed he 'had the right to adopt Curr's theory for my vatic purpose'.69 The report of the Horn Scientific Expedition to central Australia was published in the year before 'The City of Tramps' and 'The Land of the "Terrible Rite"' appeared, and it is likely that both pieces were informed by O'Dowd's reading of it. There is a vivid description by Gillen of the practice of subincision among the central Australian Aborigines in the Horn volume on anthropology but O'Dowd's problem, at least in Stephens' eyes, was that in the same volume EC Stirling had expressed considerable scepticism about Curr's theory of a 'Malthusian' purpose underlying subincision.70 Spencer and Gillen similarly rejected the idea in their Native tribes of central Australia (1899), declaring that 'the Arunta natives at least have no idea of its having been instituted with the idea of its preventing or even checking procreation'.71

O'Dowd, however, was less concerned with anthropological accuracy or Aboriginal people's ownership of their own culture than prophecy, and, with many of his contemporaries, he sensed that western civilisation was in decline. The spread of contraception and declining birth rates were, for O'Dowd and many others, among the most compelling evidence of this degeneration, and so Curr's theory permitted him to hang a critique of colonial civilisation on to a convenient Aboriginal peg. What he regarded as the degradation of the central Australian Aborigines foreshadowed the fate of white colonial society. Heavily influenced by Social Darwinism and theosophy, he was also inclined to regard history as cyclical, a story of the rise, decline and fall of great races and civilisations, who ultimately pay the price for their errant ways. O'Dowd saw both white colonial society and Aboriginal society in this light, with the lost race convention and the doctrine of reincarnation providing the linchpin. Aboriginal society

68. AG Stephens to O'Dowd, 11 March 1903, NLA MS 273.
69. O'Dowd to Stephens, 16 March 1903, Box 1/8, VSL. In the collection Downward? (1903), there is a poem with the title 'The Seed Time' that employs some of the material from 'The Land of the "Terrible Rite"' but all references to the Aborigines have been removed. Stephens' opinions prevailed. See Anderson 1969: 46-9 for a comparison of the two poems.
71. Spencer & Gillen 1938: 263-5.
was paying the price for the past sins of some dead and forgotten civilisation of which it was probably a remnant; European colonial society might yet find itself similarly degraded unless it mends its ways. For O'Dowd, central Australian Aboriginal society is European Australia's degraded 'other', a linguistic strategy that was integral to his attempt to project a utopian nationalist vision for the consumption and inspiration of European colonists. Greg Dening has remarked that 'there is no other that I describe that is not joined to myself'. There was similarly no nationalist utopia for white Australians without an Aboriginal 'other' somewhere near its core.

O'Dowd also employed an 'Aboriginal' theme on the only occasion he turned his hand to drama. The scene was Mount William, the site of the great greenstone hatchet head quarry of the Woiwurrung groups of the Lancefield/Mount Macedon area in Victoria. It is fitting that he should have chosen this setting for his play since, as Isabel McBryde has shown, Mount William had a significant place in the late colonial ethnographic imagination in southeastern Australia. White scholars and antiquarians were interested in the site around the turn of the century and even agitated for its preservation but their sentiments, according to McBryde, were 'largely rooted in ... Social Darwinism'. They 'recognized the importance of Aboriginal culture, but not any continuing active involvement of its holders in its study or recording once “contaminated” by contact with European civilization'. Aboriginal people consequently 'remained passive “subjects”'.

O'Dowd's play, to be called 'The Wooden Churinga', was intended as 'a modern version of the struggle of Paul and the other Apostles against the idol-makers of Ephesus with their rebellious cry: ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians’. The vested interests there objected to a New Churinga, which was wooden and in the shape of a cross, and 'guaranteed by a distant & great medicine man to be the sole method of saving the world'. A conflict ensued between defenders of the old stone churingas and proponents of the new: the climax was the 'final impaling [on his own churinga] of the medicine man, after a howling mob for economic as well as religious reasons had paraded Mt William crying 'Give us Barabbas' and 'Great is the Churinga of antiquity'. ‘Unfortunately, I’m not built dramatically’, O'Dowd explained, ‘& the first speech of the ambassador took so many pages that I gave the thing up before reaching the dialogue stage’. We should perhaps be grateful for small mercies: but again the message seems clear. The Aborigines who remain attached to their traditional culture, here symbolised by the stone churinga, are barbaric: they stand in the way of civilisation and progress. The medicine man, who tries to convince them of the transforming power of the cross, is himself crucified. The Aborigines, who have rejected Christ, are destined to remain primitive and unenlightened.

There was considerable ambivalence in O'Dowd's attitudes to the Aborigines. On the one hand, the complexity of the central Australian Aborigines' customs fascinated and impressed him, which might well provide some support for Morphy's position in

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74 O'Dowd to N. Higgins, 17 February 1914, Palmer Papers, NLA MS 1174/1/1036; Victor Kennedy, 'O'Dowd biography VK's notes & draft', nd p. 60, Victor Kennedy Papers, MS 9419/2044-2098, VSL.
his controversy with Wolfe, reviewed earlier in this article. O'Dowd pointed out that ‘[t]he fact that marriage relations are regulated in a much more effectual manner than we manage these things ourselves, and that elaborate automatic machinery against in-breeding have been handed down from immemorial times, cause us some astonishment when we remember that we call these aborigines the "lowest" of the human race’. O'Dowd’s recognition of the complexity of Aboriginal customs seems to foreshadow sympathy and understanding. He was particularly impressed by Aboriginal mythology:

And those strange myths of the Alcheringa (the dim past, the dream times) with their sable Odysseys, their singular ceremonial records, so reminiscent of the great Confucian book of ceremonies and rituals nearer home, their prescient (or is it reminiscent?) consciousness of the Darwinian evolutionary hypothesis of the origin of man, their stocks and stones which seem to carry us back to Chaldean plains and jealous gods of other races, and the strange sadness, fitting atmosphere of any record of the history of the human race, that floats over and in and through them all, and which overpowers even the reader of them!  

Indeed, at times O'Dowd spurned conventional colonial wisdom about the Aborigines, as in his poem ‘Democratize the World’, which was first published in the Socialist in 1907. Here, the poet rejected the idea that colonial democracy ought to be confined to the Europeans. If it has any reality, democracy must encompass all:

The race that claims within its bound
Divine Equality,
And treads another on the ground.
Is building on a lie.

You weak and outcast of our own,
We sadly hear your plea,
Nor rest till you and all have grown
To manhood, equal, free:

But if the tale we daily hear
Too glibly from each tongue,
Of races doomed to disappear,
Of tribes whose songs are sung,

Is based on cosmic law of Good,
You too our sad ones must
Renounce the Hope of Brotherhood
And be to serfdom thrust.  

75. Tocsin, 7 September 1899. For the melancholy theme in European representations of Aboriginal people, see McLean 1998: 18–33, 49–51.

Here was a vision of the oneness of humanity, which could even sustain a scepticism about the popular 'doomed race' theory. If the Aboriginal race was destined to disappear, argued O'Dowd, so was the most oppressed class in white colonial society — the working class — for its claims to justice could only rest on the same foundations as those of the Aborigines: common humanity. His ideal of democracy upheld the rights of all, irrespective of class, race and sex. At his most doctrinaire (and, from a late twentieth century perspective, most attractive), O'Dowd opposed the White Australia policy and rejected racial privilege in any form.77

O'Dowd's attitude to Asia warrants separate treatment, but it must also be considered in any examination of his attitude to Aboriginal Australians. As a young man, O'Dowd's racial views seem to have been fairly conventional, but by the late 1890s, were somewhat unusual by the standards of his day. He opposed the White Australia policy, arguing instead for 'universal brotherhood, irrespective of race, creed, sex, caste or colour'. He rejected as totally unscientific the attempt to demonstrate the inferiority of certain races, including the Australian Aborigines, by reference to such factors as skull shape.78 O'Dowd attributed his transformation, in part, to his reading of Confucius and Mencius, which left him with the impression that he was 'reading about peoples & ways of thought & institutions that I had once actually lived among, used and adhered to', so that all his old repulsion of Chinese disappeared, leaving him a 'democrat'; while his attitude to 'the Hindoo' changed after a series of psychic experiences in which, against his will, he was changed into 'a prodigious female Raksha hating but at the mercy of a male Raksha who delighted in the works of evil which I too had to seem to do but loathed to do'. The mental discipline involved in this business gave O'Dowd 'an insight into the mystery of evil which I never had before, & which makes me very tolerant since'.79 O'Dowd also distinguished between different races. He told Nettie Palmer in 1915 that he did not 'happen to like the Jap soul much' but liked 'the Chinese very much' and went as far as to advocate 'a judicious mixture' with both the Chinese and the Afghans.80

The most significant influence in the formulation of these racial attitudes was possibly the Theosophical Society, a point hinted at by his reference to reincarnation, and his suggestion of a new racial mix in Australia, which might have owed something to the theosophists' interest in the evolution of a 'New Race'. Despite Blavatsky's views on Aborigines, the Theosophical Society preached universal brotherhood, which had much in common with O'Dowd's ideal of 'colour-blind' democracy.81 O'Dowd, however, was probably indebted to theosophical racial theory in other ways. Literary critics and cultural historians have often drawn attention to O'Dowd's vision of Australia as 'Delos of a coming Sun-God's race' in his poem 'Australia' without considering the possibility of a theosophical inspiration for the idea. It has instead been located within the colonial discourses of the 'Coming Man', which is reasonable so far as it goes, but somewhat imprecise. CW Leadbeater, the theosophical author and leader whom O'Dowd heard

77 See Tocsin, 25 April 1901.
78 Theosophy in Australasia, 2 September 1912, 1 October 1912: 153, 176.
79 O'Dowd to M Pitt, 22 October 1907, Pitt Papers, JK Moir Collection, Box 22A/1(a), VSL.
80 O'Dowd to N Palmer, 10 January 1915, Palmer Papers, NLA MS 1174/1/1371.
81 Roe 1986: xii, 115.
speak during the former's visit to Australia in 1905, believed Australia to be the 'home of a new sub-race' of the Aryans who would possess much greater powers of intuition and synthesis than their predecessors. Blavatsky, as we have seen, also believed that the infusion of fresh races into the Australian continent might lead to 'new forms'. So at the very least, O'Dowd's theosophical connections must be considered to form a part of the intellectual background for the poem. There is, however, other evidence in O'Dowd’s writings that he was influenced by Blavatsky's root-race theory. In The Bush, there are references to the doctrine of the Great Year, which O'Dowd derived from his reading of Plutarch and recognised as similar to the theosophical root-race theory. In a paper with the title 'Race Prejudice', which he published in the Society's journal in 1912, he discussed

the transitory nature of human glory and the inevitableness of decay ... the ... contemporaneous existence of races in the first flush of their springtime bloom, races in the full vigour of their culminating accomplishments, races in the peace of decline, and races in the awful winter of death waiting the fateful moment when their new birth-hour, the springtime of their next Great Year, will be sounded.

There can be little doubt where he placed the Australian Aborigines in this scheme of things. Yet, for O'Dowd, the cosmic law of love transcended the rise and fall of civilisations. It proclaimed human brotherhood, the highest truth that all races were really one. All progress in human affairs ultimately depended on the strength of the note of rebellion against the 'sombre song of Fate'.

Conclusion

O'Dowd was unusual in his opposition to the White Australia policy, but the complexity of his racial views should act as a warning to historians who wish to ransack the past for examples of 'racism'. What this article has shown is that his attitudes to race — and to Australia's Indigenous people in particular — were marked by complexity and ambivalence. The categories 'racist' and 'anti-racist', 'enlightened' and 'unenlightened', have only limited usefulness in such a historical account: as Dening has suggested, we need to resist the temptation to accommodate the knowledge of people of the past to our own, and thus neutralise its 'otherness'. Humphrey McQueen's comment in 1970 that '[r]acism was the most important single component of Australian nationalism' was not so much wrong as imprecise. McQueen failed to recognise the complexity of racial ideas among the colonists. Historians of racial attitudes in Australia face the difficult task of untangling the diverse influences that shaped attitudes to race in Australia, including in their accounts some consideration of the ways in which European ideas were received and adapted in an antipodean colonial context. In this article, I have stressed the influence of theosophy on O'Dowd, but to identify such influences is insufficient: we must also to be attentive to the ways in which theosophical ideas found colonial expression. The Lemurian fantasy, for example, did not originate in the colonies, but it met certain needs of the colonisers, providing some 'enterprising' spirits with

84. Theosophy in Australasia, 2 September 1912: 155–6.
86. McQueen 1985 [1970]: 29.
material they needed for their ‘land rites’. In general, the attitudes of some radical-nationalist intellectuals to Aborigines (and we have noticed similar developments in New Zealand) were marked by a preoccupation with ‘history-making’, with filling up the ‘blank spaces’ of the antipodean landscape and the colonial mindscape with ‘indigenous’ myths, legends and a useable past. An antipodean counterpart of King Arthur was required — or, as O’Dowd would have it, a Homer in the gum trees.

If this preoccupation had been peculiar to O’Dowd, it might now be treated indulgently as yet another eccentricity of an eccentric man. If it were a phenomenon that had ended in colonial times — if there had been some point at which the process of national becoming concluded — the contemporary relevance of the themes explored in this article would be harder to define. There is, however, no such termination point. A preoccupation with ‘future pasts’ is part of the Australian postcolonial condition.87 O’Dowd, who was fascinated by the relationships between present and past, self and other, would have enjoyed this paradox of imagined futures that always require us to bend back to the past, to come to terms with colonial origins.

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Into the Kimberley: the invasion of the Sturt Creek Basin (Kimberley region, Western Australia) and evidence of Aboriginal resistance

Pamela A Smith

The extent to which the traditional owners of the upper Sturt Creek basin in the southeast Kimberley region resisted the exploration and colonisation of their country in the late nineteenth century is generally underestimated and seldom referred to in historical records. This paper documents the exploration and colonisation of the region and analyses accounts of frontier conflict recorded in diaries and other historical documents from this period. These documents provide evidence of many incidents which, when viewed together, suggest that the traditional owners resisted colonisation as best they could without guns, and that the colonists perceived themselves as invaders.

The southeast Kimberley was one of the last regions of Australia to be colonised by Europeans. The upper Sturt Creek basin, which occupies much of the southeast Kimberley (Figure 1), was the route used by the first European explorers entering the east Kimberley and a major route used by the first pastoralists entering the Kimberley with herds of cattle from Queensland.

Much of this land was, and is, the traditional country of Nyininy language speakers (a dialect of Jaru). Explorers and early pastoralists would have passed close to, if not through, several important meeting places of the Nyininy including Sweetwater on the Sturt Creek and Wan.gu (or Wungu) near Old Flora Valley (Tsunoda 1981: xvi, 6–7). This study examines the nature of the interaction between the explorers, the colonising pastoralists and the traditional owners, the Nyininy. It concludes that the Nyininy sustained a level of retaliation against the pastoralists which, although not able to be defined as an organised resistance movement, was all that was possible given the following imbalance inherent in the processes of colonisation:

In the days I speak of the overlander always carried firearms for his own protection: and of course we were armed. It should be added that the blackfellow on the

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1. Tsunoda (1981) has been used to define the boundaries of these language groups, but anthropological research has shown that people who identify by language cannot be described as a single land-owning group (pers. comm. K Doohan). That these people are described as speaking one or other of these languages should not be taken to imply that they were also from a single land-owning group.
whole was never given a chance and the coming of the whites meant the going of the blacks (Durack 1933: 19).

The exploration and invasion of the southeast Kimberley

The first recorded exploration expedition to the south-east Kimberley was that of the North Australian Exploring Expedition. This expedition was led by Augustus Charles Gregory, the Surveyor General of Queensland, and it was financed by the Colonial Office. The objectives of the expedition were to explore and map the interior of northern Australia and to report on the suitability of the country for pastoralism. Gregory, with 15 men, 50 horses and 100 sheep, set off from the mouth of the Victoria River, Northern Territory, in September 1855.

The expedition spent three months following the Victoria River to its source and charting its many tributaries. They found much of the country to be rugged and lacking good pasture. Whilst exploring the Hooker Creek they identified the headwaters of another river system and established a depot at Depot Creek to allow a small party to explore this new river (Holmes 1963: 44–47). They mapped the entire length of the river

Figure 1. Map of northern Western Australia showing the study area, the upper Sturt Creek basin in the southeast Kimberley region of Western Australia.
system to where it emptied into a broad, shallow saltwater lake (Lake Gregory, shown on early maps as Gregory’s Salt Lake) and named it the Sturt Creek (Figure 2).

On 19 February 1856, Gregory’s party passed into the country which was later to become known as Soakage Creek (and later again, as Gordon Downs Station) and on 23 February the Nyininy at Sweetwater saw the first white men to enter their country (Gregory 1884: 134; Tsunoda 1981: 16). Of this country Gregory wrote:

The back country was so nearly level that it scarcely rose above the grassy horizon, while to the south it was so flat that the clumps of bushes looked like islands, the grassy plain extending to the horizon.

Then for two days he lost the creek before coming across pools of brackish water which he again followed and found that ‘the channel was gradually lost on a broad swampy flat ... depressed about 10 feet below the grassy plain’ which he named the Denison Plain (Gregory 1884: 132).

By 1 March the creek had turned south-southwest and beyond Gregory’s Salt Lake the landscape (Gregory 1884: 138) changed to a nearly level plain of red sand, producing nothing but spinifex (Trioda sp.) and stunted bushes, the level of this desert

Figure 2. Map of the route taken by the North Australian Exploring Expedition led by AC Gregory in 1855–56 (Cumpston 1972: 132).
country being only broken by low parallel ridges of drifted sand perfectly straight, and with a direction nearly E. and W.

Gregory's expedition had entered the Great Sandy Desert to the south of the Sturt Creek basin and had found the unique desert of parallel red sand ridges that extend for thousands of square kilometres to the south and west. They retraced their steps to the depot on the headwaters of the Victoria River to find that there had been a conflict with Aborigines in their absence, the only conflict recorded by the expedition in this region. Despite his reports of good pasture, the Sturt Creek was a series of pools and the reports were not sufficiently favourable to attract colonists. A further 30 years were to elapse before the first colonists arrived.

In 1879-80 Alexander Forrest, a surveyor employed by the Western Australia government, led a well planned and successful expedition to the Kimberley financed by the colonial government of Western Australia. He was the instigator of the expedition and his objective was to report on the suitability of the country for sheep and cattle. From the west coast he crossed the Kimberley and followed the well-watered valleys of the Fitzroy, Ord and Negri Rivers into the Northern Territory. He described one region he passed through as 'the most splendid grassy plain it has ever been my lot to see' (quoted in Bolton 1958: 32). Although he passed north of the Sturt Creek it is likely that he was describing the northern portion of the Denison Plain after a good wet season. In his dispatch to Governor Ord (reported in the Western Australian Times, 23 September 1879) on reaching the overland telegraph in central Australia, he reported:

The chief results of the expedition have been the discovering of the course and source of the Fitzroy and other large streams, together with an area of 20 millions of acres of good well-watered country, suitable for pastoral purposes, besides a large area suitable for the culture of sugar, rice and coffee.

O'Donnell led the last exploring party into the East Kimberley in 1883 on behalf of a group of Victorian investors. Clement documented the several encounters between this party and Aborigines and the varying Aboriginal responses, but none were reported as being overtly hostile (Clement 1987a: 36-40).

Encounters between the explorers and Aborigines were reported as being relatively few and uneventful, although all expeditions recorded that they were aware of being watched and occasionally recorded some contact. Clement, who documented Aboriginal responses to the first Europeans in the Kimberley region, concluded from the available documentary evidence that there was little conflict (Clement 1987a: 6), that few explorers made contact with the Aborigines and that they made no demands on them:

It is likely that East Kimberley Aborigines could have assumed that the Europeans ... who first came to their attention were spirits. In evaluating such situations we should, however, be mindful that each episode of intrusion was unique and that Aborigines consequently had no sets of scope for determining from which world outsiders might have come (Clement 1987a: 25)

There is, however, evidence that the Aboriginal people were concerned by the presence of the explorers. Whilst they did pass rapidly through individual regions and there are few references to direct confrontation, there are the references to being watched and oblique references to Aboriginal attacks. Drawings by a member of Gregory's party,
provide important evidence of Aboriginal resistance. They illustrate two separate attacks on Gregory’s expedition on March 15 and March 24, 1856; a further incident took place on 29 February 1856 (see Cumpston 1972: 80-1).

These illustrations are significant because they demonstrate Aboriginal people ‘defending’ their country from the time the first explorers entered it. The attacks, however, had little impact on the armed members of the expedition; they occupy only one sentence in Gregory’s journal on 28 March 1856 and refer to an incident that had occurred in his absence.

Pastoralists and the ‘killing times’

The overly enthusiastic reports by Alexander Forrest stimulated the immediate settlement of the southeast Kimberley region by pastoralists. In 1881 the government gazetted the Kimberley Land Regulations. By the end of 1882 more than forty-four million acres had been granted to seventy-seven people, and one third of it was leased to five people (Pedersen and Woorunmurra 1995: 23). The epic droving ventures supported by family companies and investment companies began immediately, and between 1882 and 1885 thousands of head of cattle passed through Queensland and the Northern Territory destined for the Kimberley (Buchanan 1933; Buchanan 1997; Durack 1967: 262-355). The earliest of these droving expeditions was led by Nat Buchanan in 1883-84. He was already on the McArthur River in the Northern Territory with Panton and Osmand’s cattle when O’Donnell was exploring the Ord and Negri Rivers (Buchanan 1997: 89-90; Clement 1987a: 41). Buchanan was soon followed by the Durack brothers, the Emanuels and Charlie and Willie McDonald. They asserted exclusive proprietorial rights to the land, sure that their right to supplant indigenes was justified in the name of progress and sure of their racial superiority (Mulvaney 1985: 68-69). This period is now referred to by the traditional owners of the Sturt Creek basin as the ‘killing times’ (interview 62).

Nat Buchanan was the first of the overlanders to have an impact on the study area. He brought 4000 head of cattle from Richmond, Queensland, to Plympton St. Mary (renamed Ord River Station) and arrived on 22 June 1884 (Holmes 1963: 168). This droving expedition has been documented by Buchanan in a history of the family (Buchanan 1997: 89-101). Also in the party were Robert Button (who was to be the first manager of Ord River Station), Buchanan’s son Gordon Buchanan, Thomas Cahill and Donald Swan (Bolton 1953; Buchanan 1997: 91). Their employer and holder of the Plympton St Mary pastoral lease was a Melbourne-based company owned by Panton, a Melbourne magistrate, and Osmand, a naval officer3 (Lamond 1971: 45).

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2. Thirty-three oral histories were recorded as part of this project.
3. Osmand had various investment interests in the Kimberley region and is mentioned by Lamond (1971: 45) as being the owner of the Maldon battery close to Melbourne where two tons of stone shipped from the Kimberley was crushed, producing 28 ounces of gold to the ton. Specimens of the gold were put in the window of Brush Drummond’s jeweller’s store in Collins Street to stimulate interest in a syndicate to invest in the Mt Dockrell gold mine (southwest of Halls Creek). He also owned the Cushie Doo which was anchored off the Cambridge Gulf with a group of Victorian investors at the time Nat Buchanan reached Ord River Station in 1884 (Clement 1987a: 41).
Buchanan, together with his brothers-in-law Hughie and Wattie Gordon, took a second mob to Wave Hill, an adjacent lease in the Northern Territory. This lease had been taken up by Nat on behalf of the Buchanan family in 1879. The Sturt Creek lease (later named Gordon Downs) was taken up by William Frederick Buchanan, Nat's brother, in 1881 and was stocked with 1800 head of Wave Hill cattle in 1886 (Bolton 1953; Clement and Bridge 1990: 115). By 1888 these pastoral leases, together with Turner, Flora Valley (taken up by Gordon Buchanan in 1887) and Elvire stations (taken up by W.F. Buchanan), formed a continuous family holding of 2 222 000 acres.

In 1887 the adjacent Denison Downs lease along the south side of the Sturt Creek, owned by T Foster and Company, was stocked by Stretch, Lewers, Weekes and Foster who brought cattle overland from Normanton, Queensland (Holmes 1963: 168). Denison Downs was later renamed Sturt Creek Station. Figure 3 illustrates the extent of each of these pastoral leases by 1913.

The expansion of the pastoral industry into the southeast Kimberley after 1884 was rapid. The Halls Creek gold rush, which brought 20 000 hopeful miners to the east Kimberley by 1886, had ended by 1889. The ports of Derby (1883) and Wyndham (1886) had rapidly developed to meet the needs of the pastoral and mining industries, with deep water jetties built at Derby (1885) and Wyndham (1894). The Lamboo lease, south-west of Halls Creek, and Billiluna, an extension of the Denison Plains lease, were taken up in 1901 (Holmes 1963: 171). At the same time in the central south Kimberley the Emanuel family was acquiring large pastoral leases which, by 1901, included Lower Liveringa, Noonkanbah, Margaret Downs and Gogo stations on the Fitzroy River and Cherrabun and Christmas Creek Stations on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert (Bolton and Pederson 1980). With the exception of rugged country between Lamboo and Christmas Creek Stations, all of the south Kimberley adjacent to the Great Sandy Desert had been occupied by pastoralists in less than twenty years.

The boom of the 1880s was, however, followed by drought from 1889 to 1892 and the world of the pastoralists was characterised by uncertain weather, loss of stock to spearing by Aborigines, reprisals against the Aborigines by police and pastoralists, and the end of the gold rush. Little changed in the regional economy for a further decade.

Although the explorers had been able to pass through the region with minor conflict, the early period of colonisation, approximately between the mid-1880s and 1920s, was characterised by violence, chaos and the marginalisation of the Aboriginal people from their country. They were confronted with rapid and radical social and economic change. Thousands of head of cattle spread through the fertile river valleys and within a few years the significant life-giving waterholes created and occupied by the spiritual ancestors of the Nyininy/Jaru had been depleted and fouled by cattle. The diversity of vegetation declined rapidly, with many species of native fauna being dispersed to more remote regions and some forced to the brink of extinction (Haynes et al. 1974: 34).

The underlying reasons for the frontier tensions are complex. At the time the Kimberley region was colonised, Indigenous Australians were perceived by influential academics following Darwin as being the primitive forebears of modern humans and early anthropologists of this period viewed Aboriginal society as a social laboratory to test theories of evolution (Mulvaney 1985: 69). This belief is now known as 'Social Darwinism' (Griffiths 1996; Weil 1995). This and the belief that domestic agriculture and pasto-
eral endeavours were the proper purposes for owning land led the early colonists to view Australia as a wilderness, 'terra nullius', unowned and unaltered by the inferior indigenous people who inhabited it (Jones 1985: 183; Dodson 1991: 14). These beliefs were tenacious and Social Darwinism determined attitudes to Aborigines that endured in Australian government policy until the middle of the twentieth century.

In a history of this period centred round the story of Jandamarra in the West Kimberley, Pedersen and Woorunmurra (1995) demonstrated very clearly that the colonisation of that region was a process of invasion which met with strong resistance. There are few records of this period for the southeast Kimberley, but those that do exist provide evidence of these first encounters and evidence that the pastoralists met with resistance, although spears were never a match for guns.

Guns were the crucial element in the frontier violence. They were used by pastoralists to maim and kill in order to deter Aboriginal people competing with stock for water or passing through their traditional country (interview 3). Tindale, whilst recording at Halls Creek in October 1953, met an old man, Old Moses or Tjulku, a Nyininy speaker. Tindale made the following notes in his journal:

Old Moses (R.1203 Tjulku) who was born before white men came to the country. He said he first encountered white men when he was a child at Marala — now on Nicholson Station — when white men droving bullocks came up and shot at them as soon as they were seen. The same white saw them again at Kardarj. The blacks didn’t understand. The whites were ‘cheeky’ and shot an old man and a young man. Tjulku was a little boy ran away with his mother ‘we got away’. His second experience with whites was some time later when Willie Magistrate, who made a cattle station on Sturt Creek shot and killed his elder brother Maltjudu in a ‘row over bullock’ at Naiwayaiwa Pool on the Sturt Creek (Tindale 1953-4:1075).

![Figure 3. Map of pastoral leases in the study area after 1913, recorded in Clement 1987b:vi from portion of Dept Lands and Surveys locality map Perth, WA. Combined maps from Clement 1987b: vii and map of pastoral leases in the North Territory from about the 1930s (source unknown). Gordon Downs is referred to as Sturt Creek on the WA side of the border; Sturt Creek Station is marked as Denison Downs Station.](image-url)
The pastoralists brought cattle and cattle were quickly recognised by Aboriginal people as an easily obtained and desirable source of food. Cattle-spearing became rife, not only for food but as a form of resistance. In a chapter entitled ‘The Black Tastes Beef’ (Buchanan 1933: 156) the personal experiences of Gordon Buchanan provide a unique and valuable insight into the frontier and into the reasons why cattle were speared.

In 1889 the blacks about Wave Hill, who had become more cunning, if not more hostile under the severity of Sam Croker’s regime, were killing and wounding cattle on all sides. They were not long in acquiring both a taste for beef and the knowledge of how best to secure it. Grown cattle were seldom killed outright at the first attack, but ambushed and wounded, were followed and chased for hours until they became an easy prey. As the blacks gained more knowledge, relays of warriors began to be posted along the cattle pads leading from the watering places. Heifers and cows heavy in calf were the first to fall; for this reason the increase in the herds was much retarded ... In this year they became much bolder and made several raids to within a few miles of the head station itself. I was manager at that time. One day while Ferguson, Barry, black boy George and I were riding about ten miles out we encountered a fully armed party of about thirty bucks stalking some cattle near the Red Lily Spring ... a dash was made for the blacks who, splitting into several groups, retired for a short distance and then showed fight (Buchanan 1933: 156-64).

As is usual for such accounts, Buchanan does not say whether or not lives were lost in this encounter. This and other examples in the same chapter argue that the cattle were being speared not only for food, but as a reaction to the severity of a recent manager. A second example illustrates a similar motive:

Once in a raid on Sturt Creek cattle a stray beast from Flora Valley had been inadvertently speared. A Flora Valley boy who happened to be present and noticed the earmark was sent to Flora Valley with an apology from the offending tribe; they were very sorry, so he said, they thought their quarry were cattle ‘all belonga Willie’ — referring to W.H. Stretch, the owner of Sturt Creek (Buchanan 1933: 202)

In a brief history of the Aboriginal community at Yaruman (Kundat Djaru community close to Gordon Downs Station) Buchanan was described as putting in place a policy of encouraging local groups to settle on the station property while hunting and killing those still free in the bush. He recorded ‘These boundary-riding excursions to protect the white invader and his stock from the dispossessed and naturally retaliatory aboriginal (sic) ... were the most urgent and trying of any work’. Yaruman old people still tell of massacres in the area. The violence of these years was one side of a dual process (Taylor 1988: 39).

The reader is left with no doubt that there must have been many unrecorded killings in this region conducted as part of the process of colonisation and this quote from Buchanan makes it clear that he perceived himself and other pastoralists as the ‘white invader’ and that he recognised and acknowledged that the Aboriginal owners of the land were both retaliatory and dispossessed (Buchanan 1933: 156-64).

Gee, in his reminiscences as Warden of Goldfields and Special Magistrate, recorded that many of the Aborigines on the Tanami gold fields in the 1920s came from the Sturt Creek region and that they fell into two categories — those who were useful and worked for the miners and those who were myalls (bush Aborigines) and were likely to attack their camps. The latter were regarded as treacherous and were shot. He
recorded at length the treachery of one cheerful, helpful man who attempted to murder the camp leaders (Gee 1926: 26–31).

The story recounted in Figure 4 and copied from the Kutjungka (Balgo) Parish Newsletter, tells the story of the Sturt Creek massacre, which took place in the later end of 'the killing times', probably in the 1920s. Although the date is uncertain the story is frequently retold and the site of the massacre is well known and continues to be visited (interview 32).

Following this massacre many people from Sturt Creek Station and Gordon Downs Station — both along the Sturt Creek — took refuge at Lewis Creek and Slatey Creek Stations, pastoral leases in marginal desert country to the southeast in the Gardiner Ranges. Tom Bradshaw was at Slatey Creek, Jack Skeen and Dave Piggley were at Lewis Creek and both were married to Aboriginal women. Piggley is reported to have carried a pair of pistols which he used to threaten white men who came looking for Aboriginal people. Some of those interviewed in Halls Creek and Kundat Djaru lived here with their grandparents as children, while many of the young men and women, their parents, had been captured or enticed to work for rations on Sturt Creek and Gordon Downs Stations (Terry 1925: opp. 226; interview 6; pers. comm. K Doohan). They reported that the hills also provided excellent hiding places to which the cattle could be hunted and killed out of sight of the pastoralists.

The price of resistance was, however, most often the loss of life or capture and exile to work in labour gangs in Wyndham. A meeting of pastoralists from the East Kimberley region was held in 1901 to discuss police protection and pastoralists called for 'methods similar to those employed in North Queensland', that is, the wholesale killing of Aborigines on stations (Clement 1987b: 26). Few massacres on Jaru land have been documented, but the Kija people, on the northern boundary of the study area, are known to have lost many lives through several massacres4.

The following quote relates to a punitive expedition following the attempted murder of an Aboriginal stockman in the study area in the 1920s; it is most likely that it was members of the Walmajarri and Jaru who were involved. It was recalled by Grant Ngabidj who was working in the Sturt Creek area and who was about sixteen at the time:

Four Halls Creek policemen and three other white men came out. Somebody told them who the two blackfellers were and they went low down looking around among the bush people. They told them, 'Oh big mob there, longa billabong, longa Wolf junction', and they sneaked up. There may have been about twenty or thirty police boys too. They did not tie them up or take them to the jail house; they murdered the whole lot of them, shot them all: Balgo mob, Sturt Creek mob and Billiluna mob; women, piccaninnies, dogs, old people, young people, middle-sized people — finished them. I was there when it happened but they did not shoot me because I came from this other way and I was a stockman (Shaw 1981:47)

4 Information from the Kimberley Aboriginal Language Centre.
Lent Story Number 4

Clancy and Spieler - Sturt Creek Massacre

On top of Sturt Creek, the old station on top of the hill. The old people used to spear cattle. Cut 'em up - use a rock. They didn't know white man owned those bullocks. Hungry for a feed and the bullock was easy to catch. White man came along and caught them.

And that's when kartiya started shooting those people. They want to shoot them like a dog. Shoot them like a bullock. For stealing cattle.

They took them to Sturt Creek. Tied them between two big trees, in chain. White blokes started shooting from one end and other end. And they meet up in the middle. Finish. That tree was full of blood.

They get a horse, put a rope along their neck and drag them to the well. Chuck them in - whole lot. Get 'em kerosene. Pour 'em in and then light 'em. Burn all the black fella in that well after shooting them.

We mob bin kids. We were playing in the water, Sturt Creek Station. Little ones, lampam-lampam. Me and my brother was there. Watch 'em all them dead fellow. We used to see them dragging 'em those body with a horse. We bin hear 'em shoot 'em till they were finish.

Dragn them again, two bronco horse. Take them back to the well. Make 'em full again. All them dead bodies bin make that well come right full, kankami. Kankami means right full. When they bin go up burn them with kerosene. Bin go down again.

Bone - kiji. That white one now. Body. Bone for everyone. Every place, all our families. Light 'em, you can see that smoke. Spirit going up, spirit of them dead people. From there you can look all the ashes and bone. You can see the ashes there now.

Discussion

Historical documents provide only one side of the frontier conflict, the perceptions of the explorers and the colonising pastoralists, and there is no doubt that those referred to above underreported the Aboriginal presence. These documents are embedded in a culture which condoned the oppression and the extermination of Aboriginal people who resisted colonisation as integral to the 'pacification' process.

The diaries of Gregory (Gregory and Gregory 1884) and later, Carnegie (1898), frequently refer to being watched from a distance or note that they had observed smoke on the horizon, an indication that the Aboriginal people always knew where they were and what they were doing. The explorers must have also been aware of the many significant precontact Aboriginal sites in the Sturt Creek basin (see Veth 1980; Smith 2000) and would have known that a significant Aboriginal population lived in the region.

Few written records of the period were maintained by the pastoralists, although we are fortunate that Gordon Buchanan, the son of Nat Buchanan, documented his
father's life (Buchanan 1933) and that a comprehensive family history has been compiled by Bobby Buchanan (Buchanan 1997). Whilst some records refer to the Aboriginal people as a treacherous people, Gordon Buchanan acknowledged that they were dispossessed and were 'naturally retaliatory' as a result of their dispossession. He also acknowledged that the boundaries of the pastoral leases were protected by shooting those Aborigines not incorporated into the workforce on the station as they competed with cattle for water resources (Buchanan 1933; Taylor 1988: 39; interviews 3, 7, 21). This he described as being the 'most urgent and trying of any work (Buchanan 1933: 164).

The history of the Aboriginal people in the southeast Kimberley from their own perspective remained undocumented until anthropologists, usually more interested in traditional culture, incidentally recorded memories of the frontier conflict following colonisation (Tindale 1953-54), followed by a later generation of historians and anthropologists concerned to document this period while senior traditional owners were able to be recorded (Shaw 1981; Clement 1987a,b; Smith 2000, and numerous records held by the Kimberley Land Council and the Kimberley Aboriginal Language Resource Centre).

The recording of the contact history of the study area from the perspective of the dominant culture has resulted in a perception that the process of colonisation by pastoralists met with little or no resistance. However, almost all examples of contact described above are able to be interpreted as examples of resistance, although seldom effective and with no apparent long-term benefits to the Aboriginal community. The evidence from recorded oral histories reveals that many of the traditional owners, as individuals and small family-based units, did defend their country as best they were able and that their most effective form of resistance was to spear cattle. They perceived themselves as a threatened people, who knew that their weapons were inferior to guns and who were forced to calculate each small advantage.

The end of the frontier period in this region cannot be defined by a date. It was a gradual transition and the population continued to move between a traditional lifestyle hunting and gathering and the station camps until at least the 1960s (Micha 1961). The process of 'pacification' was, however, almost complete by the late 1920s, with the pastoralists asserting exclusive proprietorial rights to all of the land and water resources.

Acknowledgements
Oral histories were recorded as part of a wider project and the memories of senior members of the Jaru people have contributed to deeper understandings about the colonisation of this region. The field research for this study was undertaken with the cooperation of senior Aboriginal people living at Kundat Djaru community, several of whom have since passed away. Flinders University, Adelaide, provided both financial support and a supportive academic environment. I also wish to thank those who read and commented on drafts of this paper — they include Donald Pate, Kim Doohan, Daniel Vachon, Joe Blythe and Matthew Wrigley. This paper is based on research undertaken for my PhD thesis (Smith 2000).

5. Smith has documented the conflict between the traditional owners and the pastoralists over water resources in this region (Smith 1999, 2000).
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Station camps: legislation, labour relations and rations on pastoral leases in the Kimberley region, Western Australia

Pamela A Smith

The Kimberley region in north Western Australia (Figure 1) was one of the most recent regions in Australia to be colonised. The first pastoralists came to this region overland from Queensland in the mid-1880s and their first encounters with the Aboriginal population were in the East Kimberley (Clement 1987a; 1987b; Ross and Bray 1989; Smith this issue). There is no doubt that there was an expectation that people from the many Aboriginal tribal groups would provide cheap labour on the new cattle stations. Forrest, who explored the region in 1879-80 and who had forwarded favourable reports regarding the suitability of the country for cattle, had specifically noted that the large number of Aborigines in the region would allay concerns about the availability of cheap labour (Bolton 1958: 28).

From the Aboriginal perspective, the invasion and occupation of their traditional country by the pastoralists at the end of the nineteenth century marked the commencement of the transition from their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle to a less mobile lifestyle in the station camps on cattle stations, and was the first of several significant social and demographic changes which were to occur over the next century. For most Aboriginal people living in this region, the period between the 1880s and the 1920s must have been a time of fear and chaos. It was not, however, a period of complete dispossession, as most continued to share their land with the pastoralists until the 1970s (interviews 2, 23 and 27).

Historical documents, archival records and recorded interviews with Aboriginal people are analysed in this paper in order to better understand the dynamics between these two groups in the post-invasion period and the history of the pastoral industry in the Kimberley region. The introduction of legislation to control the Aboriginal population between 1880 and the 1920s, the early history of the ration system and the methods used to control them and to bring them under surveillance are documented in the first part of this paper.

By the 1920s life on the cattle stations had evolved an annual routine and the Aboriginal population had been incorporated into the hierarchical structure of the pastoral industry. The second part of the paper outlines changes in the legislation controlling
Aboriginal labour on cattle stations from the 1920s to the 1970s, and explores the socio-economic contexts of the ration system of that period.

1880-1920s — control by legislation and rations

That very cheap labour would facilitate the development of economic enterprise had been fundamental to the colonial culture of all European colonies during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The only cost of this labour was the price of food and clothing. Little distinguished the manner of the employment except the names given to the labourers: convicts, slaves, natives. Early free settlers in most Australian states had access to convicts and in Queensland the Kanakas, slaves from Melanesia, worked the sugar plantations. In those areas where there were no convicts (South Australia, Northern Territory and northern Western Australia) many colonists pressed Aborigines into service. In the south of Western Australia free convict labour had been used by the settlers to establish rural and urban enterprises; for this reason the Western Australian government continued to demand convicts from Britain until well after other colonies had ceased transportation. The use of convict labour in Western Australia ended in 1867 (James 1979: 19).

The use of convict labour in Western Australia had, however, been prohibited above the twenty-sixth parallel and at the time colonists were speculating about the suitability of northern Australia for pastoral enterprise, the availability of cheap labour

Figure 1. Map of northwest Australia, showing the Kimberley region.
was a part of their deliberations. Alexander Forrest, well before his Kimberley expedition, observed that:

Queensland (was) cultivating tropical products with the aid of the unhappy Kanakas from Pacific Islands; why should not Western Australia import Hindus and Chinese? If, indeed, there were not Aborigines to train as cheap labour, perhaps an indenture system could be devised for the frugal Asiatic (quoted in Bolton 1958: 28).

Indentured Asians were used as cheap labour by the pearling industry along the Kimberley coast, but this system was not introduced to provide labour for land-based commercial activities, and it was soon apparent that cheap Aboriginal labour was essential to the success of the pastoral industry in the Kimberley region.¹

Legislation

The history of these first years of the pastoral industry from the pastoralists' perspective is thoroughly documented through the legislation, commissions and reports of the period. Arranged chronologically these merge into a one-sided account of history. New laws were defined by and for the colonists to serve their interests, and they reflect the prevailing political and social climate. The legislation gave the pastoralists and the police extensive powers to control and restrict the lives of the Aboriginal people. The police, paradoxically empowered under the 1886 Aborigines Protection Act as 'honorary protectors' of the Aborigines, were paid an allowance of 2s. 5d. 'per knob' per day for all natives arrested as suspects and as witnesses to raids on stock (Durack 1967: 370). This made it profitable for the police to arrest as many as possible and it was those living outside the emerging authority of the pastoral industry who were arrested.

Chained together neck to neck, wrist to wrist, the long lines of prisoners, men, women and children wound their way over the bush tracks to receive sentence in Wyndham, Derby or Halls Creek ... acquittals were nil. Brief scattered entries reveal Father's growing sense of discomfiture at the situation: 'Am disgusted at the spectacle of a party of niggers on the road with police, the chains in many instances much too short from neck to neck, chafing and pulling as they move along and all appearing half starved' (Durack 1967: 370).

The inquiries, reports and legislation which affected the lives of Aboriginal people during the first two decades of pastoral expansion are summarised in Table 1. A notable omission is the Australian Constitution, 1901, which failed to include any reference to Indigenous Australians. Each report or new legislation sought to control the movement and activities of Aboriginal people, to make them dependent, or to improve the surveillance of their movements and activities.

The Roth Royal Commission (Royal Commission, State of Western Australia 1905) was called in response to complaints about the treatment of Aborigines less than 20 years after the first pastoralists had colonised the Kimberley. Because of the broad scope of the inquiry and the large size of Western Australia, the Royal Commission was confined to the employment and treatment of Aboriginal people living in missions in all of Western Australia. ¹

¹ There was a system whereby an Aborigine could be employed by contract or could be indentured as an apprentice; both methods were detailed in Commissioner Roth's report (Royal Commission, State of Western Australia 1905: 7-9).
Western Australia and to Aboriginal labour in the pearling and pastoral industries in the Kimberley region. The report made many recommendations, most of which were relevant to labour relations, living conditions, the establishment of reserves and relief for dependent Aborigines, the roles of the police, protectors and employers and the treatment of prisoners and prison conditions. Commissioner Roth observed that:

If the natives continue to be dispossessed of the country upon which they are dependent for their food and water supplies, by their lands being rented for grazing rights at a nominal figure — lands from which the lessees naturally desire to drive them — bloodshed and retribution will be certain to ensue.

Royal Commission, State of Western Australia 1905: 28

The passing of the *Native Administration Act* (1905-47) and the *Aborigines Protection Act* (1905) in response to Commissioner Roth’s report put in place the legislative controls which enabled the surveillance and control of the Aboriginal population by agents of the government for the next fifty years.

The *Native Administration Act* (1905-47) sought to regulate Aboriginal people more than any other legislation in Western Australia. Through 70 provisions it imposed prohibitions, restrictions and limitations which robbed them of personal freedom and denied them opportunities of citizenship. Notable examples of these provisions are:

- The Commissioner was appointed legal guardian of every Aboriginal child until the age of 21 and was empowered to direct what person should have custody of the child.
- The Minister was empowered to issue a warrant providing for the arrest of an Aboriginal and his confinement for as long as he deemed fit. No judicial process was involved and there was no provision for appeal. (This was used for the separation of children from their parents and also the removal of whole families to institutions.)
- It was an offence for an Aboriginal to move from north of the 26th parallel latitude without a permit from the Minister.
- It was an offence for Aborigines to leave their employment (15 sections regulated the employment of Aborigines).
- Police officers could order Aborigines out of towns and parts of towns and cities could be declared prohibited areas for Aborigines.
- It was an offence for a female Aborigine to be within two miles of the mouth of a creek or inlet between sunset and sunrise.
- An Aborigine could be banished from his country for cattle killing.
- An adult Aborigine had to obtain the Commission’s consent to marry.

(Royal Commission, State of Western Australia 1974)

The *Aborigines Protection Act* (1905) ensured that Aborigines in the Kimberley remained on the stations. They were not permitted below the 26th parallel without a permit from the Minister and it was an offence to move from the station where they were settled, a regulation that was enforced until the 1960s² (see Andrews 1996: 148).

The means of control

The question of why the Aboriginal people moved to the station camps is not easily answered. The pastoralists colonised the land and they controlled who passed through
Table 1: Legislative controls relating to Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, WA, 1860–1906*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Act 44 Victoria no. 9</td>
<td>To prohibit the sale of alcohol to Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Fairbairn Report</td>
<td>To investigate allegations of Aboriginal hostilities toward pastoralists — Murchison/ Gascoyne region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Forrest Commission — A Royal Commission</td>
<td>Established in response to requests by pastoralists/settlers for government assistance with the ‘Aboriginal problem’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Aborigines Protection Act</td>
<td>Establishment of Aborigines Protection Board. Constituted to provide food and clothing to destitute Aborigines, education for children. In fact, it greatly extended government powers to regulate and control Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Constitution Act</td>
<td>Provided funds to Aborigines Board for the welfare of Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Act 52 Victoria no. 24</td>
<td>Provided Crown Lands for use by Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Amending Act 55 Victoria no. 18</td>
<td>Passed to authorise the whipping of Aboriginal offenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Aborigines Offenders Act</td>
<td>Amended to provide for increased punishments for Aboriginal offenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Aborigines Department established</td>
<td>Abolition of Aborigines Protection Board, Chief Protector of Aborigines now responsible for Aboriginal affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904/5</td>
<td>Commissioner Roth’s Royal Commission</td>
<td>Inquired into administration of the Aborigines Department, employment of Aborigines, Aboriginal police system, treatment of Aboriginal prisoners and distribution of relief. Recommended the protection of Aborigines by strict controls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Aborigines Protection Act (1905)</td>
<td>Chief Protector given statutory powers to enact recommendations of the Royal Commission. Power to protect and control, to act as legal guardian of Aboriginal children with authority to remove them from their parents. Introduction of many restrictive measures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Information compiled from Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (1994).

it; the traditional owners became trespassers and were persecuted when living in the bush and were subjugated by arrests and massacres (see Durack 1967: 370). Those who stayed in the bush, the myalls, were considered a nuisance; in order to pass through their own country they had to develop new strategies to avoid meeting white people

2. Daisy Andrews recounts: ‘I was born in Cherrabun. That is my country because I was born there. My mother and father liked Cherrabun but my father never got used to working on a station, and he used to go away from there, you know, run away and leave the job. Then a policeman came and picked up father from Cherrabun and took us to the old police station at Fitzroy Crossing’ (Andrews 1996: 148).
and to stay alive. The growing body of evidence for the number of Aboriginal people maimed or killed during this period makes it increasingly doubtful that the pre-invasion population numbers can ever be estimated.

Using the colonization of the southeast Kimberley as an example, oral histories leave no doubt that the Nyininy/Djaru competed with the cattle for water and were hunted and maimed or killed to discourage them from using the waterholes (Taylor 1988:39; interview 3; K Doohan, pers. comm.). They were forced to live on the run, move to the rugged fringes of the Tanami Desert, or settle at the station camps and be incorporated into the pastoral industry. Micha recorded two methods used to ensure that captured Aborigines stayed on the stations:

Older Aborigines today still remember the time when the hard soles of their feet were lacerated by files, of the sort which are used to work horse’s hoofs, in order to prevent them from running away, and still today one may see e.g. iron balls, to which black women were chained - for the disposal of the mostly single station managers and as hostages for their working but striving-away husbands.
Micha 1961: 673

Commissioner Roth, in his report of the 1905 Royal Commission on the Condition of Natives, referred to an additional method of obtaining labour whilst at the same time enticing people to live closer to the station — the stealing of strong healthy children from their families still living a traditional lifestyle in order to have them live in the stock camps with the ‘stock boys’ already recruited. Commissioner Roth reported that ‘pastoralists have taken most of the native boys from the tribes; the blacks come in from the bush to get tobacco and food from the boys working on the stations’ and this is when their children were taken (Royal Commission, State of Western Australia 1905).

The introduction of rations to entice and coerce Aboriginal people to live in permanent camps on the stations commenced within ten years of colonisation. In 1896 Flora Valley Station was the first Kimberley cattle station recorded as having supplied rations to the Aborigines (Ross 1987: 13). They were followed by Ord River Station in 1905, although according to Ross, with an element of coercion of the management (Ross 1987: 13). In 1908, in a bid to resolve the tensions between Aborigines and pastoralists, the Chief Protector of Aborigines asked station owners whether they were prepared to kill enough beef to satisfy the needs of Aborigines in the adjacent country and if so, would they require compensation. Ross concluded from this that the practice of giving beef to Aborigines was begun in order to discourage cattle spearing (Ross 1987: 15).

Labour, rations and dependency

Viewed from within the political milieu of the time, it is likely that there were at least two reasons for the introduction of rations, both of them economic. The first was to stop the spearing of cattle, many of which were valuable breeding stock, and the second was to gain control of a cheap labour force. The spearing of cattle was certainly a serious issue as stock losses were high, but the question of the availability of cheap labour was the more pressing of the two issues. As previously mentioned, there is no doubt that the

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3. Translated from German into English by Micha.
pastoralists came with an expectation of using Aboriginal labour and that this was a 
more urgent issue in the 1890s than in the late 1870s when it was raised by Forrest (cf. 
Bolton 1958: 28). A prolonged drought during the 1890s, the high cost of taking cattle 
long distances to markets, the intense political battles over quarantine regulations, and 
new cattle diseases (Durack 1967: 379–81) meant that the earlier promise of great wealth 
was less likely to be realised.

Knowledge about the pastoralists, their cattle, their tobacco and the flour which 
didn’t need to be ground, spread quickly. In addition to rations provided to ‘workers’, 
pastoralists made small parcels of ration foods available to all who called at the stations. 
At a slightly later time, elderly Aboriginal people in an adjacent region recalled trading 
‘thumb-sized packages of tea and sugar as well as steel tools from the Kimberleys in the 
mid 1930s’ (Cane 1990: 13); and an elderly woman recalled a story of how her family 
had called at Sturt Creek station (probably in the late 1920s or early 1930s) and had been 
given rations for the first time. Not knowing what to do with them, they had buried 
them for fear of the kartiya’s magic (interview 12).

The ration was a measured portion of food handed out to Aboriginal employees 
and their dependents from the station store. It comprised a quantity of flour, tea and 
sugar together with a stick of tobacco, called ‘nigi-nigi’. In addition, salt beef and 
damper or bread may have been given to those who were working at the station home­ 
stead during the day. Those who were not ‘workers’ who were living in the camp 
would be fortunate to receive the hoofs, bones and intestines of a ‘killer’ (McPherson 
1995; K Akerman pers. comm.; interview 9), although this did depend on the generosity 
of the current station owners and managers. In these early years staple foods were often 
common to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal station workers, particularly where 
there was no access to a homestead garden. As a generalisation, the differences between 
the ration provided to the Aboriginal workers and the diet provided to the non-Aborig­ 
inal station employees were the quality and quantity of the beef provided, the quanti­ 
ties of the flour, tea and sugar provided, and the variety of foods used in addition to the 
staples. For example, dried foods such as rice and dried vegetables such as blue boiler 
peas were added to stews.

These supplies were brought to the stations twice a year from the ports of Wynd­ 
ham and Derby. They were brought by the Gan — the Afghans and their train of camels 
— who brought supplies to the remote areas of northern and central Australia. Terry 
(1927: 159) provides a unique description of the arrival of one camel train at Gordon 
Downs station during his stay in the mid-1920s:

Towards sundown that day a picturesque sight stalked to the homestead. It was a 
train of pack camels in the charge of Afghan camel men, arriving with stores from 
Wyndham. In a long winding string, tied nose to tail, they appeared out of the 
Bush, glowing as if on fire in the setting sun. In fact it seemed they were really 
walking straight out of the sun ... Slowly with dignified mien, the train ceased its 
paces by the homestead. Quietly the Afghan camel men walked down the train, 
catching nose lines, murmuring the inevitable ‘Whoosta’. Tired beasts sank to

5. ‘Kartiya’ is the word generally used for a white person in the east Kimberley.
6. The measure for flour was reported as being the depth measured from the fist to the elbow in 
a calico flour bag. This was for one family for one week.
earth, chewing the cud leisurely, gazing in supercilious disdain on all around...Packs dropped to the ground; camels rose up, free to roam the night through. They marched away a step — a pause — a step — a pause, without hurry or fuss, leaving two lines of merchandise near discarded pack saddles as testimony to their labours ended for a while.

Again using the southeast Kimberley as an example, supplies were taken by camel train as far as the larger stations such as Gordon Downs and Sturt Creek and smaller stations further to the south had to collect their supplies from the nearest of the larger stations. Stories of family trips by wagon to collect stores were recalled (interview 6), whilst others told of their people being forced to carry bags of salt and flour long distances to remote stations in the time before the camels came. Occasions have been recorded when they were whipped if they became too tired and they were chained to prevent them from running away (K Doohan pers. comm.).

Whether easy access to food and tobacco, curiosity or just fear of living in the bush account for why people moved to the station camps, most Aboriginal people did move closer to the station camps in the first two to three decades following colonisation. The pastoralists, sure of their own racial superiority, selected their labour force from the strong and healthy, and ignored the health and squalid living conditions of the less able-bodied (generally the elderly) living in the station camps. This attitude is evident in a photograph taken by Terry whilst travelling through the Kimberley region (Terry 1925: opp. page 226).

The pastoralists perceived the failure of the Aboriginal population to develop the economic potential of the land as a moral failure. In fact, traditional methods of harvesting, the storage of surplus dried fruit and seed and the concern for the seasonal regeneration of all flora and fauna expressed through ritual and in species management were largely unnoticed by the pastoralists. The impact of pastoralism on the traditional social organisation of the Aboriginal people was devastating and they were incorporated into the lowest rung of the pastoral economy. The demographic structure of traditional society had already been greatly altered through the loss of many young men from the frontier violence, through the many deaths from introduced infectious diseases, particularly of elders and children, and through a continuing high infant mortality rate from diarrhoeal disease resulting from the appalling living conditions and lack of ablution facilities in the station camps (Saggers and Gray 1991: 67).

Settlement living, coupled with the conditions of employment and what it brought in terms of food became linked with increasing malnutrition and high infant mortality and, in turn, with a diminution of traditional activity. Any desire to move away from the base camp was correspondingly lessened; and for good workers it was virtually an impossibility, except at short periods of limited walkabout. Family life was being upset. This was not just in terms of children being produced, or not being produced, but in terms of the revamping of male–female

7 Terry and a companion passed through the Sturt Creek area in 1925. Their vehicle broke down close to Mt Wittenoom and they had to walk for several days and almost lost their lives. Although this is an area where there are large traditional camp sites along the Sturt Creek, Terry did not encounter any Aboriginal people living in the area (Terry 1925: 244–66). He did, however, comment on the large Aboriginal camp at Gordon Downs when he arrived there (Terry 1925: 267). Although this is very circumstantial evidence, it does support the argument that most Jaru had moved to the station camps by the 1920s.
roles — in relation to marital responsibilities, both economically and emotionally and in the claims of Europeans for sexual access to females married or unmarried, children or adults (Berndt and Berndt 1987: 275).

Traditional relationships between men and women were also altered. Station managers and stockmen often availed themselves of Aboriginal women for sexual satisfaction and more permanent liaisons were frequent. Aboriginal men were rendered powerless in these relationships because of their inability to intervene. The relationships between men and women were also altered by the increase in opportunities for women to extend their range of social interaction beyond the camp (Bell 1983). Many Aboriginal people found that to be in a close and dependent relationship with the pastoralists was safer than to be free but vulnerable in the bush (Kolig 1987: 27).

Others chose to remain in the bush and some stations became known as ‘refuges’. Lewis Creek Station and Slatey Creek Station, marginal pastoral leases in the northern Tanami Desert, were reputed to have been such ‘safe’ areas (K. Doohan pers. comm.). Tom Bradshaw was at Slatey Creek and Jack Skeen and Dave Piggley were at Lewis Creek; all were married to Aboriginal women. Following the Sturt Creek massacre in the 1920s many people from Sturt Creek took refuge at Lewis Creek Station and Piggley is reported to have carried a pair of pistols which he used to threatened white men who came looking for Aboriginal people. Mostly, however, it was the elderly and children who lived there, while the young men and women worked for rations on adjacent stations (interview 6).

There were also some positive outcomes as the new social order gradually asserted itself. Working with cattle replaced hunting as the activity through which men acquired prestige. This occurred, however, within the hierarchical structure of station economies and was often external to traditional relationships.

Aboriginal men used cattle work to regain or maintain their pride as men, in a colonial context. Their use of this work to continue ritual ties with land challenged colonial ownership and the domination of white Australia culture’ (McGrath 1987: 46).

The seasonal cycles and the nature of cattle work involved a mobile existence not entirely alien to traditional land use patterns and Aboriginal stockmen, in particular, were able to maintain a greater degree of continuity with their culture than their counterparts living in towns or on missions. They supplemented their diet with bush food and sustained a fragmented relationship with their country until the wet season. The routine of station life dictated that no rations were supplied during the wet season and for about three months of the year the people were free to leave the station.

This was an important period in the annual calendar and was a significant factor in the ability of Aboriginal people to maintain a high degree of cultural continuity (Micha pers. comm.). Pastoralists had imposed restrictions on the type of ceremonies which could be performed and had prohibited all initiation ceremonies (K Akerman pers. comm.). The wet season became the period in which people were free to visit the sites within their traditional country with less fear of being shot; they visited relations and held rituals and ceremonies. They also returned to a largely hunting and gathering lifestyle. This afforded opportunities to pass on to their children skills and knowledge at many levels, as hunting and gathering was also an expression of spiritual attachment to land with many complex meanings (Young and Doohan 1989: 132).
Although past ownership of land did not endow the Aboriginal people with any legal rights within Western law, they continued to recognise and practice such rights and made a distinction between land-users and land owners:

They drew a contract, in these terms between a local descent group having primary spiritual rights in land (recognising that other secondary rights were important too), and a mixed group which economically exploited land. Europeans and their interests were seen as falling into the second category. The difference was that Europeans exploited the land without providing any real compensation for its usage and without allowing equal participation on the part of Aborigines. Aborigines accepted what was offered to them, in the way of food and goods, as no more than their due - as payment, however inadequate, for use and occupancy. Possession of the land however, in Aboriginal belief, remained in their hands because each Aboriginal person was closely linked to that land - to specific stretches of land; and the land, in their view, was inalienable' (Berndt and Berndt 1987: 279).

This continuity of land ownership and thus of traditional religious beliefs and practices provided a necessary and continuing emotional security and a counterbalance to the disruption of their socioeconomic security (Berndt and Berndt 1987: 274).

By the late 1920s the ration and an annual replacement of clothes was the accepted rate of pay to Aboriginal ‘stockboys’ and the Aboriginal camp became a labour pool for additional labour. A new culture had emerged on the stations, based around a stable Aboriginal population. The pastoralists’ need for a cheap labour force which could be controlled had been satisfied. As this relatively stable system of labour, and increasing profits, emerged during the first quarter of the twentieth century, many of the family-owned and controlled stations were sold to investment companies, absentee landlords concerned only with economic viability and with no concern for the traditional owners. Soon after World War I new policies were being implemented and a new era in pastoral management began.

It is apparent from these documented histories that, for most of the traditional owners, the transition from a traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle to the station camps had been made by the 1920s. This transition is arguably the most significant of several social and demographic transitions which occurred in this region during the first one hundred years following the European invasion. Most Aboriginal people lived for 9-10 months of the year at the station camps and those who were able to work were incorporated into the hierarchical structure of the pastoral industry and worked in return for rations. Despite this they were able to maintain a high degree of cultural continuity and continue religious and social relationships which were able to be reinforced during the wet season. Whilst the pastoralists were later to claim that they supported a large and dependent Aboriginal population, the Aboriginal people perceived themselves as sharing their country with the pastoralists and their cattle, whilst adapting their culture to the changing circumstances.

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8. No historical reference was found to Aboriginal stockmen. The term ‘stockboy’ when referring to Aboriginal employees seems to have been consistently used on all cattle stations in this region at this time.
1920–1970s: legislation, rations and the transition to wages

The frontier period of invasion and colonisation was followed by a period when the mode of production on the Kimberley pastoral leases developed an annual routine and a degree of economic security. New homesteads were built, cattle markets were secure although fluctuating, permanent roads and regular services were established, and the practice of using Aboriginal labour in return for rations became well established. This is illustrated by Terry’s description in 1927 of the new homestead at Gordon Downs which had replaced the original cottage since his visit two years earlier:

> It was interesting to see the place where our fuel supplies had been dumped at this homestead. At my previous visit, the holy-of-holies the manager’s house — had been a small humpy consisting of four stone walls capped by a tin roof. Now there is a double-storey house built on piles, palatial in comparison and the place that had once housed the lord of all he surveyed was become a roofless shack, wherein were stacked rows of red benzine drums and debris. What a change wrought by fate and progress in such a short space of time (Terry 1927:161).

Whilst the pastoralists prospered during this ‘golden era’, little changed for the Aboriginal people living in the station camps until after World War II. Government policies gradually reflected the growing public recognition that the beliefs labelled Social Darwinism (Mulvaney 1985: 68–9) were unjust. A new era of government policies was put into place. These were founded in the belief that opportunities for Aboriginal people would emerge if they were assimilated into the lowest rung of the wider white Australian society. The following statement by a government Minister in 1945 encapsulates the dominant white attitudes to Aboriginal people which prevailed during the 1930s, 1940s and into the 1950s.

> Under existing policy aboriginals employed on cattle stations are not paid any wages, but are clothed and fed by the employers. In addition, the employers have to maintain the whole of the dependents of the aboriginal employees. It is stated that the cost of the maintenance of the dependants more than offsets the expenditure that would be involved by paying the employees wages and leaving them to maintain their dependants. On the larger cattle stations there are considerable numbers of aboriginals, the majority of them ... seemed to be happy and in good condition. The aboriginal employees like their work and are a definite asset to the stations (Minister for the Interior, November 1945, quoted in Berndt and Berndt 1987: 51).

Berndt and Berndt provide a different perspective:

> They owned neither the huts in which they lived nor the land on which these were built, they had no rights of tenure, and in some cases have been sold or transferred with the property. Their security depended on the new land holders — a precarious security at times and in places where there were few, if any, checks or curbs on the treatment accorded these people who had, for a long period, no effective rights at law (Berndt and Berndt 1987: 273).

### Summary of major legislative changes, 1930s–1970s

A brief resume of Federal and Western Australian state legislation and regulations controlling Aboriginal people working on stations in Western Australia between 1945 and the 1970s is provided in Table 2 in order to explain how the wider political milieu continued to control their lives. This was also a period when all people living on stations
Table 2  Government legislation relevant to Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, 1944–72

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>amended Natives (Citizens Rights) Act</td>
<td>Provided citizenship rights to successful applicants with strict conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951, 1958,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Bateman Report</td>
<td>Recommended major restructuring of Native Welfare Department into districts with flow-on effect on legislative changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Native Welfare Act (1954) and Native Administration Act (1905–1947) amendment</td>
<td>Repeal of most of the restrictive and discriminatory sections of the original act, introduced major reforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Native Welfare Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Commonwealth Social Services (Consolidation) Act amendment</td>
<td>Restrictions on Aborigines receiving pensions and maternity allowances were lifted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Commonwealth Select Committee</td>
<td>Inquired into whether Commonwealth franchise should be extend to Aborigines — they were granted the right to enrol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Native Welfare Act</td>
<td>Replaced Native Administration Act. A number of other legislative amendments also occurred in 1963, for example, Criminal Code, Evidence Act, Mining Act, Licensing Act, Firearms and guns Act, Health Act etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Criminal Code amended</td>
<td>Abolished special provisions relating to the whipping of ‘natives’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Federal Referendum</td>
<td>Australians voted ‘yes’ to citizenship rights for Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Pastoral Industry Award (1965) amended</td>
<td>Equal wages paid to Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Liquor Act amendment</td>
<td>Last two restricted areas in WA, the Kimberley and Goldfields, were de-proclaimed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Repeal of the Aboriginal (Citizens Rights) Act, WA.</td>
<td>Legally opening the way for full political, economic and social involvement as Australian citizens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were becoming aware of social changes and when much of the earlier repressive legislation was repealed.

The Native Administration Act of 1905–47 had emphasised the inferior status of Aboriginal people more than any other legislation in Western Australia. An attempt to alleviate this situation was made through the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act (1944). This Act provided for the issue by a Magistrate of a certificate of Citizenship Rights to a suc-
cessful adult applicant who was 'deemed to be no longer a native for the purpose of the Native Administration Act, or any other Act', but such a person was also forbidden to associate with other Aborigines, even members of his/her family. This Act was amended in 1951, 1958 and 1964. The underlying principle, however, remained the same: 'One could be Aboriginal or a citizen, but not both' (McLarty 1965).

In 1954 the Native Administration Act was substantially amended to remove most discriminatory and restrictive sections and the remaining provisions were removed by the Native Welfare Act, 1963. Under this Act the Native Welfare Department was again substantially reviewed and there was a shift from an assimilationist policy toward one which recognised self-determination. This Act was in place for a few significant years during which Aboriginal people were granted equal wages and full citizenship rights. It was replaced by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act, 1972.

The policy of not permitting Aboriginal people to move from their stations was in place until the 1950s. Jack Bohemia, a police tracker working in the Fitzroy Valley during the 1940s and 1950s, described in detail the treatment of Aborigines who left the stations where they were employed (Bohemia and McGregor 1995). It is clear from his accounts that activities on behalf of station owners occupied a great deal of police time. All Aboriginal people continued to be accounted for; those reported to police as being absent from their allocated station (except to attend urgent family business such as funerals) were hunted and returned, usually in chains. New arrivals from the deserts were allocated stations, most frequently those where they arrived, or were escorted to stations where the owners had indicated that they were short of labour. These restrictions were confirmed by Micha (1961:71) as being enforced at least until the end of the 1950s. From the 1920s to the 1950s the number of able-bodied Aboriginal 'workers' was regarded as an asset of the property, able to be transferred to a new owner when a pastoral lease was sold.

Wages and rations
Before the 1950s, Aboriginal employees on stations were paid only with rations. In 1948, following a protracted wages strike led by Don McLeod in the Pilbara in 1946, an inquiry into Aboriginal working conditions found that the Kimberley was the only region in Australia not paying any wages to Aboriginal employees. A further inquiry in 1949 by the Department of Native Welfare recommended the immediate introduction of a cash wage and the provision of a minimum standard of housing. This recommendation was disputed by the Pastoralists' Association. The minutes of a meeting between representatives of the Pastoralists' Association and the Commissioner for Native Affairs held at Pastoral House, Perth on 7 February 1949 record that:

Mr Durack pointed out the complications of the non-payment of wages to natives in the Kimberley and mentioned that in the Territory natives were being paid wages and he was of the opinion that similar action would have to be contemplated in Western Australia. He was very firm in his statement that the Department should lay down a set standard of wages payable to natives be it 5/- or 25/-.

Pastoralists Association and Commissioner for Native Affairs: 1949: 4

At a later meeting of the Pastoralists Association of Western Australia in 1950 it was resolved to agree to pay a wage to Aboriginal 'workers' on cattle stations in the Kimberley. This was £1 per month for stockmen and 10/- per month for domestics
(Hawke and Gallagher 1989: 68-9); from this their weekly ration of food was deducted. In addition, some individual employers paid a bonus, particularly after a good year, and some paid long service leave.9 This agreement, and one subsequent wage rise, determined all that Aboriginal employees received until the introduction of full award wages on 1 December 1968. Before 1961 an allowance was made to stations for the support of ‘dependent’ Aborigines (unemployed, children and pensioners) through the office of the Protector of Aborigines. Between 1961 and 1970 some social security payments were received by the stations on behalf of unemployed Aboriginal people. It was not until after 1970 (in WA) that those who were unemployed became entitled to full unemployment benefits, pensions or social security payments. Pensions and social security payments were made directly into an account maintained by the pastoral company on behalf of individuals and the resident book keeper was responsible for ensuring that rations provided through the station store were deducted from the appropriate account before the benefit was paid.

Rations were only available from the station to which the Aborigine ‘belonged’ and, according to Micha (1961: 71) it was the provision of rations which made it possible for pastoralists to maintain an assured labour force. He described the distribution of tea, flour, tobacco, clothes and sugar to the people living at Gordon Downs Station in 1959-60, and recorded that the distribution of rations had been used to develop a dependence on the pastoralists (Micha 1961: 67).

The Protector of Aborigines had paid stations a small subsidy for each ration provided but this ceased when Aboriginal people became eligible to receive some welfare benefits. In order to administer the payment of the pensions the Department of Social Security classified cattle stations on which Aboriginal pensioners were resident as ‘institutions’. For this reason full pensions were not received by pensioners but paid directly into the general account of the station on which they were resident. It was noted by the Superintendent of the Native Welfare Department, Derby, that this itemised issue (dated 23 March 1965) represents the full value of the pension. According to Stevens (1974: 157) the legality of this was questionable. The amounts of cash received by the pensioners after their expenses had been deducted varied widely between stations.

Although recommendations were made by the Department regarding the quantity and quality of the rations to be provided to Aboriginal workers both of these varied widely according to the policies of the station owners and the goodwill of individual station managers. The report of Berndt and Berndt (1987: 63) on their fieldwork on several stations owned by the Australian Investment Agency confirmed that the overstating the rations provided was practised by station managers in 1946.

The returns regarding Aborigines forwarded to the Department of Native Affairs and to the head office of the AIA, follow a pattern set down by the AIA ... However, certain discrepancies are evident, not only in the figures as presented and arranged, but also in the general impressions produced ... apart from the inequality in the value of the

9 Currency is expressed here as pounds (£), shillings (s) and pence (d). For example, 10/- was ten shillings and £1/11/4 was one pound, eleven shillings and 4 pence. There are 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. At the time decimal currency was introduced (14 February 1966) one Australian pound was equal to two Australian dollars.
food as actually obtained and as therein represented to have been obtained. (This information was supported by detailed observation over a period, in addition to data obtained from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sources.) That is, perusal of these records alone, without other evidence, would result in the inference being drawn that the cost of maintaining Aborigines attached to the station was higher than that of maintaining non-Aboriginal employees, whereas this was not the case. This is clearly shown in the 'Working Records' of the station.

In 1951 the Commonwealth Department of Health conducted an Australia-wide nutrition survey of the Aboriginal population (Commonwealth Department of Health 1952). The results of that survey are presented in Table 3, which provides diet records for eight Kimberley cattle stations, missions, Aboriginal families living in towns and hospitals. In addition the Department of Native Affairs ration allowances in 1951 and 1952 are included for comparison with the ration actually provided. The nutrient compositions of this dietary information have been evaluated by Smith and Smith (1999). Several conclusions can be drawn about the diet of Aboriginal people living on stations at this time, based on this evaluation and on Table 3 (col. 1):

- The station diet consisted essentially of flour, meat and sugar and was very inadequate in fresh fruit and vegetables, milk, cheese and butter.
- The station diet supplied adequate protein energy, iron and some minor dietary components.
- Shortfalls in foods containing vitamin A, calcium and vitamin C would have led to serious dietary deficiencies.
- Shortfalls observed in the station and mission diet were corrected in the hospital diet (col. 3) and to a large extent in the self-selected diet of Aboriginal households living near large towns (col. 2).¹⁰

The 1951 nutrition survey did not include bush foods which were recorded as being used in most of the station camps.¹¹

The 1951 nutrition survey also revealed that Aboriginal people receiving rations at one south Kimberley station had the lowest calorie intake per head per day of all eight Kimberley stations in the study and that this was 50% less than the next lowest figure (Commonwealth Department of Health 1952). In reference to this same station, a nurse who had worked at the Fitzroy Crossing Hospital in the early 1960s said:

A main problem was ... station — it was their kids we were sitting up nursing at night and watching die. It had a very bad history. The diet on ____ was bread and tea, three times a day. This was the ration. So the women would go up and get a hunk of bread and a billy of tea and some meat when a killer came in. The best cuts went to the top house, then the next best to the manager and then further down — it would be the hooves and the horns and the gut and entrails and stuff like that which would be brought up into the camp and boughs and leaves would

¹⁰ This point is emphasised because it was widely believed by Western health providers at that time, and until quite recently, that poor nutrition in Aboriginal communities was an outcome of their own poor food choices.

¹¹ In the wider study from which this paper is derived (Smith 2000) it was found that although bush foods were used and valued, the people living in the camps were unable to exploit local bush foods in sufficient quantities to be nutritionally significant.
Table 3 Weekly per capita food consumption, Kimberley Aborigines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food item</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Stations: Anna Plains, Fossil Downs, Gogo, Jubilee, Noonkanbah, Flora Valley, Margaret River, Moola Bulla (mean of 8)</th>
<th>Aboriginal families living near Broome or Wyndham and buying own food (households) (mean of 2 towns)</th>
<th>Kimberley hospitals: Wyndham, Derby, Broome, Derby Leprosarium (mean of 4)</th>
<th>Mission stations: Beagle Bay, Drysdale River, Forrest River, Kununya, Lombadina (mean of 5)</th>
<th>Department of Native Affairs ration allowances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour, bread, cereals</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk (fresh or dry)</td>
<td>pints</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter or dripping</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>no.</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat or fish (boned)</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other veg.</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit (fresh, canned or dry)</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on data from the 1951 Commonwealth Department of Health Nutrition Survey, Kimberley region.
be got and this stuff dropped into the middle of it and the women would rush out and the dogs would rush out — it was appalling. (Interview 9).

There were also many stations which did supply adequate rations. This was supported by anecdotal evidence, an example of which is the following statement, which also supports the evidence that Aboriginal people supplemented their diet with traditional foods on a regular basis:

The people on ___ were well looked after, had a better diet than the other stations too — river people, always had access to fresh food, went fishing and hunting ... There was a big vegetable garden too. Interview 8 [refers to the 1960s and early 1970s]

Detailed recommendations regarding rations based on the 1951 nutrition survey (WA Archives, Account 993/Item 101/51/1-5) were sent to all stations by the Department of Native Affairs (Department of Native Affairs 1952a,b). Included were the recommended daily food allowances for Aboriginal 'workers' which were circulated to station managers (Table 4).

Table 4. Basic ration scale per head — recommendations, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Per day</th>
<th>Per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat (boneless wgt)</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>7 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>4.5 oz</td>
<td>2 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables or fruit, fresh or tinned</td>
<td>4.5 oz</td>
<td>2 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried peas</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
<td>.5 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread or flour</td>
<td>12 oz</td>
<td>5 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking powder</td>
<td>.5 oz</td>
<td>3 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porridge meal</td>
<td>2 oz</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>3 oz</td>
<td>1.25 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jam, Syrup or treacle</td>
<td>3 oz</td>
<td>.75 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried milk or cheese</td>
<td>.5 oz</td>
<td>4 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver or green vegetables</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
<td>7 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dripping margarine or butter</td>
<td>4 oz</td>
<td>1.75 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water-pure potable water from an approved source and entirely available for drinking</td>
<td>6 pints</td>
<td>5 qts (sic) (=5 gal.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 lb = ~0.45 kg; 1 oz = ~28 g; 1 pint = ~0.57 litres

Reproduced from Department of Native Affairs, Western Australia 1952b: 4.
It is clear from both the 1951 nutrition survey report and from these recommendations that cultural assimilation was a further goal which, it was anticipated, would evolve through a 'gradual transition from foods and methods of cooking at present accepted by Aboriginals to those of white Australians' (Department of Native Affairs, Western Australia 1952b: 4).

Although comparative Kimberley data are not available, Stevens (1974) provides sufficient information about rations on cattle stations in the Northern Territory in the 1960s to enable some assessment of changes in the ration system. Both the Kimberley and the Northern Territory were bound by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission awards enforced by the Native Welfare Branch in each region, and the Commonwealth nutrition survey 1951 was also conducted on stations in the Northern Territory with the same or very similar results as the Kimberley region.

Table 5. Weekly ration per person for all residents on one Northern Territory station (152 persons) in 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour and flour/cereal products</td>
<td>4.73 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk, powdered</td>
<td>0.01 pints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, fresh</td>
<td>7.0 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried fruits</td>
<td>0.03 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar - incl. treacle, golden syrup &amp; jam</td>
<td>0.48 lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data derived from Table 7 in Stevens 1974: 85.

Table 6 shows a deficit in expenditure in 1965 by a Northern Territory cattle station on maintenance cost of Aboriginal employees and dependents, including diet, when compared with estimates of the Aboriginal Welfare Branch (Stevens 1974: 91). In this example the net annual expenditure is £4145 and the net annual expected expenditure estimated by the Welfare Branch (NT) is £13 060. These figures are supported by data from other cattle stations used in the same reference in which Stevens estimates deficits in rations of between 30% and 85%.
Table 6. Aboriginal wages and sustenance costs, 1965 and Welfare Branch (NT) estimates of station costs for maintaining Aboriginal labour force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure categories</th>
<th>Station costs for maintaining an Aboriginal labour force</th>
<th>Welfare Branch (NT) estimates of maintaining an Aboriginal labour force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pensioners (12) weekly, Stockmen (22) weekly, Whole of camp (70 persons) annually</td>
<td>Single stockman, Whole of camp (70 persons) annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance</td>
<td>£ s. d.</td>
<td>£ s. d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>10 0, 2 2 4</td>
<td>3 8 35 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>1 0 5, 1 0 5</td>
<td>1 6 9 6 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>11 1 1, 11 1 1</td>
<td>9 9 8 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>9 4, 9 4</td>
<td>7 9 9 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap and matches</td>
<td>4 1 0, 4 1 0</td>
<td>4 0 3 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROSS COST</td>
<td>2 1 7 7, 4 9 1 1</td>
<td>7 8 8 9 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less pension funds</td>
<td>6 0 0, 9 6</td>
<td>3 7 4 4 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET COST to station</td>
<td>3 2 5, 4 0 5</td>
<td>4 1 4 5 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from sections of Table 9 in Stevens (1974: 88).

Since most Aboriginal people employed on stations had received some form of wages since 1950 (although often only in the form of a store credit) and the white employees were paid full wages regularly, the store was the place where surplus money could be spent on additional food, clothing and other goods. It was also where the rations were dispensed. Those who received the ration, however, seldom received any surplus from their pensions to spend in the store. Furthermore, Stevens (1974: 156) noted that at some station stores the Aborigines were not informed of the prices of the commodities that they received. In these cases

The employee simply asked for goods, and if his account was in credit, he was handed them without reference to the price. A sum was then deducted from the employee's account.

Paradoxically, rations were also the subject of constant documentation and scrutiny, not with reference to their quality and quantity but the amount they cost the government. Correspondence concerning the hospitalisation of two Christmas Creek Station stockmen in Derby in 1968 illustrates this. The first letter is an account for $9.18 sent to the manager of Christmas Creek Station for the supply of rations by the Department of Native Welfare in 1968 to two Aborigines in Derby for medical treatment (WA Archives, Consignment 1733 Item 196/44/3); the second letter is from the Commissioner of Native Welfare's office in Perth to the superintendent in the Derby office inquiring why the account had been sent (WA Archives, Consignment 1733 Item 1196/
Whenever Aborigines left their station and were supplied with rations elsewhere by the government, meticulous records were kept and the station asked to refund the cost. WA Archives consignment 1733 Item 196/44/5 is an example of the standard form used as a receipt for payment of a ration order—in this case it was issued to Jubilee Downs for an amount of £2/0/6. A further document, WA Archives consignment 1733 Item 196/44, is a record sheet from the Halls Creek office of the Department of Native Welfare, dated 25 November 1960, naming individuals in receipt of rations during the previous quarter. This detailed recording of all travel by Aborigines is an example of the net of surveillance used by police, bureaucrats and pastoralists to control their lives.

The Department of Native Affairs, through its patrol officers, was responsible for the surveillance of the living conditions in the station and for ensuring that the Aboriginal Ordinance regulations were observed and station owners employed bookkeepers who were responsible for completing Aboriginal employment returns for this Department twice a year. A now retired station manager reported that the bookkeepers employed by the larger pastoral companies were so thorough that the ‘only way a manager back then could make a little on the side for himself was through the rations and the store’ (Interview 7).

The Australian Aboriginal population did not have rights to full citizenship unless people had been granted one of several forms of legal exemption (Berndt and Berndt 1979). They were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and, in a society so concerned with industrial justice, the question of paying Aboriginal employees wages for their substantial contribution to the Kimberley cattle industry was seldom addressed (Stevens 1974: 189-205; Marshall 1989). Stevens (1974: 189-205) detailed the events which led to the judgement by the Full Bench of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, 1965. This judgement stated that by 1 December 1968 all male employees of cattle stations in the Northern Territory were to be employed subject to the awards and determination of the Commission—with a provision for ‘slow workers’.

In an Australia-wide referendum held in 1967 the non-Aboriginal population of Australia was asked to decide whether Aboriginal people should be granted full citizenship rights. The result was a resounding ‘yes’ vote. A consequence of this referendum was the extension of the 1965 ruling of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to include all Aboriginal employees in the pastoral industry in all states and the payment of the standard Pastoral Award from 1 December 1968.

Following the passing of the Pastoral Award in Western Australia (almost three years later in 1971) many station owners within the Kimberley region, appear to have decided with a single mind that the time had come for the Aboriginal people living on the stations who were not employees to be removed. They did not, however, expect that many of the employed labour force whose loyalties were to their families, would move as well. At this time many pastoralists found they lost both their access to cheap labour and their most experienced stockmen. For most of these Aboriginal people, the ‘station times’ ended in the 1970s and the struggle for land rights commenced.

12 The Australian Workers Union spent $28 per head in the Northern Territory to get the Aboriginal station workers signed up as unionists; they could not afford to then come to the Kimberley (interview 29).
Concluding comments
What are now referred to by Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region as the ‘station times’ lasted for seventy to eighty years and was a time when most Aboriginal people learnt to share their traditional country with the pastoralists. It is also a time that many now reflect on with considerable nostalgia. This paper has sought to describe some methods used by some pioneering pastoralists to control the Aboriginal population and to ensure a constant and cheap labour force on the cattle stations from colonisation in the 1880s until the 1970s. The region is remote. It is likely that few of the early pastoralists would have been literate, and none of the Aboriginal people were literate. As a consequence sources of information, particularly about the period before the 1920s, were difficult to locate.

From the information presented, the frontier period (1880s to the 1920s) in the Kimberley region was a particularly violent period, the land was occupied by cattle and the young and fit members of the Aboriginal population were pressed into forming a free labour force, although they were never referred to as slaves. In addition, the pastoralists were able to ensure the control and surveillance of the Aboriginal population by influencing state legislation. At first the legislation was repressive, whilst attempting to be humane. The extent to which this legislation changed through the twentieth century also reflected the changing attitudes of the wider society. Ironically, it was the achievement of full citizenship and the 1968 Pastoral Industry Award, giving Aboriginal people the right to equal wages, which resulted in the final act of their dispossession.

Rations are shown to have been central to labour relations on cattle stations. Until the 1960s they were the only payment made to Aboriginal ‘workers’. Although there were station owners and managers who did provide sufficient rations for their Aboriginal employees, it is easy to understand how the Aboriginal people were able to be exploited. For all of the period discussed, most were illiterate and had never attended school, and few had any experience of handling cash. By the 1960s most knew that they received a wage or a pension, but their food and any money they received always came directly from the station manager and, despite the availability of some cash, it was the ration which remained the recognised remuneration for Aboriginal labour in the Kimberley region until the introduction of equal wages in 1971.13

Acknowledgements
Oral histories were recorded as part of a wider project and the memories of senior members of the Jaru people have contributed to deeper understandings about the colonisation of this region. The field research associated with this study was undertaken with the cooperation of the Aboriginal people living at Kundat Djaru community and with support from Flinders University, Adelaide. I wish to thank those who read and commented on drafts of this paper, including Associate Professor Donald Pate, Kim Doohan, Daniel Vachon, Joe Blythe and Matthew Wrigley. This paper is part a PhD research project with the Department of Archaeology, Flinders University, South Australia.

13 Despite the payment of award wages, full citizenship rights, including the right to vote, continued to be withheld from Aboriginal people in the Kalgoorlie and Kimberley regions until 1971.
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From Wattie Creek to Wattie Creek: an oral historical approach to the Gurindji walk-off

Minoru Hokari

The Gurindji walk-off was a symbolic historic event in Australian race relations, particularly in terms of the Aboriginal land rights movement. The episode succeeded in gaining the wide public attention of contemporary Australia, it has been spoken of at length among the Gurindji people, and has also been discussed by academic historians. It remains an event that is deeply engraved on the memories of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. Drawing upon field research with the Aboriginal people of Daguragu, this article attempts to interpret the meaning of the walk-off within Gurindji cultural practice and ideas of decolonisation, by using oral historical accounts of the Gurindji people.

There are many questions to investigate in order to understand the Gurindji’s perspective of the walk-off event. I especially address three main questions. The first question relates to how the Gurindji people formulated the idea of the walk-off. Who invented or brought about the idea of the walk-off? This discussion will also examine the reason why the Wave Hill Aboriginal people, not other stations, were able to begin their struggle towards regaining their country. Secondly, I will examine the Gurindji people’s action, which has most often been referred to as a ‘strike’ in the popular sense of the term. The question here is: to what extent was the Gurindji walk-off a strike? The third question is: why did they choose Wattie Creek and move there to establish the new community? In accordance with the above three questions, three sequences must be examined: (1) Before the walk-off, (2) the walk-off, and (3) the establishment of the Daguragu community.

To my knowledge, even though there were a number of studies and reports of the Gurindji walk-off episode, there have been no accounts exploring the questions I raised above in a comprehensive manner. Nor has there been extensive study of the Gurindji people’s oral accounts of their history before the walk-off, or their retrospective views. My research seeks to redress this gap. Applying an oral historical approach with new questions, I will show the consistency of the Gurindji people’s demand for regaining their country from the very beginning of this process. In the course of my analysis, I will show a Gurindji geography that is historically situated, that comes into being as a

1. Fieldwork was conducted by the author in January and June–December 1997, and January–March 1999.
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dimension of colonial residence within an existing Dreaming landscape. However, before exploring oral accounts of the Gurindji people, I shall examine published and unpublished studies related to this event.

I

Among written accounts of the Gurindji walk-off, the first and most significant report is probably Frank Hardy’s *The Unlucky Australians.* As a writer, Hardy was personally involved in this event and supported the Gurindji people. Encountering the Aboriginal struggle with white pastoralists, Hardy decided to help Aboriginal people in his own way: writing articles, seeking a way to raise funds for their survival during the ‘strike’, writing a petition to the Governor-General of Australia for the return of their land, and so on. His standpoint is clear: he actively assisted Aboriginal ‘strikers’, but did not initiate their movement. Even though there is no doubt that Hardy’s commitment to the cause greatly encouraged the Gurindji elders’ decision-making, his restraint in terms of respecting Aboriginal initiative is admirable. Hardy conscientiously resisted paternalism in his relationship with the Gurindji people. Therefore, my discussion does not intend to dismiss the extremely important role of Hardy as a supportive participant in the event. Nevertheless, I want to make it clear that Hardy’s role was not to explore and interpret the background of the walk-off, but to immediately respond to the Gurindji people’s request in an appropriate way. He played his role effectively, and thus, the Gurindji people respected him greatly. *The Unlucky Australians* is the product of his actual experience at that time.

However, when readers aspire to understand the Gurindji people’s view of the walk-off, Hardy’s book gives us a limited perspective. For instance, readers are not privy to the actual process involved in the development of the Gurindji’s demands and decisions. Hardy simply presents the chronological order that he experienced. In *The Unlucky Australians*, the Gurindji people at first demanded (1) equal wages, then (2) social justice in every aspect, until finally they wanted (3) the return their land. If you read this book without further information, you would be most likely to accept that this was the chronological order in which the Gurindji people developed their ideas. However, it is crucial to emphasise that this was the order *in which the Gurindji people told their story to Hardy*, and this reflected what he and others were able to observe at the time.

Most of the research literature follows Hardy’s order. This order often describes the Gurindji walk-off episode as moving ‘from a strike to a land claim’. For instance, Stuart Macintyre says, ‘What had begun as a strike had become a land claim’. Similarly, Lyn A Riddett titled her article ‘The strike that became a land rights movement’. However, my research has convinced me that the Gurindji walk-off was never principally a ‘strike’, but rather their main purpose was consistently ‘to get their land back’ from the very beginning. I explore this point as one of the keys to developing an understanding of what the walk-off means to the Gurindji people. Despite these problems, *The Unlucky Australians* contains a lot of oral accounts. In later discussion, I use Hardy’s book as one of the primary contemporary sources.

2. Hardy 1968.
In other more academic studies, there are — broadly speaking — two different approaches towards the Gurindji walk-off: economic historical and socio-historical. Hannah Middleton was probably the first to explore the economic historical view.\(^5\) Gordon Briscoe also claims the importance of class analysis based on Marx’s theory of the mode of production.\(^6\) Tina Jowett applies the theory of ‘internal colonialism’ to explain the process of exploitation of the Aboriginal workers at Wave Hill station.\(^7\) My previous work rejected theories such as ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘articulation of mode of production’ because these theories cannot adequately describe the active participation of the colonised Aboriginal economy. Instead, I have emphasised the Gurindji’s struggle to maintain economic autonomy not only during, but also before the walk-off.\(^8\) These economic historical analyses are necessary for understanding the economic status of Aboriginal people living on stations and for explaining the economic aspects of their motivation for the walk-off. However, at the same time, economic considerations are just one of the many issues involved in understanding this event.

Socio-historical approaches emphasise racial conflict and its social complexity. Jack K Doolan’s report clearly points out that the Aboriginal struggle was not for wages but for an equal relationship between two races.\(^9\) The land claim book written by Patrick McConvell and Rod Hargen shows good integration of both economic and sociological perspectives.\(^10\) The Aboriginal Land Commissioner’s report on the Daguragu claim is also based on this land claim book.\(^11\) Using *The Unlucky Australians*, Ann McGrath emphasises ‘white men’s unfair sexual monopolisation of Aboriginal women’ as one of the key reasons for the walk-off.\(^12\) Riddett reflects aspects of non-Aboriginal support, including her personal commitment.\(^13\) These socio-historical approaches certainly give us a wider view of the walk-off episode than the economic historical approach. However, we still do not know much about *what the walk-off meant to the Gurindji people*, a question to which I believe only an oral historical approach can provide an answer.

Jowett and Riddett used oral historical accounts from Daguragu, yet these were not presented as a major source in constructing the history of the walk-off, but were treated more as supplementary sources.\(^14\) McConvell and Hargen’s work and a number of other reports were heavily based on the Gurindji people’s oral accounts.\(^15\) The Aboriginal Land Commissioner’s report especially dealt with the Gurindji people’s oral testimonies to justify the Aboriginal ownership of the claimed area and its historical background.\(^16\) However, as I mentioned in the beginning, the questions I seek to

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address — Who invented the idea of walk-off? Was the walk-off a strike in the European sense of the term? Why did those who participated choose Wattie Creek as their new community? — were not discussed at length in these previous oral historical works. Deborah B Rose’s *Hidden Histories* includes a chapter on this ‘strike’ movement, in which she asserts that the Aboriginal people’s primary demand was the return of their land. In 1982, Hobbles Danayarri, a Mudburra man of Yarralin, said to Rose, “Tommy Vincent (Lingiari) told Lord Vestey: “You can keep your gold. We just want our land back”.” However, she primarily explored the perspective of Aboriginal people from Victoria River Downs rather than those from Wave Hill.

Thus, the purpose of this article becomes clear: it addresses the need to discuss the walk-off episode more thoroughly with specific questions based on the oral historical accounts of the Gurindji people. Only through this approach can we understand the meaning of the walk-off, not from an economic or sociological perspective, but more strongly from the Gurindji perspective.

II

A leader of the Wave Hill walk-off, Tommy Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji elder, told Hardy what he had been thinking during the ‘Vestey time’, i.e. before the walk-off:

The manager of Wave Hill was Tom Pisher. Bestey man, Tom Pisher. ... Aboriginal men out in bush all time. White ringers come back to station ebyr Friday night. That not right. I think to mesel’ about that longa time. And think them Bestey mob don’t treat Aborigine native people right way.

A similar story is also told by Captain Major (Lupgna Giari), another Gurindji man who led the Aborigines of Newcastle Waters station and walked off to the vicinity of Elliott, about three months before the walk-off at Wave Hill station. Captain Major told Hardy:

I was thinkin’ to mesel’: I was reckon I only get ten dollar and all these other men only get six dollar. And them women might book a few things down at store, lucky if thirty bob left after two months. That not right. And I bin thinkin’ agen: Wish we had someone behind us somewhere.

Dexter Daniels, a young Aboriginal Roper River man who worked for the North Australian Workers Union, also remembers that Captain Major ‘told me he had often thought this. He told me about having someone behind him, someone who would help the Aborigines’. These comments show us that both the Gurindji men, Vincent Lingiari and Captain Major had been thinking about the poor situation of their people. It was before Dexter Daniels and Hardy arrived to support Aboriginal stock workers that Lupgna Giari was looking for ‘having someone behind him’ who would help Aboriginal people.

I would like to explore this point: what did it really mean when Vincent Lingiari said, ‘I think to mesel’ about that longa time’ and Lupgna Giari said, ‘Wish we had

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someone behind us somewhere'? What was behind these statements? This should be the starting point for exploring our first question: where did the idea of the walk-off originate?

Most of the Aboriginal elders in Daguragu remember a Gurindji man, Sandy Moray Junganaiari, who seems to have been well known throughout the region.22 Frank Hardy met and wrote about him, describing Sandy as ‘an ancient thin man’.23 Among the Aboriginal elders in Daguragu community, I held intensive discussions with Jimmy Mangayarri, Mick Rangiari, Peanut Pontiari and Stanly Sambo. They convinced me that Sandy Moray was the founder of the walk-off before Vincent Lingiari took the real action.

They told me that Sandy Moray was called ‘Tipujurn’ among the Gurindji and his country was Seal Gorge and Wattie Creek.24 During the mustering time, he did stock work on Wave Hill station, then he went back to his country, Seal Gorge, when the wet season (holiday time) started.25 Sandy Moray also worked for Alex Moray, a pastoral inspector for Vesteys, whom they called ‘Vestey’s big boss’, or ‘travelling boss’.26 Tipujurn’s European name, Sandy ‘Moray’ comes from Alex Moray.27 Since Sandy Moray worked for Alex Moray, ‘he bin all over’ Australia.28 His frequent interstate trips gave Sandy Moray an unusual opportunity to observe the race relations at cattle stations in other places such as Queensland and Western Australia. In other states, especially in Queensland, Sandy Moray was impressed to see that Aboriginal workers and white Australians worked together and the conditions of the Aboriginal people were relatively better than in the Northern Territory.29 Sandy Moray wanted to show the better race relations in Queensland to his ‘mate’, Vincent Lingiari. One day (holiday time?) they went to the Northern Territory-Queensland border to meet some Queensland Aboriginal people. However, local police denied them entry because they did not have permission to travel into Queensland.30

Eventually, Sandy Moray started to think about changing the Aboriginal situation in his country: ‘He (Sandy) bin start think’n, (and said) “I gonna get somebody. I got a bit of idea.”‘31 The Gurindji elders with whom I spoke could not fully explain to me

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23. Hardy 1968: 161. Hardy also drew a portrait of Sandy Moray on the front page of *The unlucky Australians*.
24. Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31; Mick Rangiari, Tape 30.
25. Mick Rangiari, Tapes 30, 31; Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31. I also found his name in the Aboriginal employment records at Wave Hill station. For example, Sandy Moray had worked for 29 weeks in 1952, zero weeks in 1953, and 14 weeks up to July in 1954. He earned one pound a week, as did most of the other male Aboriginal workers. See, ‘Employment of Aboriginals in the Pastoral Industry, Wave Hill Station’, in NAA FI 52/736; NAA FI 53/674.
26. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30; Mick Rangiari, Tape 31; Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31; Stanly Sambo, Tape 32. See also McGrath 1987: a photo page between 84 and 85; Cole 1988: 196.
27. Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31.
28. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30; Mick Rangiari, Tape 31; Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31.
29. Mick Rangiari, Tape 31; Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30.
31. Mick Rangiari, Tape 31; Mick Rangiari, Tape 32.
how Sandy Moray developed the idea of changing the situation of his own country. They did suggest that Tipujurn was good at following the white man’s ideas and practices because he had known Alex Moray for a long time. They also told me that Sandy Moray may have met unionists in Queensland and learned how to fight. Mick Rangiari suggested that Sandy Moray had a good ‘brain’ so that ‘maybe he bin think’n himself.’ He also said, ‘He (Sandy) bin think’n every night.’

On the other hand, what they clearly remembered is that, one evening, Sandy Moray called a meeting under the ‘partiki tree’ (Terminalia arostrata, or ‘nut tree’) at Wattie Creek. Jimmy Mangayarri was one of the participants. Other participants he remembered were Vincent Lingiari, and Peanut Pontiari’s father, Bob Warriyawun. Mick Rangiari was a little boy at that time. Pincher Nyurrmiyari (Manguari) was not there because he was not yet a member of this project. At this meeting, Sandy Moray told them, ‘What’s for we work’n langa kartiya [white people]? We wanna fight the kartiya. Get the country back! Don’t worry about it. You gotta [will get] land, no worry. You gotta land, you gotta station, you gotta buluki [bullock], you gotta motika [car].’ Initially, most of them did not believe him. However, Sandy Moray patiently explained his idea to people. He said, ‘We gonna do something’ and explained his plan every night. He talked ‘all night, and get old men made’em understand’. Jimmy Mangayarri and Mick Rangiari confirmed that these meetings had been held a long time before Hardy visited the Gurindji country.

The ideas of returning their land and running the cattle station by themselves were formulated by Sandy Moray and had been in the Gurindji people’s consciousness long before the actual walk-off occurred. Riley Young of Lingara told Rose that Sandy Moray also went to the Ngarinman country to explain his plan, which, according to Rose, appears to have been around 1950:

And old Sandy Moray used to come out from Wave Hill. ... Sandy Moray, Jängala [subsection] bloke. He used to come out there and tell us this story for us. Tell us. Ohhh, myall time. We were working for whiteman yet. He used to come out and tell us. He used to come out from Wave Hill for holiday, you know. ‘Ah,’ he told us, ‘ah, you gotta change the law now. Eh? Might be four years’ time, might be five years’ time’. He (had had an) education for whiteman before. Working (for) the whiteman too long. He used to go down to Canberra, talk with them

32. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30; Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31.
33. Stanly Sambo, Tape 32.
34. Mick Rangiari, Tape 30.
35. Mick Rangiari, Tape 31.
37. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30. I personally think another walk-off leader, Captain Major, could have been there as well. Peanut told me that Bob Warriyawun passed away before the walk-off began (Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31).
38. Mick Rangiari, Tape 30.
40. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30.
41. Mick Rangiari, Tape 40.
42. Mick Rangiari, Tape 40.
43. Stanly Sambo, dictated, Daguragu, 22 Dec 1997, Fieldnote no. 4.
44. Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30; Mick Rangiari, Tape 31.
Waterside Union. Talking with them. Telling them. Sneaking without no permit...

He used to come out telling us: 'We gotta get this land back. Don’t tell anybody'.

However, if Sandy Moray was the person who conceived the project, was there a reason that prevented him from leading the walk-off? Peanut Pontiari explained that he was already too old to become a leader of all the actions they would take. Instead, Sandy Moray said to Vincent Lingiari, 'You gotta do something' and told people, 'You can do it. No body gonna stop you.' Here, they were ready to take action. The only thing they had to do in advance was to look for someone from outside who could help the people to achieve the purpose. Supporter/s must know how to deal with white agencies such as Vesteys, the government and the Australian media.

This story of Sandy Moray holds the answer to the question I raised above. When Vincent Lingiari said, 'I think to mesel' about that longa time' and Captain Major said, 'Wish we had someone behind us somewhere', they meant that they had been thinking about how to put Tipujurn’s plan into practice and were looking for someone to facilitate their project. Their project was, from the very beginning, to get their land back and to establish their own cattle station.

One may wonder why the story of Sandy Moray has been strangely neglected by the many previous oral accounts of the Gurindji people. We heard much about Vincent Lingiari as a leader of the walk-off, but rarely about Sandy Moray as a founder of it. As oral testimonies are often criticised, it is natural to cast doubt on the Gurindji people’s memories of Sandy Moray. Was this aspect made up by the Gurindji people decades later? Is it likely that previous studies are more accurate than my research conducted 30 years after the events?

To answer this, I have already mentioned that there was little oral historical research which explored the specific question of ‘who invented the walk-off?’, instead of ‘who led the walk-off?’. As shown above, Rose was one of the few people who collected a story of Sandy Moray. In addition, Patrick McConvell, who did intensive fieldwork at Daguragu in the mid-1970s, was also told that Sandy Moray formulated the idea of the walk-off. According to McConvell, he was referred to as ‘Jangala’ — his subsection name — since his name was taboo at that time. McConvell found out later ‘Jangala’ referred to Sandy Moray. Because of the nature of oral accounts, every detailed story of Sandy Moray may not be accurate, but it is compelling that the essence of the story has remained identical over the decades spanning the research done by McConvell, Rose and me.

It is also interesting to note that the story of Sandy Moray has been gradually revealed to the non-Gurindji; first, briefly, to McConvell in the 1970s, then to Rose in the 1980s, and to me, in more detail, in the late 1990s. I found that the Gurindji people today have become more comfortable telling the stories about the deeper background to the walk-off episode. I will return to this point after discussing the whole event.

46. Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31.
47. Mick Rangiari, Tape 33.
48. Mick Rangiari, Tape 32.
49. Personal communication with Patrick McConvell, 14 August 2000.
In order to look into the sequence before the walk-off in more detail and expand on our discussion above, it is also important to know about the Aboriginal relations and networks in different stations. I would especially like to explore the relations between the Gurindji elders of different stations.

It is interesting to note that Captain Major also worked for Alex Moray. In *The Unlucky Australians*, Captain Major told Hardy that 'I bin droving sometimes and I worked in Queensland. I worked for Alex Moray, Vestey man but very good'. In addition, in 1977, he told McGrath that he used to work for Alex Moray. Jimmy Mangayarri also confirmed that Alex Moray used to take two 'boys', Captain Major and Sandy Moray. There is a strong possibility that the two Gurindji men from different stations, Captain Major from Newcastle Waters and Sandy Moray from Wave Hill, discussed what they had seen in Queensland and Western Australia and how to change the situation in their own country. They may also have visited or heard about the Pilbara (Findan) walk-off in 1946 in northern Western Australia.

Eventually, Captain Major took the action first at Newcastle Waters and Sandy Moray told Vincent Lingiari to lead the walk-off at Wave Hill station. When reading *The Unlucky Australians* without knowledge of such background, readers probably believe Dexter Daniels was the one who chose Newcastle Waters as the first place to strike, and then Wave Hill station was chosen as the second strike through the discussion between Hardy and Dexter Daniels. However, Dexter Daniels had been to many stations to encourage Aboriginal workers to take action. In addition, conditions at Newcastle Waters were far better than at other stations in the area. Captain Major even said the manager of Newcastle Waters, Roy Edwards, was the 'best boss I ever work for. We had good house at Newcastle Water, cement floor and electric light, good buildings. Better than other stations'. Nevertheless, the Aboriginal response to Dexter Daniels' offer was much swifter and more organised at Newcastle Waters than at many other stations. It is logical that if you are looking for help and waiting for the right moment, your response to the right offer will be quick.

It is also noteworthy that when Dexter Daniels met an old man called 'Double-O' from Newcastle Waters, he suggested that Daniels meet Captain Major. Why did Double-O tell him to see Captain Major? It is reasonable to assume that, through the net-

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50 Hardy 1968: 30.
51 McGrath's interview with Captain Major, in A McGrath's Fieldnote 20 Jun 1977, Daguragu.
52 Jimmy Mangayarri, Tape 30.
53 Rowley (1971: 338) suggests that they may have had contact with the Pilbara people. On Pilbara walk-off, see, for example, Stuart 1959; Wilson 1979: 131-68; McLeod 1984; Hess 1994. Hess argues that it was a 'tribal law meeting' that initiated the Pilbara strike (Hess 1994: 71). This view certainly corresponds to my argument about the Gurindji's initiative for the Wave Hill walk-off.
54 Hardy 1968: 21, 24, 64–5.
56 Hardy 1968: 30.
57 Dexter Daniels indicated to Hardy that he had been to many stations and 'they are ready to fight' (Hardy 1968: 24–6). Aboriginal people from Brunette Downs went on strike, but they soon went back to work (Hardy 1968: 27). As we know, successful actions, i.e. Newcastle Waters and Wave Hill, have been led only by the Gurindji men.
58 Hardy 1968: 27.
work among Aboriginal people, they knew of the long awaited Gurindji project, and in particular that Captain Major (and Sandy Moray) were looking for 'someone behind them'. Before Captain Major received a letter from Dexter Daniels, he already 'bin hear about that young Dexter, an aboriginal who work for that Union mob in Darwin'. Here, you can see how the Aboriginal people were trying to make a ‘connection’ between people who were looking for assistance, and a person who was willing to help them. Hardy may have been unaware of, or have underestimated, the amount of planning among the Gurindji people before his involvement. In fact, Captain Major expresses this point of view in *The Unlucky Australians*:

> Some white fella bin say Dexter tell me to strike because him higher man in tribe. That not right. Dexter Roper River man, me Gurindji; nothing to do with Roper River mob. We strike because we sick of small money. We had someone behind us.  

One may read this in a way to mean that Captain Major is asserting his authority over the Gurindji 'strikers'. But the oral historical approach gives us the deeper meaning of his statement: Dexter Daniels and Frank Hardy were the *external conditions* which simply ignited the Gurindji's long awaited project.

### III

At this point, I would like to explore the sequence of the walk-off. It was on 23 August 1966 that Vincent Lingiari organised the Aboriginal people at Wave Hill station. They walked off the property for sixteen kilometres to the banks of the Victoria River near the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. The main question here is: to what extent was the Gurindji walk-off a strike?

Why did they walk off? If the Gurindji's action was literally a 'strike', the aim of their action must have been equal wages or improvement of their living conditions. In

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60. Hardy 1968: 32.
61. It was in early August 1966 that Dexter Daniels met Vincent Lingiari in the Darwin hospital for the first time. Vincent Lingiari explained that he had been kicked by a donkey, which broke his foot. Hardy describes this meeting as if Dexter Daniels coincidentally knew Vincent Lingiari was at the Darwin Hospital so that he could visit this Gurindji leader of Wave Hill station in order to discuss the condition of the station (1968: 68-9, 72). It is probably true that, as Jowett writes, 'this discussion was the catalyst for fundamental change to Aboriginal political rights in Australia' (1990: 44). However, she does not explain (nor does Frank Hardy, or other studies) how this historic meeting was made possible. Was it too coincidental that while the strike had been going on at the Newcastle Waters station, a leader of the Wave Hill Aboriginal people broke his foot and went up to Darwin, and that Dexter Daniels happened to know he was in the hospital? There could well be something more behind this event. Mick Rangiari told me another story about this meeting. Sandy Moray told Vincent Lingiari to pretend to be 'sick' (injured?) in order to go to Darwin to see Dexter Daniels (Mick Rangiari, Tape 33). We might believe that the story was made up later by the Gurindji people in order to control their own past more actively. However, his story may be true. As I discussed, if the Gurindji people were ready for the action and looking for someone behind them, and then found out what Captain Major did at Newcastle Waters station, it is reasonable that they wanted to hold discussions with Dexter Daniels about further action at Wave Hill station. Captain Major may have sent a message to Sandy Moray or Vincent Lingiari to come to Darwin to see Dexter Daniels. In the same manner, it would also not be surprising if Vincent Lingiari intentionally let a donkey kick his foot to create a reason to contact unionists in Darwin.
that case, it would not be necessary to leave the station. They should have stayed there and simply stopped working in order to force the manager to negotiate.

An approach from the Gurindji’s perspective gives us two main reasons why they wanted not only to stop working but also to leave the station. First, physically moving and shifting their living space is a traditional tactic for solving problems. Aboriginal people were, and in many aspects still are, nomadic. Mobility is one of their fundamental social modes of being. To move for economic reasons is a common practice in hunting-gathering Aboriginal societies. Mobility is also fundamental for maintaining their ceremonial exchange system. One cannot underestimate the importance of the physical and metaphysical functions of movement in Aboriginal social practice. Furthermore, the importance of Aboriginal mobility, even within the context of relatively settled contemporary lifestyles of Aboriginal communities, should not be underestimated. For the Gurindji people, the ‘strike’ did not mean negotiating with the Wave Hill manager. Instead, it meant leaving the station and shifting their living location. It is noteworthy that, from the beginning of their action, the Gurindji people did not want to stay at Wave Hill station. Changing their living space or ‘camp’ must have been the first step to independence from European authorities: be nomadic and white settlers cannot catch up with you!

This idea gives us the second reason: since their purpose was to regain the authority in their country, the first thing they had to do was to leave the European authority. For example, Pincher Nyurrmiyari says, ‘We go back to Wave Hill if that Tom Fisher (the manager) leave, alla that Besty mob leave’. What they wanted was not an improvement of the condition at Wave Hill station, but to keep Vestey’s out of their own country and run the cattle station. Vincent Lingiari explains more clearly why they did not stay at the station. He told Hardy that one Aboriginal person suggested they go back to Wave Hill:

He (an Aboriginal man) said: ‘When white fella go on strike, they don’t walk off straight away, they see their boss and talk things over. I worked for white man myself and start for sixpence maybe, or five bob, now I got proper money.’ ‘You work for that Welfare?’ I (Vincent Lingiari) said. And he said: ‘Yes, them Welfare blokes are all right. And Tom Fisher a good man. Why can’t you fellas go back to work? And I said: ‘I won’t go back.’ That’s all I said. I never said no more.65

Vincent Lingiari implies that the Gurindji ‘strike’ was not like a white workers’ strike. He did not want to negotiate with the manager; he wanted to leave the station. Peanut Pontiari remembers that Vincent Lingiari once asked people if they wanted to go back to the station, but they said, ‘No, we don’t wanna go back. No more station. One way walk-off, that’s it!’

The memorial day of 23 August 1966 was not the day the Gurindji people started negotiations with the white authorities, but the day they physically left foreign authority and returned to their own. In other words, the walk-off was not really an agitation

62 See, for example, Thomson 1949; Yengoyan 1968; Kolig 1984; Rose 1987.
63 See, for example, Young and Dooham 1989; Hokari 2000.
64 Hardy 1968: 111.
65 Hardy 1968: 156.
66 Peanut Pontiari, Tape 31.
against Wave Hill station, but a spatial movement which allowed them to regain the power to establish their own community. They did not want to go back to Wave Hill unless Vesteys left the property. Higher wages and improved conditions may have been secondary considerations, but neither was the original or main purpose of their action.

Therefore, one needs to be careful when referring to the Gurindji walk-off as a ‘strike’. I do not object to the usage of the expression ‘Wave Hill strike’, not only because it has already become part of the Australian lexicon but also because the Gurindji people also express their ‘walk-off’ as the ‘strike’. However, the Gurindji people do not describe the sequence as moving ‘from a strike to a land claim’. The word ‘strike’ should be understood in Gurindji Creole as meaning their physical walk-off from the European authority in order to fight for their land.

Later, Hardy himself admits that the issue was their land, not wages. He ‘discovered that wages were not the only, perhaps not even the main, issue for the Gurindji men. They were concerned about their women, about the children getting an education, about housing, about dignity and self-respect, about tribal identity — and there hovered vaguely behind every thought a desire to live alone in their own land’.67 As already discussed, it is remiss to read this change in Hardy’s impression as a change in the Gurindji people’s demands. Their aim was consistent, but their strategy was to avoid discussing their central project with white people in the beginning. They did not explicitly challenge the agenda or politics of unionists. Rather, they simply followed their own initiative in not returning from the walk-off, once outside support for their action had been secured.

However, if their aim from the outset was to regain their land, why did they not mention it to the outside supporters at the first stage? To answer this question, Rose provides us with the insight that for the Gurindji people, ‘wages were a language which Europeans could understand, and constituted an issue which trade unions were known to support’ 68. They were looking for allies who could help them to realise their plan, and finally found unionists such as Dexter Daniels, and a writer like Hardy, who were willing to help them. Gurindji people knew that unionists were keen on the issue of equal wages. They knew that ‘equal wages’ was the key term to gain the support from outsiders. After the walk-off leaders confirmed these people’s support, the Gurindji people gradually started to educate them to understand the real purpose of their action.

This educational process can be observed in The Unlucky Australians in the supporters’ confusion. From Hardy’s point of view, he was the one who knew how to fight and that was why Dexter Daniels as well as the Gurindji people asked him to help. However, he eventually discovered the Gurindji’s plan extended beyond his own conception. When the Gurindji leaders told Hardy about their desire to run their own cattle station, Anne Jeffrey, a wife of a welfare officer at Wave Hill, asked Hardy if this was originally Hardy’s idea:

Anne asked: ‘Did you have this in your mind when you came here, Frank? […] ’Are you sure you didn’t prompt them? If you did, they’ll agree just to please you because you want to help them. Right?’

(Frank said) 'No, Anne. Vincent mentioned it first on the way to Mount Sanford and I didn't take much notice. Then Pincher approached me. I'm positive I didn't plant it in their minds. It wasn't even in my mind. I was thinking of wages and conditions and strikes'.

Later, when Hardy found their 'strike' seemed never-ending, he was confused about what the Gurindji people were really thinking regarding their future and wondered if he should tell them to stop the struggle and go back to Wave Hill. However, immediately after this, Vincent Lingiari told Hardy about their plan to move their camp to Wat­tie Creek and establish their own community. Through all these processes, we can see the Gurindji's initiative. At the same time, Hardy's constant support for their self-determination must also be acknowledged. It is of no doubt that his non-paternalistic attitude towards the Gurindji people facilitated the establishment of a firm rapport.

70. Hardy 1968: 166.
between Hardy and the Gurindji. Accordingly, Gurindji leaders gradually told the supporters about their plan and the final destination of their walk-off movement.

IV

In this section, I would like to discuss the sequence of the establishment of the Daguragu community at Wattie Creek. We will see how the Gurindji people finally accomplished their long awaited project. However, first I will look at the sequence of their movement near the Wave Hill settlement before going directly to Wattie Creek.

The most immediate need following the walk-off was maintaining access to an adequate food supply. Vincent Lingiari told people to look for bush tucker. They certainly counted on bush food, yet at the same time, a sedentary camp could not support over 200 people. Mick Rangiari often told me how they were relieved when a truck with plenty of food arrived in the walk-off camp. The Unlucky Australians also shows that it was urgent to keep enough food to feed the walk-off mob. When they left Wave Hill station, the nearest place they could get enough food from was Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. They also had to camp there because they definitely needed access to the white settlers' information network. It was essential to keep in touch with outside supporters, such as Daniels and Hardy. When they left the station, Wave Hill Welfare Settlement was the only place for them to access the telegram and other mailing systems, by which the Gurindji people could make a connection to the outside world. Furthermore, as we saw, their plan was flexible at the first stage. If Vesteys left their country, they could regain their authority over the country simply by going back to Wave Hill station and running the property by themselves. The Gurindji people needed to see how Vesteys as well as outside supporters reacted to their initial action. Therefore, the riverbank near the Welfare Settlement was ideally suited as a temporary camping place.

In March 1967, at the end of the wet season, seven months after their walk-off from Wave Hill station, the Gurindji people shifted their camp to Wattie Creek near the Seal Gorge Dreaming site. The main question here is: why did they choose Wattie Creek?

Most scholars simply explain that the Gurindji people chose Wattie Creek because it was a symbolically central place for them. For example, Jowett states that 'This area was chosen because it was the main place of the Gurindji Dreaming and the geographical centre of the traditional Gurindji country'. It is not surprising that people simply accept such an explanation because the Gurindji leaders themselves explained their decision to the public in the same way. In April 1967, with the assistance of Hardy and Bill Jeffrey, the Gurindji leaders wrote a petition to the Governor-General for the return of five hundred square miles of their country. In this letter, they explain Wattie Creek is 'the main place of our dreaming.'

73. Mick Rangiari, Tape 27; Mick Rangiari, Tapes 32, 33.
However, their explanation of Wattie Creek as a main place for their Dreaming was probably their tactic to make white people understand how important it was to establish their community there. Such a tactic is similar to the way they used 'equal wages' to gain public attention at the first stage. They needed a public reason that could help outside supporters understand their decision.

If you study the sacred sites in the Gurindji country, it is not difficult to find out that Seal Gorge/Wattie Creek is only one of many Dreaming sites for them. For example, McConvell and Hargen suggest there are over 200 sites in the Daguragu land claim area.77 TGH Strehlow explains that since the major totemic sites were linked according to the nature of their totems with the totemic sites of other subgroups and even of other tribes, not one of them was fitted in any sense to act as a sort of central 'capital' site for a whole tribal subgroup or a whole tribe.78 In Dreaming geography, there is no such 'centre' or 'main' place. Dreaming sites are connected to each other through the Dreaming tracks and you cannot claim one of them as a centre of these Dreamings.79 Certainly, Seal Gorge was one of the important Dreaming sites for the Gurindji people so there must have been no problem in shifting the camp there. However, in order to make settlers understand, they used a word like 'centre' or 'main' place to describe Wattie Creek.

However, we still do not have an answer as to why they chose Wattie Creek in particular and not some other Dreaming site. Jowett interviewed Mick Rangiari in 1990, and summarised his comments: 'it was Vincent Lingiari's decision to walk off Wave Hill station, but that was only after he had consulted with senior members of the community. When they were at Wave Hill settlement the elders decided to move to Wattie Creek'.80 There is no doubt that when it became clearer that Vesteys would never leave Wave Hill station, they were looking for a place near the Dreaming site for the location of their new community. From Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, one of the closest sites is Wattie Creek. This purely geographical factor may be one of the reasons for their decision.

However, Wattie Creek has more meaning for the Gurindji elders and their walk-off project. It is important to note that even though the leader of the walk-off was Vincent Lingiari, he constantly 'consulted with senior members' about the decision and destination. One of the elders would have been Sandy Moray, an original planner of this movement and the one who told Vincent to take action. As I mentioned earlier, Wattie Creek was the country of Sandy Moray. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the 'partiki tree meeting' during which Sandy Moray told his plan to the Gurindji elders for the first time was held at Wattie Creek as well. Jimmy Mangayarri took me to the big partiki tree where the meeting was held. The tree (Plate 1) was located in the middle of the Daguragu township, only about thirty metres away from the memorial stone of Gough Whitlam handing over the Gurindji land to Vincent Lingiari. The Daguragu community was established beside the memory of their historic meeting. Sandy Moray

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told people, 'Before I die, you gotta do it.' Mick Rangiari proudly said to me, 'So we did it!' The project of the walk-off had been formulated at Wattie Creek and returned to the same place at the end.

At this point, I want to return to an earlier question: why has the story of Sandy Moray rarely been told to the non-Gurindji? Why didn’t the Gurindji people discuss Wattie Creek as the country of Sandy Moray in earlier research?

It is crucial to understand that the Gurindji people had been fighting for their land until 1986 when finally their inalienable freehold title was granted. Therefore, what they thought was worth telling to the non-Gurindji during that time was probably not ‘who invented the walk-off?’ or ‘who belongs to Wattie Creek?’ Instead, their greater

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81: Mick Rangiari, Tape 31.
82: Mick Rangiari, Tape 31.
concern was letting outside supporters know about Vincent Lingiari as a leader of their movement and Wattie Creek as the country for all the Gurindji. It is indisputable that Vincent Lingiari was the leader of the Gurindji walk-off movement. It is also true that Daguragu became the symbolic place for all the Gurindji who fought for their land. These were the issues they wanted to communicate to non-Gurindji supporters at that time. Since then, the Gurindji people's political circumstances have changed and their rights over their country have become more certain. Today, the Gurindji people probably feel more comfortable telling the stories about different aspects of the walk-off episode. The story of Sandy Moray has been gradually revealed to the non-Gurindji according to their situations at different times.

Therefore, one should be more critical of the naive notion that the earlier oral testimonies are more accurate than the later. We should consider the historical and political situation in which any — oral and written — accounts are inevitably situated. Therefore, the assessment of the oral historical accounts should not only be based on their temporal distance from the events, but also according to their political context.

V

What was the Gurindji walk-off? Since I have discussed the sequence of the Gurindji walk-off episode, I shall now answer this question. From the very beginning, the Gurindji walk-off was not initiated by white people in order to protest against European authorities and gain better working conditions. Of course, there is no doubt that the Gurindji people needed and looked for supporters from outside. Without the presence of Dexter Daniels and Frank Hardy, the Gurindji project might not have happened. Without Australia-wide support, their project could not have been completed. Today, the Gurindji people remember Hardy and many other outside supporters as 'good kar-tiya [whites] helped ngumpin [Aboriginal people]'. The Gurindji people are deeply grateful to them for their devotion to the fight for the Gurindji country. However, let me repeat here that these were the external conditions that the Gurindji people had been long waiting for.

What was the Gurindji walk-off? The walk-off was the Gurindji mode of decolonisation of their land, planned and conducted by the Gurindji people and those related to the Gurindji country. Their aim was to physically leave European authority, to regain autonomy and sovereignty over their country, to establish their own community, and to run the cattle station by and for themselves.83

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83. Gurindji people still live in their community at Daguragu. However, their effort to run the cattle station failed after years of trials. The story of the time after the walk-off, or so-called 'New Generation', will be examined in my PhD thesis.
helpful discussions with A McGrath and DB Rose who encouraged me to publish this article. Thanks are also due to Linda Bennett, Johanna Perheentupa, Philippa Webb, Rebecca Thomson and Carolyn Roberts for reading the manuscript and making a number of helpful suggestions.

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‘Cranial connections’: Queensland’s ‘Talgai Skull’
debate of 1918 and custodianship of the past

Murray Johnson

As the Great War steadily ground towards its bloody conclusion in 1918, leaving in its wake an incalculable mass of decayed human remains, a single Aboriginal skull unearthed in Queensland generated a different form of conflict. Although devoid of martial combat, the war of words which developed nevertheless gave vent to considerable angst. Named after the site of its discovery, the ‘Talgai Skull’ provided valuable ammunition for the scientific fraternity, who stressed the great antiquity of the Aboriginal presence in Australia. Yet, as the public debate revealed, their assertions were not easily accepted. While shifting battle lines were thus drawn, opposing camps made brief forays into the intellectual realm of ‘No Man’s Land’. Ultimately prevailing against the salvos of diatribes fired against them, Australia’s pioneer archaeologists firmly placed the Pleistocene epoch as a crucial point from which the Aboriginal occupation of the continent could be pushed further back into the swirling mists of time. On the other hand, it is the physical evidence emanating from that past, including the Talgai Skull, which has also raised the important ethical question of custodianship. It was definitely not an issue in 1918, but perhaps the Talgai Skull symbolises that an understanding of the human record is essential for both Europeans and Aborigines. It may yet lead to an Armistice.

The Talgai Skull itself has travelled a tortuous path. In 1886 a fencing contractor, William Naish, and his two sons, Alfred and Charles, were temporarily forced to abandon their work on Queensland’s Darling Downs due to inclement weather. After six days spent in the nearby township of Allora they returned to their camp on Dalrymple Creek, which ran through the pastoral holding then known as East Talgai Station. When Naish inspected an old billabong near his fence line, which had been scoured afresh by floodwaters, his attention was drawn to an unusual object protruding three feet from the bottom. On closer investigation it proved to be a human cranium heavily encrusted with calcium carbonate.¹ Naish gave his find to the owner of East Talgai, GJE Clark, from whom it was later acquired by EHK Crawford, Clark’s nephew-in-law. By his own admission an avid collector of ‘curios’, Crawford owned Waterloo Station, near Walcha in New South Wales. In 1896 a report concerning ‘a petrified skull’ appeared in the local

newspaper, attracting the attention of Robert Etheridge, Curator of the Australian Museum.2

The correspondence which followed has been documented by NWG Macintosh. Put succinctly, Etheridge suggested that Crawford might either lend the supposed skull to the museum or offer it as a gift. Crawford had other intentions, forwarding it to Sydney where it was displayed at the stationery firm of Turner and Henderson. Obviously aware of its pecuniary value, Crawford continued negotiations with the Australian Museum and possibly contacted the British Museum of Natural History.3 There appears to have been no response from the latter, but Etheridge and the Trustees of the Australian Museum continued to make further offers until it was disclosed that the cranium had no ‘geological history’; that is, its chance finding precluded any attempt at dating. The Talgai Skull was to languish in Crawford’s possession until 1914, but it is relevant that two of the Trustees of the Australian Museum during these negotiations were Professors Edgeworth David and James Wilson.4 These two were to figure prominently when the fossil cranium re-emerged from its slumber at Walcha, possibly triggered by the controversy surrounding palaeoanthropological finds in the gravels of Sussex. England’s ‘Piltdown Man’ and Queensland’s Talgai Skull were inextricably linked, but while 1912 was to become infamous as the year of ‘Piltdown Man’s’ fraudulent discovery, the exact year of Naish’s genuine find in Queensland soon faded from memory.

Based on Naish’s statement in 1914 that he had found the Talgai Skull some thirty years earlier, public disclosures of this important archaeological evidence posited the year as 1884. However, Macintosh contended in 1967 that 1886 was far more likely. After examining meteorological and pastoral records, Macintosh was able to demonstrate that severe drought had gripped much of Australia, including the Darling Downs, between 1880 and 1885. Relief finally came in 1886. So meticulous was this research that Macintosh tentatively suggested that the ancient cranium may have been exposed in the month of June, as lowering temperatures also concurred with Naish’s account.5 Noting that it was the length of deposition which became literally a bone of contention in the 1918 debate, the actual year of discovery is not particularly significant. On the other hand, and for two distinct reasons, 1914 certainly was.

In that year, Crawford forwarded the cranium to Edgeworth David at the University of Sydney for valuation. Again making it clear that the skull was available for purchase, either in Australia or overseas, Crawford remained adamant that it was not to be tampered with in any way until a sale had been effected. Events now took a curious turn. Edgeworth David is recorded as having been present during discussions over the Talgai Skull in 1896,6 yet in 1914 he appeared to have exhibited no sign of recognition. Even more surprising, it is only at this point that he realised the potential archaeological value of the cranium.7

He could, however, only guess at what lay beneath the encrustation. To allay any doubts, Edgeworth David invited a host of eminent colleagues, including Grafton Elliot Smith, von Luschan, William Sollas, James Wilson (who, like Edgeworth David, made no reference to the discussions of 1896), Berry, and Baldwin Spencer, to carry out cursory examinations. While their special fields were diverse, the conclusions were unanimous; the Talgai Skull should be purchased. Finding the necessary funds was another matter. However, before an overseas buyer was found Alderman Joynton Smith, Lord Mayor of Sydney, came to the rescue. Smith reputedly paid 150 pounds for the cranium and graciously presented it the University of Sydney, minus an upper incisor tooth which Crawford had extracted from both the skull and the sale.

There can be little doubt that the sudden interest in the Talgai Skull emanated from the publicity surrounding Piltdown Man, which temporarily provided British archaeologists with 'evidence' of prehistoric hominids to rival discoveries on the Continent. The unearthing of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon remains across the Channel had certainly bred considerable resentment among British scientists. Moreover, the postulation soon to be made that the Talgai Skull was a relic of the Pleistocene epoch reinforced the British claims of great antiquity for Piltdown Man. The connection was to strengthen even further.

Preliminary examination of the Talgai Skull was carried out by the two Australian Museum Trustees of 1896 — Edgeworth David and James Wilson, the latter Challis Professor of Anatomy at Sydney University. In August 1914 they presented their findings to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Sydney. The Queensland cranium was greeted with considerable acclaim by those present, but Edgeworth David lamented that as the skull had not been recovered in situ, its antiquity was largely dependent on geological deposits in the vicinity and the archaic 'anatomical characteristics'. Grafton Elliot Smith referred to the Talgai Skull in his own lecture, in which he expounded the view that human evolution began with the shrews 'which threw off the domination of the sense of smell, and developed that of vision', thus creating the precedent to effect change. Smith was also an advocate of the theory that the development of the brain preceded both speech and erect posture. Of those who had recommended the purchase of the Talgai Skull, only Baldwin Spencer was absent from the Sydney meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. He had nevertheless been a major organiser for the Melbourne leg of the tour, and despite their diverse interests, all were closely involved with Grafton Elliot Smith.

It was not until 1953 that Piltdown Man was conclusively shown to be fraudulent, consisting of human skull fragments and an ape mandible of comparatively recent origin. At first, accusations fell heavily upon the 'discoverer', Charles Dawson, who con-
veniently died in 1916. Later studies of the hoax, however, have directed attention towards the Australian, Grafton Elliot Smith. The motive for the Piltdown Man episode has not been adequately explained and is quite outside the scope of this paper, but it can be suggested that the 'amnesia' of Edgeworth David and Wilson in 1914 is quite inexplicable. Furthermore, the re-emergence of the Talgai Skull was most opportune in relation to Piltdown, and the close association between Grafton Elliot Smith and the other Australian scientists surely requires further investigation.

Acclaim for the Talgai Skull certainly inspired Edgeworth David, who visited East Talgai Station and met William Naish shortly after the Association meeting. Aged and crippled with rheumatism, Naish was carried to his old campsite, where he pointed out the location of his remarkable find. Perhaps not surprisingly, no other skeletal fragments were uncovered and Edgeworth David contented himself with collecting geological samples. He remained at East Talgai for three days. As a geologist, he took little further interest in the Talgai Skull and Wilson's expertise was soon required by the military. Less than two years later, Edgeworth David was himself in France, using his geological knowledge to solve military problems, particularly trench damage and the construction of tunnels. It was thus left to Dr Stewart Smith, another anatomist at the University of Sydney — and brother of Grafton Elliot Smith — to analyse the cranium in detail. His comprehensive report was published in 1918 and although many of the findings were later shown to be inaccurate, Smith rightly contended that the skull was, indeed, of great antiquity. While Smith was thus unable to prove conclusively that the Talgai Skull dated from the Pleistocene, he had no qualms in stating publicly that the human occupation of Australia may well have taken place at least 50,000 years BP. It was an assertion which required qualification.

Smith's hypothesis was dependent on an amplification of the 'primitive' morphological traits disclosed by the Queensland cranium. As will later be shown, this approach was continued by Macintosh, albeit, with far more sensitivity. Put succinctly, Smith's analysis concluded that the skull was of a male youth, between fourteen and sixteen years of age, whose teeth were 'of human form' with the exception of the large canines, which were 'similar in some respects to anthropoid canine teeth'. Their size and articulation with the first premolar led Smith to compare the dentition of the Talgai Skull with that of Orangutans. Thus:

In the fossil from Talgai, one may discern a form of skull in which the cranium has long since become of the definitely human type, but in which the face still preserves the last definite trace of the lower, more brute-like characters.

It went further. Smith estimated the cranial capacity as being approximately 1300cc, 'well within the range of modern [Aboriginal] Australians', the implication being, of course, that Aborigines were far less intelligent than Europeans. This contention

22. DM 30 August 1918: 5.
accorded well with the pseudo-scientific beliefs prevalent within the dominant culture, but it was not to go unchallenged. It was Smith’s emphasis on the antiquity of the Aboriginal presence, however, which drew the heaviest flak.

Proof was certainly elusive. With only rudimentary technology available, dating of the skull was — as Edgeworth David earlier pointed out — premised on the estimated age of geological formations in the vicinity of Dalrymple Creek. While the Darling Downs had already yielded the bones of many megafaunal species, no fossil remains had been found within ten miles of Naish’s campsite.24 As well, Smith was unaware that the Talgai Skull had probably been carried some distance along a watercourse before the final deposition.25 With more than a little touch of humour, 'The Globe Trotter' reasoned in July 1918 that even a direct association with Pleistocene megafaunal remains was by no means conclusive:

The Talgai Skull was found near the bones of long extinct animals, but that is nothing to go by. If a cataclysm destroyed Brisbane now, and covered it up for a few thousand years, then the archaeologists of that day might find the skeleton of the present Director of the Queensland Museum beside the bones of the long extinct Diprotodon. But that would not prove that Mr. [Heber] Longman was contemporaneous with Diprotodon Australis!26

Nevertheless, by drawing on the work of Robert Etheridge, who established that the megafauna were extant when the dingo was introduced into Australia, Smith rightly contended that the discovery of the Talgai Skull also pushed back the history of navigation.27 This 'Proto-Australian' thus possessed considerable technological skills, attributes which were usually overlooked among the Aborigines of Smith's own day. His were violent times, particularly in Europe, but it was known in 1896 that the cranium exhibited 'a hollow, indicating that its owner had received a blow, which probably killed him.'28 The base of the skull had also been removed shortly after death, a practice that had parallels elsewhere in the world.29 This was merely the preliminary step in the anatomical dismantling of the Talgai Skull. In his 'careful preparation' Smith had sawn the cranium in half, 'in order that the inside as well as the outside could be studied in detail.'30

While there was no apparent personal animosity directed towards Smith, his academic paper and public appearance in Brisbane certainly triggered off a fiery debate in 1918. Yet it began in a benign fashion, with the unknown journalist writing under the pseudonym of 'The Globe Trotter' maintaining that the age of fossil hominids was irrelevant. The important question, continued this self-professed worldly being with a rhetorical flourish, was whether the human brain preceded 'the upright position, or did the upright position precede the brain?'31 As noted previously, Smith's brother presumed the former, but such reflections were overtly influenced by the social application of

27. Smith 1918: 383.
30. TC 9 September 1918: 6.
Charles Darwin's evolutionary concepts, Australian Aborigines being among the early victims. In times of stress it was easily expanded to fulfil a dichotomous purpose. During the Great War, for example, Germans were frequently portrayed as brutal, and therefore primitive, 'ape-men' intent on wanton slaughter. By distancing themselves from those characteristics the righteousness of Australia's involvement in war was reinforced and, at the same time, the inspiration of fear was aimed at strengthening the homogeneity of Australia's dominant culture. Thus, mutual support based on race and ethnicity was a necessary prerequisite for vanquishing the anthropomorphic beast. Those false beliefs appeared to be on the verge of justification in August 1918, when Dr Stewart Smith addressed the Royal Geographical Society in Brisbane.

Smith began his lecture by merely reiterating 'The Globe Trotter's' remarks that 'a knowledge of the development of the brain ... was the fundamental factor in the evolution of man.' Nonetheless, after demonstrating that the dentition of the Talgai Skull differed from contemporary Aborigines, Smith continued:

[W]e had the remains of an individual whose skull-cap, brain case and brain were indistinguishable from the Australian aborigine of the present day, yet whose face still bore definite traces of the common ancestral or ape-like character. We had here an instance of the traces of the brute having not completely disappeared, but being within one step of disappearance.

In this way, contemporary Aborigines seemed confirmed as veritable 'living fossils', little more than a rung above the bottom on the evolutionary ladder. It was the direct implication of those comments which aroused the ire of Archibald Meston, formerly the Protector of Aborigines for South Queensland (1897-1906). Although the official title was an obvious misnomer, as Aborigines continued to be treated appallingly in Queensland, Meston's entry into the public discussion on the Talgai Skull was nevertheless the crucible for scientific theory.

The charge was led, however, by a correspondent to Brisbane's Daily Mail newspaper, writing under the pseudonym 'Still Waiting'. This was a general castigation of so-called experts, whose reports differed so widely 'that science did not gain anything by them.' Yet, carried away by intellectual pondering, 'Still Waiting' drifted away from the Talgai Skull to seek answers to the meaning of life itself. Whether those questions were answered is unclear, but there is little doubt that the writer is waiting no longer. Meston's approach was far more pragmatic and, while much of his argument could not be supported, important points nonetheless arose.

Rather than attacking Dr Stewart Smith, Meston initially focused his criticism on Edgeworth David who, he believed, should have examined the Talgai Skull 'through the telescope of fact'. According to Meston, bones buried in the red basaltic soils found throughout the Darling Downs fossilised 'in a surprisingly short time, even in fifteen or twenty years'. Those who read Meston's comments were thus informed that the Talgai Skull was definitely not deposited during the Pleistocene epoch; on the contrary, it belonged to an Aborigine killed by Europeans during a punitive raid in 1848. Meston's

33. QGJ 1918: 133.
34. DM, 30 August 1918: 5.
35. DM 2 September 1918: 6.
grasp of geology may have been wanting, but his explanation is worth recording at some length since it reveals significant aspects of the frontier war on Queensland’s Darling Downs:

The first white man killed by blacks on the Downs in 1842 was John Manuel who, with a spear sticking in his back, came galloping in to Eaton Vale, then the property of Crawford and Hodgson. The bodies of the blacks shot on that occasion were burned, so there was no chance for them to fossilise. But in 1848 the first native police came over from the Murray River by way of the McIntyre [River], in charge of Commandant Walker and Lieutenant Marshall. The blacks had been for some time giving considerable trouble, doubtless not without good and sufficient reason, and the native police caught a lot of men and youths out in the open plain on Talgai Station, and shot about thirty or forty. They put the bodies in one of those billabong holes so common on the Downs, and filled it in with the red basaltic clay.36

The Talgai Skull, asserted Meston, was from the body of one of those slain youths. While Meston was perhaps more proficient as a ‘Protector’ than a palaeoanthropologist, it should be noted that he did not doubt the antiquity of Aboriginal occupation. Rather, his criticism was only directed at the alleged authenticity of the cranium from East Talgai Station. Solid evidence supporting that occupation, continued Meston, would remain elusive owing to indigenous burial practices. This tendentious claim did not dissuade Heber Longman of the Queensland Museum, who finally managed to extricate himself from ‘The Globe Trotter’s’ Diprotodon bones to come out in support of Smith and Edgeworth David. Longman’s opening round against Meston lacked conviction, but he sought to place the Talgai Skull and contemporary Aborigines within a broader theoretical framework:

Even admitting, for the sake of argument, that Mr. Meston’s story is true, and that the Talgai Skull reached its very remarkable state of mineralisation in 36 years (1848–1884), the fossil still stands ... as one of the most abnormal human skulls ever described ... The estimated cranial [capacity] shows the brain to have been not inferior in size to those of present day aboriginals, who are small-brained, when compared with Europeans.37

This overt racial arrogance was too much for Archibald Meston, who struck back with vehemence just two days later:

The Australian aboriginals represent one of the oldest races of mankind and among them are all shapes of skulls, and physiognomical expression. Some skulls are of a low type, low as any skulls of the white race, and others had heads like Plato and Socrates. If Mr. Longman wants to see skulls of low animal types he can find them any day in the main streets of our capital cities. He will find nothing worse among any tribes of Australian aborigines. It is time that scientific men dropped this mischievous illusion about the low mental calibre of Australia’s native races.38

36. BC 4 September 1918: 6.
38. BC 7 September 1918: 6.
As 'Caithleach' rightly commented, the Talgai Skull was indeed 'causing quite a flutter'. Meston, however, did not stand alone. Although his ammunition was fully charged with paternalism, 'Old Bushman' entered the fray with a supporting fusillade:

Is the Australian aboriginal less intelligent than the ordinary white man? I think not. He is smart, quick at observing things; a good, faithful worker, and a splendid horseman. In my 47 years of bush life I employed many blacks, and generally found them honest and trustworthy. As to morality, they are far above most of the mean whites.

'Old Bushman' was nevertheless deluded in his belief that the Aborigines, or 'all that remains of them — are now well cared for'. The reality was quite different. Charles Bourne, on the other hand, was not concerned with either intellectual capabilities or the exploitation of Aboriginal labour. With the interest now being aroused by the Talgai Skull, and perhaps to record his name for posterity, Bourne associated himself with Naish's original discovery. Claiming to have been the overseer of 'Talgai' in 1884, Bourne argued that Naish actually found the cranium at the base of a sand ridge 'more than a mile from the bank of Dalrymple Creek.' This revelation emerged from his having marked the line of fencing erected by the contractor. With Naish having died in 1917, and Edgeworth David on active service in France, Bourne's contention was aided by the Toowoomba Chronicle. Apart from recording Heber Longman's statement on the subject, the local newspaper ignored the Talgai Skull controversy. Whether through disinterest, or because they remained unaware of Bourne's presumed knowledge, there was no response from local inhabitants.

Not satisfied with having linked his name to this unique discovery, however, Bourne agreed with Meston that a massacre of Aborigines had occurred in 1848 — but he disputed the location. The actual site of the bloody encounter, concluded Bourne, was on Goomburra Station, 'about 30 miles distant' from East Talgai. Although Meston had no way of knowing that the cranium was probably unearthed in 1886, not 1884, the manner of his response revealed that he had strong doubts as to the reliability of Bourne's testimony.

Moreover, by providing a historical synopsis of East Talgai and Goomburra Stations, Meston expressed open contempt for Bourne's presumed local knowledge. The former Protector of Aborigines also seized the opportunity to briefly mention further atrocities committed against Aborigines on Jondaryan and Jimbour Stations in 1851 before terminating his broadside with the stinging rebuke:

I would advise Mr. Bourne to leave history alone, and go back to his sheep. They are more easily understood, and they won't contradict him.

To give the debate a political flavour, Donald Gunn, Independent MLA for Carnarvon, claimed that he was also unaware of any punitive action against Aborigines on East Talgai Station — despite having 'spent my life not far from that district.' Like many poli-
ticians, Gunn found his interjection ignored. However, the Queensland Labor Party had only recently politicised the Talgai Skull in a different context, with their public mouthpiece, Brisbane's Daily Standard, portraying the conservative and therefore archaic Legislative Council as the Talgai Skull. The metaphorical representation may have been on the verge of being pounded to oblivion, but Charles Bourne was unwilling to accept a similar fate from his own adversary.

The former 'overseer' remained adamant that he knew 'within a few yards where the skull was found'. Elaborating, Bourne contended that the billabong where Naish recovered the cranium was itself more than a mile from Dalrymple Creek. It was only when NWG Macintosh rediscovered the location—nearly five decades later—that Bourne's claim was finally shown to be false. His true colours were undoubtedly revealed in 1918, however, when he challenged Meston's use of oral testimony:

According to Mr. Meston, my history is shaky. I got mine from white men, Mr. Meston his from blacks, which, I suppose, is looked upon by him as more reliable ... I consider the story told by men less than 20 years afterwards quite as reliable as Mr. Meston's blacks' yarn.

It was not quite the last word from Charles Bourne, but at this point in the debate 'Yorick' offered both a practical, and tasteless, means of determining whether there really was a connection between the Talgai Skull and the punitive action of 1848:

If, as Mr. Meston states, the bodies of the blacks were buried all together, there should be little difficulty in recovering the remaining 30 odd skulls. We should then have sufficient Talgai skulls to go round all our own museums, and a reserve to provide exchanges or presentation specimens for European museums.

Inadvertently, 'Yorick' also brought to the surface the exclusivity of custodianship, although the contemporary European concept was unequivocally ownership. Nor was it confined to archaic skeletal remains. Throughout the nineteenth century Australian Aborigines had been subjected to intensive anatomical and morphological inquiry. This was, of course, a pragmatic adjunct to prevailing pseudo-scientific theories which was further reinforced by geographical isolation. Ultimately, this presumed primitivity and rapid decline in numbers led to Aborigines being relegated the same level as antipodean fauna and, as E.H.K. Crawford was aware when he possessed the Talgai Skull, they also acquired pecuniary values. Expected to become extinct, contemporary Aboriginal remains were thus 'collected' with remarkable avidity:

[A] Bower-Bird skin in good condition was worth five shillings; a 'racially pure' Aboriginal skull complete with jaw was worth seven shillings and sixpence. A collector could write regretting that he had no bodies to offer, while adding that he was nonetheless forwarding some rare Trap-Door Spiders' nests to the [Australian] Museum.

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45 DS 7 September 1918: 6.
46 BC 14 September 1918: 12.
47 Macintosh 1967b: 112.
48 BC 14 September 1918: 12.
49 Ibid.
51 Ibid.: 116.
To their credit and resilience the Aborigines did not fulfil those expectations of extinction but, despite this, a number of European museums continue to equivocate when demands are made for the repatriation of recent Aboriginal remains. While a strong case can certainly be posited for the retention of archaic skeletal material, there is no justification — morally, ethically or scientifically — for retaining modern Aboriginal remains in any institution. Presumably, many were gathered as the ‘spoils’ of frontier conflict and, as the public debate on the Talgai Skull revealed, there was no dispute that Aborigines on Queensland’s Darling Downs had been subjected to intense punitive action. ‘Romany’ was among those who concurred, stating that the correspondent’s parents had first-hand knowledge of one particular incident. The location was unspecified, but whether this was because ‘Romany’ wished to avoid clashing with either Archibald Meston or Charles Bourne, or that there were simply too many similar engagements, is not clear.

Even Bourne, in his final reply, expressed the view that reprisals against the indigenous people may have also taken place on Dalrymple Creek. His only objection was that they did not occur within the boundaries of ‘Talgai’ Station. The daily journals of Talgai Homestead were destroyed in 1934, so it is difficult to verify whether Bourne was actually overseer in the mid-1880s. His determination to distance the property from surrounding atrocities does, however, lead one to suspect that information was also being withheld. Although Bourne’s motivations must necessarily remain in the realm of supposition, this particular aspect of the debate had been important for jogging almost forgotten memories of the frontier war on the Darling Downs as pastoralism consolidated. It was undeniably bloody and bitter.

With Bourne’s exit from the public arena, Heber Longman returned to place the debate on a higher philosophical level. In September 1918 he addressed the Socialist League in Brisbane’s Trades Hall, the subject of his lecture being the Talgai Skull and evolution, the theory of which was Longman’s special area of interest. On this occasion, he expanded on intellectual capacity to encompass the female gender:

Man stood at the head of animal creation because of his bigger brain. In white races the man’s brain weighs about 3lb, though the brains of Byron weighed 70oz, and Oliver Cromwell, Bismarck, and Kant, all had brains which weighed more than 3lb. The female brain weighed about 5oz less than that of the male. Aboriginal Australians and the black races generally had brains of lesser weight than the white races possessed.

Despite these assertions, the press reported the lecture as being ‘entirely free from ‘scientific’ dogmatism, or intellectual snobbery.’ Overwhelmed by it all, even Meston’s reply was meek; earlier criticisms were merely repeated. Against such heavy artillery which reinforced the masculine domain of the dominant culture, opposition forces stood little chance. There were also more important matters in the offing. As hostilities

52. Mulvaney 1985: 93.
53. BC 19 September 1918: 5.
54. Ibid.
57. DS 21 September 1918: 7.
58. Queenslander 21 September 1918: 41.
raced towards a conclusion on the Western Front, the public debate over the Talgai Skull dissipated with similar rapidity. The Armistice, however, did not bring peace to the archaic Queensland cranium.

Over successive decades the Talgai Skull was subjected to more rigorous, and increasingly sophisticated, analysis. Many of Smith's conclusions were, of course, found wanting, but his dating was remarkably accurate even though it was unqualified. As James Urry has argued: 'Until 1961 the oldest reliable date for an archaeological deposit in Australia was that from Cape Martin in South Australia (dated at 8700 BP)'. Yet, it is now accepted that the Talgai Skull was indeed deposited during the Pleistocene. Although a precise date has still proved elusive, the general consensus among archaeologists is that the youth whose skull was uncovered at East Talgai lived around 11,000 years ago. The possibility also exists that it may be even older, perhaps up to 18,000 years BP.

The Queensland cranium has since been joined by other archaic skeletal remains. In 1925, for instance, the 'Cohuna Cranium' was unearthed by a plough in northern Victoria. In 1940, yet another early skull was uncovered by a quarry worker at Keilor, also in Victoria. Archaeological excavations at Lake Mungo, in south-western New South Wales, further increased the accumulative knowledge of Australia's early inhabitants from 1969. Concomitantly, however, a conundrum emerged.

It was readily apparent that there were two morphologically distinct 'types' of skeletal remains — one having a gracile build, the other robust. Similar distinctions have been found among early hominids in many parts of the world, but Australia appears to be an anomaly. Elsewhere, the robust form preceded the development of a gracile build. Not in Australia, where the reverse has apparently occurred. The Talgai Skull is representative of the later robust form, but it has also been suggested that the larger dentition could possibly be indicative of environmental adaptation. Large molars would undoubtedly have been an important asset if grass seeds had been a major component of the diet.

Nonetheless, the identification of two contrasting morphological types has resulted in a number of theories relative to the peopling of Australia. This is clearly a separate issue, but it does need to be said that in the global context archaeological discoveries within Australia have become increasingly significant. The long-held view that Homo sapiens emerged only from the African continent is being rapidly superseded by a 'multi-regional hypothesis which argues that modern man evolved in several places at once while sharing the same genetic blueprint'. For their part, Aborigines have remained adamant that they have always belonged to the land called Australia, and it is perhaps significant that in 1920 Eugene Dubois, who first unearthed the remains of

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60. Urry 1978: 150.
Homo erectus in Java, suggested that their occupancy may have even been wider in extent. After studying Stewart Smith’s report on the Talgai Skull, Dubois re-examined two fossil skulls from the Wadjak district in Java and concluded that they were ‘very like the skulls of Australian blacks, though more massive, and with more massive jaws.’ It was the later work of NWG Macintosh, however, which attempted to draw a connection between Homo erectus and the cranium from Queensland.

Macintosh began his quest for all relevant information to the Talgai Skull in 1948. It was to be an odyssey spanning more than two decades. Before it was over Macintosh not only identified the location of Naish’s discovery, but had also found and interviewed Charles Fraser, who accompanied Edgeworth David and Naish to the site in 1914. Like his predecessors, Stewart Smith and Heber Longman, Macintosh was primarily concerned with highlighting the ‘primitive’ traits disclosed by the cranium. Unlike those earlier workers, however, he was sensitive to the risk of racial derogation. In 1972 Macintosh certainly did argue that Homo erectus characteristics showed a greater tendency to persist ‘in Australian Aborigines than in any other modern racial groups’, but that statement had already been carefully qualified.

The stimulus in this contemplation lies not in any attempt to visualize the aboriginal Australian as surviving Homo erectus or Solo Man, but rather in the suggestion that Homo erectus is brought nearer to reclassification as Homo sapiens.

Given the significance of the Talgai Skull in Macintosh’s investigations, the connection with Homo erectus certainly does offer support for the multi-regional origin of Homo sapiens. Yet, Macintosh later abandoned this line of thought after further research. In the broader context, increased knowledge of the past has also raised another important issue. The question of custodianship of physical remains has been echoed in many quarters — and has generated considerable hostility. Although mistakenly perceiving it as a question of ‘ownership’, Nicolas Rothwell succinctly outlined the dispute thus:

As critical as the struggle to find the depth of the Australian past has been the struggle for ownership of it. Aboriginal communities today exert significant control over their archaeological heritage, and this has led to repeated conflicts with prehistorians eager to investigate ancient traces of humanity.

As an angry Rosalind Langford decried in 1983: ‘If we Aborigines cannot control our own heritage, what the hell can we control?’ What cannot be overlooked, however, is that archaeologists have played a pivotal role in bringing about the changes necessary for the Aboriginal people to rightly become custodians of their physical culture. Mulvaney and Kamminga have lamented that:

It is therefore paradoxical and disappointing that archaeologists are seen as the ‘enemy’. At present both sides are losers. We can only hope that archaeological

67. BC 31 December 1920: 5; Queenslander 8 January 1921: 38.
70. Macintosh 1967b: 98.
fieldwork and analysis can recommence in co-operative partnership, devoid of mutual acrimony and confrontation.74

Clearly, a solution is fraught with difficulties. There can be no denying, however, that knowledge of the past benefits all humanity. This is the point made by the archaeologist Colin Pardoe, who has worked closely with Aboriginal communities:

I am opposed to reburial of any skeletal remains. The value of these to archaeology and understanding the past is inestimable. However ... it is not my decision. By accepting Aboriginal ownership and control of their ancestors' bones, I accept their decisions on the dispositions of those remains. My optimism stems from the hope that by demonstrating the value of skeletal studies the day may come when Aboriginal people might wish to preserve those remains 'in the name of science'! Bones and burials may represent death and all the attendant qualms of our culture, but through the information held in their structure they contain evolutionary history. And evolution is about nothing if not life.75

This represents a far different outlook on evolutionary history than that promulgated during the 1918 Talgai Skull debate. As Pardoe nevertheless infers, it is imperative that a resolution should be achieved as soon as possible. While archaeological excavations can be considered as acts of preservation, DJ Mulvaney has also argued that the repatriation of archaic skeletal remains may well have serious long-term consequences for indigenous Australians:

Because ancient bones may need to be re-examined as the passage of time brings new investigative techniques, the custodians to whom such remains are entrusted should be made aware, before final disposal, of their own potential responsibilities to future generations of their own people. Total destruction of human remains now, for example by cremation, may come to be regarded as vandalism by future generations of the custodians.76

Mulvaney has suggested the construction of secure 'keeping-places' and their control by the 'relevant Aboriginal communities' as a solution. It is also relevant that a number of Aboriginal communities have already lodged physical remains within existing institutions as a temporary measure - but along the same lines advocated by Mulvaney.77 So perhaps an armistice can be reached after all. The Talgai Skull might also become an important factor in the outcome, for it is certainly indicative of current sensitivity. A recent request to the Anatomy Department of the University of Sydney for information on its whereabouts still remains unanswered, although it was apparently sent to Britain some time before February 192278. The ancient cranium from Queensland's Darling Downs has already weathered one fiery debate; at the very least, it is to be hoped that it can yet survive another. Without doubt, those cranial connections are well deserving of careful considerations.

74 Mulvaney and Kamminga 1999: 356.
75 Pardoe 1990: 222.
76 Mulvaney 1985: 93.
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Instructing the Indians at Botany Bay

RC Petersen

The first books brought to Australia included twelve copies of a book listed by both Bonwick in 1898 and Macintosh in 1978 as Wilson's *Instructions for the Indians*. These twelve copies were in the store of over four thousand volumes brought out on the First Fleet by Richard Johnson (1753–1827), the clergyman attached to the expedition as chaplain for the convicts and their guards. The books, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, had been given to Johnson by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, for him to use in his pastoral work in the penal colony that was to be established. Johnson brought out some fifty titles in various quantities. There were 200 copies of the Church of England catechism, 200 copies of *Christian Soldier*, 100 *Exhortations to Chastity*, six copies of the *Great Importance of a Religious Life Considered* by William Melmoth, and one copy of Osterwald's *Arguments*. There were 500 copies of *Stonehouse's Administrations* printed on a big sheet of paper, and 100 copies of it stitched into booklets. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge also gave Johnson some schoolbooks with the expectation that a school would be opened at Botany Bay. The *Child's First Book Part One* was supplied in 200 copies and the work by Henry Dixon, *The English Instructor, Etc., Or, the Art of Spelling Improved* in 100 copies, but only one copy was included of Talbot's *Christian Schoolmaster*, that is James Talbot's 1707 work, *The Christian Schoolmaster: or the duty of those who are employ'd in the publick instruction of children, especially in charity schools*. Maybe Johnson himself owned some other books on education and pedagogy, and maybe their lessons were utilised when Australia's first school opened in 1789 or when Johnson set up schools from 1792 on. We do not know this, it seems. But the most numerous items in the cargo were, as would be expected, Bibles and separately published parts of the Bible like the Psalms. Some years later, more boxes of books were sent out to Botany Bay by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

It would be interesting to investigate the contents of all of them, of all these first European 'cultural items' brought to the continent, but here only Wilson's book is

2. They did the same in Georgia, fifty years earlier, and including some of the same books. See list in Church 1932: 236.
3. Wood (1926: 243) also refers to the books.
treated. It must be remembered that Johnson and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge understood that the settlers were coming to an inhabited land. It was not only the convicts and their guards with whom Johnson expected to deal, it was also the indigenous people of Botany Bay, the Aborigines. How should these be approached? The twelve copies of Wilson's *Instructions for the Indians*, a product of the American experience, were the only ones in Johnson's luggage patently for use with the Aborigines. In his history of Aborigines encountering Christianity, Harris remarks that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts sent Johnson to Botany Bay, but that 'this did not inspire them to any early action on behalf of the Aboriginal people'.

Their inclusion of Bishop Wilson's book in his luggage seems to show, on the contrary, that they did. Of course it rested with Johnson how he would use Wilson's book.

The land was inhabited by its natives; and the English had a long experience of natives. The eyes which looked upon the natives of Australia were not innocent eyes. Precedents were established: by 1788 the English had been dealing with the indigenous people of the Americas for over two hundred years. It is almost certain that the English coming to Australia brought with them attitudes to its natives formed or at least influenced by the English experience of the American Indians. Indeed, in the first texts, they are often spoken of as Indians. La Pérouse in 1788 referred to them as 'the Indians of New Holland'. As late as 1819 Barron Field called them Indians. The Americas had been discovered three centuries already, and the First Fleet called in at Rio de Janeiro on its way out. The governor, Arthur Phillip, had been for years in Portuguese naval service in Brazil, at Rio where Indians and Blacks from Africa went about the streets.

The *Instruction for the Indians* was not written in the American colonies, however. The book, whose title was finally *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities; or, An Essay Towards an Instruction for the Indians* [etc.], was written in England by Thomas Wilson and first published in 1740.

It was a catechism, that is a course of lessons in the form of questions and answers, sustained over a hundred and fifty pages in Wilson's *Works* scrupulously edited by John Keble for the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology in the 1860s and double that in the duodecimo edition of 1781, which presumably was the one Johnson used. The questions were asked by an Indian and answered by a Missionary. In nine dialogues the interlocutors proceed to explicate systematically the reasons why human beings should desire Christian baptism. Then dialogues follow on the Nicean Creed and its implications, on the Ten Commandments, on duties to God and neighbours, on prayer, and on the Lord's Supper (or Holy Communion). The twentieth dialogue is on 'the delusion, the danger, and the mischief, of being Christians without Christianity', and it is here that the Missionary asks the Indian to abandon pagan practices, saying: 'And

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8. Tench 1961, passim. Here I should note that I use 'Indians', and not terms like 'Native Americans' which have been fashionable lately, to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. I believe I am supported in this by Francis (1992), and especially Ward Churchill (1995).
10. A copy of the 1781 edition is preserved in the library of Moore College, Sydney. There was an edition in 1787 but Johnson was given the books in late 1786.
first, Consider whether there are any ways of life, or customs, which at present you are
fond of, which you will not utterly forsake, when you shall be convinced that they are
forbidden by God, or displeasing to him.' To which the Indian replies: 'I know of none
which I will not forsake in order to please God.'

The author of the book, Bishop Thomas Wilson (1663–1755), seems to have been a
kindly man, with a saintly concern for the welfare of his flock. Educated at Trinity Col­
lege Dublin, he was appointed to the see of Sodor and Man at the age of 34 and held it
for fifty–eight years (1697–1755), living on the Isle of Man among the Manx people,
learning the Manx language (which is or was a Celtic language related to Irish), trans­
lating parts of the Bible into Manx, even writing some of his own works in Manx.11 He
was so beloved by the rough and simple Manx that the good bishop believed he could
also reach American Indians and other savages.

He was asked to write a catechism for the Creek Indians of Georgia by James
Oglethorpe (1696–1785), administrator of Georgia and founder of Savannah.12
Oglethorpe had the welfare of the Indians at heart; and while admiring their virtues
wished to make them Christians, any sort of Christian (except Catholic and perhaps
Wesleyan). He returned to England from Georgia in 1743 bringing with him some spec­
imens of Indian humanity: Tomochichi the mico (or chief) of the Yamacraw Creeks, his
wife Scenawki or Sarauki, his fifteen year old great-nephew called Tonahowi or Tooana­
liomo, and half a dozen retainers.13 The Creeks were paraded around England (though
not so far as the Isle of Man) and immortalised in paintings dressed in wolf-skins and
clutching eagles. They presented a deerskin and eagle feathers to King George II, and
asked 'for the good of the children of our Nation that they may be instructed in the
knowledge of the English'.14 When Oglethorpe and Wilson met in London it seems that
the Indians were elsewhere so that Wilson never met them, he only heard about them
from Oglethorpe and from his own son. It was his son who saw them at Kensington
Palace on 1 August 1734, noting that 'they behaved with a becoming Gravity, not too
much admiring the furniture or the Dress of the Court tho' very splendid', true Sto­
cics.15 But pressed by his son and Oglethorpe, Bishop Wilson agreed to write a
catechism for Tomochichi and the Creeks, or at least for generic Indians.

The Creeks were an agricultural people living in semi-permanent villages and cul­
tivating corn on the rich soils of what are now Georgia and Alabama.16 There are still
some Creeks but their ethnic homelands were long since lost to them, and after a forced
march of thousands of kilometers in the 1830s most surviving Creeks settled in Indian
Territory, a fake homeland which in turn was lost to them in 1907 when it became Okla­
homa.17 They had chiefs and war chiefs, but these positions seem not to have been
hereditary. In fact, the Creeks were matrilineal. Their life was structured by the seasons
and the farming tasks of each, and culminated in a Festival of the Green Corn around

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11. See Keble 1863. There is an entry in DNB. Wilson is considered the initiator of Manx literature.
12. See Church (1932) and Corkran (1967). There is an entry in DNB.
13. Ibid. There are pictures of them in Swanton 1946, Plates 29 and 30.
15. Ibid.
16. Adair nd; Burt and Ferguson 1973; Swanton 1922 and 1946.
the end of July, when after being extinguished the hearths were relit for a year. Before battle the braves drank the concoction of a kind of holly, a black liquid which immediately purged them. The men were fine athletes; they played lacrosse; both sexes danced. Swanton’s books lovingly collect all the facts about this people.

Oglethorpe’s proteges, however, were not representative of the Creek nation. Tomochichi seems to have been the self-appointed leader of a tiny fraction of the nation, calling themselves the Yamacraw, that had fallen out with the rest and, finding themselves at the site of Savannah, had attached themselves to the powerful white men. They were almost exactly the American equivalent of the Aboriginal ‘kings’ in Australia, honoured and used by outsiders who had not the faintest understanding of indigenous politics. Well might Oglethorpe consider the Creeks to be a docile and pliable nation, for he was dealing with demoralised people.

Wilson seems to have known nothing of all this. The Indian who speaks in his catechism is a figment of the European imagination, nourished probably in equal measure by classical literature and reports of modern voyages. He took Oglethorpe’s word for the Creeks’ possessing almost Roman virtues, as these could be studied in Livy. Oglethorpe even thought that, through the interpreters, he detected an eloquence equal to the ancients; and he went so far as to say, ‘I am a red man, an Indian in my heart, that is why I love them’. Their simplicity of life and their austere manly virtues led Wilson in turn to read them as the Cynics and Stoics portrayed by Diogenes Laertius and others. And he presumably took the whole matter of America from books like LA Lahontan’s Dialogues Curieux entre l’Auteur et un Sauvage de Bon Sens qui a Voyage (1703), John Lawson’s New Voyage to Carolina (1709), the Jesuit Joseph Lafitau’s Moeurs des Sauvages Américains Comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps (1724), and Cadwallader Colden’s History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada (1727). These books typify the pro-Indian literature of the period; and Lafitau was one of the many Europeans raised on Virgil, Tacitus and Lucretius who believed they could draw Classical parallels with Indian cultural practices. James Adair, who was collecting data on the Creeks in those very years, for his part insisted on viewing them as the Lost Tribes of Israel. The ‘Other’ is a Rorschach blot. The Indian of Wilson’s dialogue is a ‘sauvage de bon sens’, philosophical by nature, grave and reasonable, a sensible savage. He is not an especially noble savage, however, savages being human and therefore as liable to sin as the most highly civilised of men. Wilson expatiates upon ‘the cruelty, the oppression, the pride, the injustice, the malice, the covetousness, the lewdness, the impurity, murders, drunkenness, and all other sins’ which all humans commit. Just as reason is the great leveller up, so sin is the great leveller down.

It is of course a plausible deduction that, if American savages were deemed reasonable beings, then all humans were reasonable and could be reached by messages

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19. He also edited notes made by JNB Hewitt in 1881–82 from interviews.
20. On these see Tanya Cleary’s Poignant regalia and Jakelin Troy’s King plates (both 1993).
21. Honour (1975) deals with this theme.
22. Many examples of this literature are surveyed in Sayre (1997); the Indian problematic is well exposed in Todorov (1992).
pitched at their reason — and so Wilson deduced. Of the African slaves he said that ‘nobody ought to question, but that these people are as capable of receiving religious instruction as any other Gentiles, or even as we ourselves were, when the Gospel was first preached to us’. Here ‘we ourselves’ are the English, an allusion presumably to non Angli sed angeli. It was not implausible, then, that the book promised to be useful with the black natives of Australia. Wilson said that ‘heathens can reason as well as Christians’. All these people had reason and all were sinners, regardless of their race. ‘Human nature, as it is now corrupt, is the same in all men.’ It is a question, however, whether the Indian in Wilson’s dialogue would have shown himself so rational had he been envisaged as female: the noble savage, and even the antique pagan, was almost always taken to be a man.

Wilson heard from Oglethorpe about the Indians of Georgia, ‘who, as he assured us, are a tractable people, and more capable of being civilized, and of receiving the truths of religion, than we are generally made to believe’. All that was needed, really, was to remove some hindrances, and take proper measures to awaken in them a sense of their true interest, and make them realise their unhappy condition so long as they remained pagan. In his book, Wilson set out to emulate Jesus, ‘to follow the example of our Great Master, — by giving instructions suitable to the present necessity and strength of such as were to receive them’. This is a doctrine of economy. The instructions built upon what ‘plain and unlearned people’... ‘know and feel within themselves,— upon the corruption of human nature,— their proneness to evil,— the fears that attend such a sad state,— and upon the experience of their own utter inability to deliver themselves out of this state of bondage; — arguments which every thoughtful man, though never so unlearned, if awakened, feels the force of’. There is no Indian decor in the book — even in the section on the Ten Commandments — where familiar examples were appropriate. Wilson writes of servants who disobey their masters, and of rum and gin as ruining ‘many thousands of the lower part of mankind’. Idolators were bad. As well as maintaining a sacred fire in a circular temple tended by braves, the Creeks had idols. However, when the Missionary says that ‘You must know then, through the suggestions of the devil, most nations have been led into a vile custom of representing and worshipping God by images’, the wording does not point particularly to Creeks or even Indians.

Wilson populated his world with good spirits and evil spirits, and to frighten the Indian from evil spirits used the examples of Noah’s flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire out of the sky. The Indian says, ‘These indeed are reasonable proofs of the power which EVIL SPIRITS have over wicked men, and of the great danger we are in of being ruined by it’. The very first prayer in the book, apotropaic,
names Satan; later Wilson writes of ‘the evil spirit, i.e., the DEVIL, who is the great tempter of mankind to all evil’. Angels were mentioned. It was a world in which the grossest superstitions could be called reasonable, and certainly one in which un instructed Christians were as burdened with pagan residues as the various natives to whom they claimed to be superior. Nevertheless, Wilson assured the Indians that ‘these things are true, and will at last be found to be so, whether men believe them or not. And if any man is lost forever, for want of giving credit to them, or for not considering them, it will signify little whether he was called a Christian or a Heathen.’

After the Indian had listened to the Missionary, he would be allowed to read the Gospels: ‘I mean FOUR SMALL TREATISES, in which the life and actions of our Saviour are written for the benefit of all succeeding Christians; and, when it shall be your happiness to read them, you will find there abundant matter and reason for the perpetual remembrance of Jesus Christ’. First the oral Gospel, then the written; and, with that, the schoolmaster.

Although Wilson submitted the manuscript to Isaac Watts for his approval, to make sure Dissenters would also use his book, he did not allow his teaching to become too Protestant. In the tenth dialogue, for example, the Indian is told that there are two sacraments: baptism and communion, which is against the seven sacraments of Catholics and the Orthodox; and that baptism may be administered to infants and adults, which is against all kinds of Baptists. The whole second half of the book faithfully interprets the Church of England catechism, which Wilson had earlier rendered into Manx.

This Instruction for the Indians was republished regularly until 1848. It reached its thirteenth edition in 1781 and its fourteenth edition in 1787; these presumably furnishing the copies brought to Australia. It was published in French at Geneva in 1744, in Italian by 1757, and in Welsh in 1774; decades later it was translated into Manx but this version was never printed. What its influence may have been is incalculable. It was distributed among the African slaves on American plantations, or at least distributed among the slave-holders for use with the Blacks. And as early as August 1741, ‘a great many thousand of the last edition [had been] sent all over our plantations in the West Indies’, being warmly received in Jamaica; while by 1745 it was being used at William and Mary College in Virginia with black, Indian and white students. As to its influence as a literary work, it may be that Voltaire, who was in England in 1726–29 and kept up an interest in things English, was using Wilson’s format twenty years later to promote deism in his Entretiens d’un sauvage et d’un bachelier of 1761, and the Catéchisme de l’honnête homme ou Dialogue entre un caloyer et un homme de bien two years later. His subversive catechisms in the Dictionnaire Philosophique of 1764, especially the ‘Catéchisme chinois’, may echo the Instruction for the Indians. But a confident account of its reception and Fortleben would need a full study.

34. Wilson 1861: 231.
35. Wilson 1861: 274.
38. Most of these are printed in Voltaire 1961.
This then was the book of which Johnson brought twelve copies to Botany Bay. If the Indians whom Johnson intended to convert by it, that is if the Aborigines around Sydney Harbour, the Cadigal, the Birranbirragal, the Goraualgal and the Borogegal people, with their more distant peers, could have learned English very well, then by reasoning they might have admitted the pre-eminence of the Semitic sky god. They may have had a sky god of their own, Byamee or Baiami, though there is some doubt as to its pre-eminence; but even with a mastery of English there was no way they (or anyone else) could have been led by reason to understanding the triune god of the Christians and the tenets of the Church of England. These are mysteries beyond human understanding ... particularly the tenets of the Church of England.

It is not clear whether Johnson ever used Bishop Wilson’s catechism at Botany Bay. We have evidence that Johnson was kindly disposed towards the real indigenes whom he found around him. In May 1788 he said that ‘from what I have seen & heard they are very harmless & inoffensive’. He and Mary Johnson undertook to be charitable to them. In the smallpox epidemic children were orphaned. A boy, Nanbaree, was taken into the care of John White, the Surgeon-General; and a girl, Boorong or Abaroo, was taken into the Johnson household. Thus began the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their parents and relatives. Eleven months later, Johnson reported:

Have taken some pains with Abaroo (about 15 years old) to instruct her in reading, & have no reason to complain of her improvement. She can likewise begin to speak a little English & is useful in several things about our little Hutt. Have taught her the Lord’s Prayer &c., and as she comes better to understand me, endeavour to instruct her respecting a Supreme Being, &c. Wish to see these poor heathen brought to the knowledge of Xtainy & hope in time to see or hear of the dawning of that time when these shall be given for our Lord’s heritage, & the uttermost parts of the earth for his Possession.

It is possible to construe some of Johnson’s words, words like ‘instruct her respecting a Supreme Being’ and ‘brought to the knowledge of Christianity’, to mean that he used Bishop Wilson’s approach to proselytise Abaroo; but her slight abilities with speaking and reading English must have kept Instructions for the Indians out of her hands. In any case, before her conversion had progressed very far she decamped and took up with a young man of sixteen, Imeerawanyee. A portrait by the so-called Port Jackson Painter, reproduced in McBryde, shows Abaroo decorated in pink for a funeral. She was seen about the harbour, paddling naked in a canoe; and by then the 39 Articles of the Church of England were probably very far from her mind. Johnson took another girl into his household, but we have no further information about her except that she soon went walkabout too. In 1792 he asked for two missionaries to be sent out specifically to teach the Aborigines but his request went unheeded; and when some London Missionary Society missionaries did turn up in Sydney in 1798 after their failure in Tahiti, they taught only European children, presumably having had enough of savages noble and ignoble.

43. Cleverley 1971: 64; Bridges 1968.
This in bare outline is the story of one book that links three continents and three nations. It would be worth looking closely at all the other books which Johnson brought with him, and seeing if there are others which less patently than Wilson's were nonetheless intended for use with the Aborigines. Wilson's book, however, testifies that the first contacts with Australia's native inhabitants carried at least the promise of humane treatment for people who were accepted as being reasonable. Wilson's Missionary told his Indian that God: 'has given you and all men Reason, which is instead of a written law or rule, by which you ought to live, and may in some measure know what is good, and what is evil; what will please, and what will displease, an holy, just, and good God'. A promising start for Europeans settling alongside the natives; it was a tragedy that this promise was not fulfilled in the decades and the centuries that followed.

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Memories of the buffalo shooters: Joe Cooper and the Tiwi (1895–1936)

John Morris

The Tiwi Islands, of which Melville is the largest, are located to the northwest of Darwin, Northern Territory. In the 1960s memories of the exploits of buffalo shooter Joe Cooper on Melville Island were still fresh in the minds of the Tiwi elders. These exploits made a serious impact on local society, bringing about changes that were, to some extent, to transform the future of the islanders. Cooper’s presence in the islands brought about not only a level of cultural innovation but also lasting connections with a mainland tribe, who like the Tiwi, had experienced a British garrison in their tribal country in the 1820s. Furthermore, for the first time the Tiwi were to suffer violence at the hands of another Indigenous group.

In the broader public a mythology developed about Cooper. He was credited with fighting a fictitious duel to become ‘king’ of the island, and with establishing a peaceful environment in which he could travel unarmed and a mission could be established in the islands. In truth, Robert Joel (Joe) Cooper and his brother Harry had moved from their native South Australia to the Northern Territory, in about 1881, later becoming buffalo hunters on the Cobourg Peninsula and in the Alligator Rivers area. Joe then managed buffalo shooting operations on Melville Island for EO Robinson who successfully applied for two pastoral leases over Melville Island in 1892. Buffalo shooting operations there actually commenced in April 1895 when Robinson sailed for Cape Gambier on southern Melville Island with Joe Cooper and J (Barney) Flynn, together with a team of horses. Cape Gambier is located in the ‘country’ of the Mandiimbula, one of the Tiwi bands. A small band of Iwaidja men from the Malay Bay - Port Essington area were recruited to work with Cooper and Flynn.

1. The British occupied Fort Dundas on Melville Island from 1824 to 1829, and Fort Wellington and the town and fort of Victoria, both in Iwaidja country, between 1826 and 1829 and 1838 and 1849 respectively.
2. Tiwi oral history tells of a raid on Melville Island by the Larrakia in the nineteenth century. Several women by stolen by the raiders but there is no oral record of any Tiwi being killed.
3. See Morris (1999) for examples of such writings.
4. South Australian Register, 27 May 1897: 5. The buffalo, of unknown numbers, were descended from a herd left on the island when Fort Dundas was abandoned in 1829.
5. Northern Territory Times, 8 Mar 1895.
Robinson apparently spent some time with his shooters before leaving Cooper and Flynn as the only two Europeans on the island. Tiwi oral history indicates that there was fear among the first Mandiimbula to observe the shooters. Cooper, said the elders, tried to catch Tiwi people to quieten them by giving them 'plenty presents'. If Islander oral history is correct, however, there was another side to the buffalo shooters' presence on Melville Island. By late 1895 or early 1896 Cooper and his team worked their way around Melville Island as far as the island's northern side. The people there greeted the Iwaidja with cries of 'Pongki! Pongki!' (Peace! Peace!). When the Iwaidja tried to catch them the Islanders fled, some into swampland. They apparently had no understanding of the Iwaidja's intentions. Six Tiwi men and women were shot by the Iwaidja, while on the southern side of Melville Island another man was wounded.

Rightly or wrongly the elders blamed Flynn for the shootings, one elder commenting that 'Barney Flynn bin kill lotta people. (Flynn) go along bush, (people) run away.' Later, on the mainland a 'blackfella' sang poison into Flynn. In fact, Flynn died from a snake bite in his buffalo-shooting camp in the Alligator Rivers area. It is impossible to establish whether Flynn was involved in deliberate shootings of Tiwi people. An inquiry in 1915 concluded that the Iwaidja carried out the shootings of their own volition.

By early June 1895, according to Robinson, trouble with the Tiwi had been minimal. Flynn had a narrow escape when a spear grazed his shoulder. Despite 'the animosity of the savages' the Tiwi had apparently retreated 'to quieter parts of the country'.

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6. *South Australian Register* 27 May 1897: 5.
7. See Morris (1999) for details of interviews with the Tiwi and Iwaidja elders whose memories of Cooper and his times form the basis of this article.
8. These dates are approximations based on the time taken by buffalo-shooting teams to work across the 5697 square kilometres of the island. The *Northern Territory Times* 7 Jun 1895 and the *South Australian Register* 27 May 1897 p 6 indicate the localities in which the shooters operated.
and the shooters’ horses were able to graze safely. On 26 June, 1895, however, the *South Australian Register* proclaimed ‘OUTRAGE BY NATIVES. A BUFFALO-HUNTER SPEARED’. The *Northern Territory Times*, which was not a daily publication, reported two days later the ‘Spearing of J. Cooper on Melville Island’. Like other incidents in his life, the circumstances surrounding the wounding of Cooper have become the subject of some error or have been magnified to a large extent. Even the *Northern Territory Times* published two versions, one given by either Cooper or another party, possibly Captain James of the lugger *Beatrice*, and the other a report handed to the police in Darwin. Cooper stated that he rode out of his Cape Gambier camp early in the morning of 24 June 1895 ahead of some Iwaidja employees who were on foot. Flynn went in another direction with other Aboriginal workers. Cooper claimed that he was speared in the left shoulder by a Tiwi Islander. Dismounting, he fired a shot at a group of Tiwi who were about a hundred yards from him and who fled. Breaking off the spear he walked back to the camp.

Ngaringari, an Iwaidja hunter, who was present at the incident, stated that Cooper saw a Mandiimbula man named Porkilari while riding through the bush. Wishing to make peace with him Cooper rode after Porkilari who leapt behind a tree. As Cooper grabbed his wrist Porkilari lunged a spear at him from the other side of the tree, spearing him through the shoulder. Tiwi elders confirmed Ngaringari’s version. When Cooper was speared the Iwaidja with him were said to have run away.13

11. *Northern Territory Times*, 7 Jun 1895.
13. Interview with Jerry Kerinaiua, 1 Jun 1965.
Alfred Searcy, a customs officer, arrived at Cape Gambier on the morning of the attack and witnessed Cooper’s evacuation to Darwin on the lugger Beatrice. While at the camp Searcy ‘went inland for a few miles, but never a sign of a nigger did we see’. The Iwaidja, said Searcy, ‘were in mortal dread of the island blacks’. Soon after the spearing of Cooper one of them was wounded in an attack upon the mainlanders. He later died in Darwin Hospital. As for Cooper, the South Australian Register of 25 June, 1897, reported that he had been able to return to Melville Island within three weeks of being injured, although he carried a large scar for the rest of his life.

Horses used by the hunters were also attacked. A small number of Tiwi were gradually attracted to Cooper’s camp, but others remained opposed to the buffalo-shooters. Although Robinson had stated early in June 1895 that the horses could graze freely, he later stated that ‘we found the natives very hostile and daring there, and lost one horse, which they speared. They speared two other horses, but not fatally.’ Again, on 19 June 1896, The Northern Territory Times commented that the ‘Melville Islanders have been showing their teeth again ... one of J. Flynn’s horses (being) speared by the unfriendly savages’ a few days previously.

Additional men having joined Cooper’s team late in 1895, hunting operations continued well into 1896. During those two years the island’s buffalo population had been depleted by about 7000 beasts. Wishing to build up the herds again, Robinson withdrew Cooper and the other hunters at the end of 1896. Standing out graphically in Tiwi memory is the departure, on Cooper’s lugger, of a group of about twelve Tiwi women and babies and two island men, sailing for the Cobourg Peninsula. The removal of the Tiwi is noted in an official report into later activities on the island. It is not clear why the Tiwi choose to go with Cooper, although at least one woman was a consort to an Iwaidja man.

Robinson sold his leases over Melville Island in the next few years, repurchasing them in 1902. He did not, however, recommence shooting activities on Melville Island until the end of June 1905. Cooper was again in charge of operations, this time with a larger team which included his brother Harry. Tiwi oral history recalls that Robinson came to Cape Gambier in the lugger Essington, along with Samuel Ingeruintamirri, one of the Mandiimbula who had been on the mainland.

Samuel, not Cooper, was the key to the peaceful return of the buffalo-shooters. He walked up the beach, calling out towards the bush to identify himself, hoping that some of the Mandiimbula were camped above Cape Gambier. Hearing him, the people who were there came to meet him on the beach, hitting themselves in Tiwi fashion as a sign

15. Ibid.
17. Northern Territory Times, 22 Nov 1895.
19. Ibid.
21. South Australian State Records (SASR), GRS1/300/1897 and GRS10/16901/1907; Northern Territory Times, 13 Apr 1900.
of past grief for they had thought that he, and the others who had left the island with him, had been lost forever. Samuel handed out what must have appeared to be a wealth of trade goods. Robinson then came up, also handing out presents. Samuel told his fellow Islanders that Joe Cooper was returning to their land. When the shooters and their horses, and later Cooper, arrived from the mainland the Tiwi offered no violence. There were, however, bands other than the Mandiimbula who were not peaceful or who had reason not to be peaceful. Despite the popular picture of Cooper establishing peace on the island he was actually on his guard during the years he was to spend there.

In the final days of June 1905 the steamer *Wai Hoi* made two trips from Darwin to Yulupoo on Cape Gambier, transporting 20 horses bred by the Cooper brothers.23 Harry Cooper and Samuel Ingeruintamirri escorted the horses which the Mandiimbula happily helped to unload. Several Darwin residents who travelled on each of the *Wai Hoi*'s trips to Melville Island were impressed by the friendliness and the physical appearance of the Tiwi they saw on the beach. Unlike Aborigines around Darwin, the Tiwi were not suffering from the effects of alcohol and opium.24

On its second trip the *Wai Hoi* brought back to Melville Island all except one of those Tiwi who had departed in 1896. The remaining man had died at Oenpelli. The returning people belonged to the Mandiimbula and Yeimpi bands, five of the women in this group having taken Iwaidja or Gagudju (Kakadu) husbands. This no doubt assisted the devel-

opment of enduring relationships between the Aboriginal buffalo shooters and these bands. Understanding of the mainlanders was also assisted by the insight the Tiwi had gained into aspects of their culture during their stay in Western Arnhem Land.

Joe Cooper, says Tiwi oral history, returned to Melville Island in a cutter some time after the *Wai Hoi*'s trips on or about 27 and 28 June 1905. Upon his arrival two of the Tiwi women who had been on the mainland with him called to their fellow Islanders who were at Panarli, 'Pongki! Pongki! (Peace! Peace!) This man quiet!'

Three frightened Mandiimbula men walking along the beach were given damper and buffalo meat, which surprisingly they had not eaten before, being seen as suitable only for dogs. Suspicious, they buried the food. They were also frightened of matches.

There is some confusion as to how many Iwaidja were in Cooper's team and whether there were any mainland women with this team. The *Northern Territory Times* of 30 June 1905 states that '30 or thereabouts Aborigines' were travelling to Melville Island on the *Wai Hoi*, including 'two or three' Tiwi who had been brought to the mainland in 1896. Cooper gave evidence in 1915 that he had brought 18 mainland Aborigines, including two women, to the islands in 1905.

Whatever the number of Iwaidja on Melville Island, during the next eleven years they became, to varying degrees, agents of cultural and social change in the Tiwi Islands. They introduced the didjeridu (didgeridoo) to the islands but it was rejected by the Tiwi. Whether the Islanders adopted the message stick from the Iwaidja or not is the subject of debate among the Tiwi. If it was introduced by the buffalo hunters it was quickly absorbed into local use. Although Iwaidja ritual was witnessed by the Tiwi, local ceremonies prevailed. To a limited extent Iwaidja culture was diffused into the islands through the accommodation of a small number of words into the local language, wholly or in a Tiwi version of some words. Possibly the biggest effect of the Iwaidja presence was the wider employment of dugout canoes. On an epistemological level, with arrival of the mainlanders the Tiwi became acquainted with, and absorbed into their own culture, the concepts of magic and death by poisoning. While these beliefs became an important function in Islander convictions and law, the details of their actual application were and are beyond Tiwi comprehension.

On the whole, Tiwi customs and traditions were not greatly affected by this prolonged episode of inter-cultural contact. As will be seen, however, for the first time this contact resulted in a strong physical relationship between the Tiwi and another Indigenous group through marriage and descent. Moreover, the mainlanders became instruments of aggression in Tiwi society.

The spread of the buffalo-shooting teams across Melville Island resulted in the attraction of a number of Tiwi to employment with Cooper in exchange for food and other desired items. Many Tiwi remained suspicious of, and even antagonistic towards the outsiders. Gradually the shooters made inroads into the 'country' of bands other than the Mandiimbula. More Tiwi came into frequent contact with the foreigners. By late 1906 a large number of Tiwi had established themselves in a shooters' camp near

25. Interview with Cardo (Kartu) Kerinaiua and Albert Kulappaku Croker, 26 Mar 1964.
the Jessie River in northeastern Melville Island. Nevertheless, several horses were killed or injured by suspicious Tiwi. There was, however, a greater cause for Tiwi discontent. This resulted from a lack or virtual lack of mainland women in the Iwaidja ranks on Melville Island. The Iwaidja therefore sought Tiwi women. Academic and popular writings about Cooper's time in the islands usually fail to mention the aggression caused by the mainlanders’ demand for women.

As long as they were armed with rifles the Iwaidja apparently displayed no dread of the Tiwi. In the mid-1890s the Tiwi had experienced terror and the kidnapping of several females at the hands of the Iwaidja on the north coast of the island. Now, for the first time they were fired upon in the interior of both Melville Island and the neighbouring Bathurst Island. Allegations about Cooper's involvement in the shootings cannot be substantiated. In a subsequent enquiry in 1915, no suggestion was made of charges being laid against Cooper. Nevertheless, a feeling still existed among many Tiwi elders in the 1960s that Cooper, being in charge of the buffalo-shooting enterprise, must have been responsible for the actions of the Iwaidja.

What is clear is that the Tiwi were witnessing a change in their history, an alliance between some Islanders and an outside force. However, care is needed in making any statement as to how far this alliance went. Survivors of the Cooper era insist that no alliance existed between the mainlanders and the larger part of any Tiwi band. This contrasts with statements by writers who see a strong relationship between the Iwaidja and the Mandiimbula and Yeimpi bands in particular. Proposals for the theft of Tiwi women by the Iwaidja are even attributed to some Islanders. The only Tiwi oral history to support this suggestion concerns an incident in which two Mandiimbula men accompanied several Iwaidja men to kidnap a woman on Bathurst Island in 1911. The Iwaidja were beaten by local Tiwi men and their rifles seized and returned to Cooper's camp. This event occurred while Cooper was on holidays in southern Australia. In other incidents two old women and a man were shot on Bathurst Island and four Tiwi women seized by the Iwaidja. The names of about 24 Islander women who were taken by the Iwaidja in or after 1910 were still etched in the minds of the elders in the 1960s. One of the women, then a girl, escaped from an Iwaidja camp, despite being fired at.

The death of Harry Cooper at Cape Gambier in 1907 added to the Cooper legend. For some reason the belief arose that Harry was speared by the Tiwi. In fact, Harry died of disease in his bed on 10 April 1907, and Joe took the body to Darwin. Tiwi oral history, with its emphatic statement that Harry had died of natural causes, not from a spear wound, was closer to the truth than the public legend.

Within a short time of his brother’s death, the decline in the number of buffalo forced Joe Cooper to turn to the cutting and milling of cypress pine. The Tiwi were thus

31. Northern Territory Times, 16 Apr 1907 and 26 Apr 1907. While this newspaper, 16 Apr 1907, reported that the examining doctor certified the cause of death as heart failure, the Archives of the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Northern Territory, Entry 132, lists the cause of death as syphilis.
introduced to new machinery and equipment from at least 1908. Gradually a number of other timber-getters moved into Melville Island, leading to employment for a few Tiwi and some conflict between the Europeans there.

By 1911 several events occurred which would have a large bearing on the Tiwi. In June a Catholic mission station was established at Nguiu on Bathurst Island. With the transfer of the Territory from South Australian to Commonwealth administration in 1911, Federal authorities took more interest in the circumstances of the Territory's Aboriginal population than South Australia had. The Aboriginal Department was rejuvenated. Baldwin Spencer was appointed Special Commissioner on Aboriginal matters in 1911, becoming Chief Protector of Aborigines in the following year. Along with John Gibration, later Administrator of the Northern Territory, Spencer spent time with Cooper and, to a lesser extent, with Father F.X. Gsell at Nguiu. He gathered a copious amount of ethnographical material on both the Tiwi and the Iwaidja in 1911 and 1912.

Spencer's writings about his visits to the islands raise doubts about claims that Cooper pacified the Tiwi, making the islands safe for Caucasian visitors and allowing Gsell to peacefully settle at Nguiu. Spencer followed Cooper's practice of never leaving the camp unarmed. Spencer noted that Cooper 'takes good care to have his bodyguard of Port Essington (Iwaidja) boys with him when he hunts.' Iwaidja elder John Ngaringari verified these comments with his memory of Cooper always being armed with one or two revolvers and a shotgun or rifle. The evidence of Cooper being on his guard against a possible attack by the Tiwi is in contrast to the widely publicised picture of him pursuing Islander law breakers while clad only in a loin cloth and armed with a spear, something which the Tiwi deny ever occurred. On the other hand, he did take part in Indigenous ceremonies both at Malay Bay and on Melville Island.

The issuing of timber-getting licences in the Territory led to a small increase in the number of Caucasians on Melville Island as further sawmills were established. Cooper was therefore appointed Honorary Sub-Protector of Aborigines for the Tiwi Islands by Spencer. Elderly and infirm Tiwi who visited Paru could obtain government rations. Cooper was also responsible for the supervision of 'incorrigible' Aborigines sent to Paru from Darwin. A few were also sent to Nguiu mission. For the first time, the Tiwi, apart from those relative few who had travelled to Darwin with Cooper, encountered Aborigines with serious social problems arising from consumption of alcohol and opium.

The Administrator of the Northern Territory reported in 1913 that in contrast to most Indigenous groups on the Territory mainland, the population of the Tiwi Islands

32. SASR GRS10/17465/1907, July 1908.
34. Spencer 1928: 643; NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 – NT007080/1914, Spencer to Hunt, 19 Nov.
37. For example Beatty 1965: 30; Sunter 1937: 134–5.
38. Spencer 1928: 720; NAA Series A3/1 Item NT 16/245 – NT 007080/1914, Spencer to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 19 Nov 1914, attachment p 1. The date of appointment is not given.
included numerous children.\textsuperscript{39} However, the Islanders were now exposed to alcohol and disease. Since 1905 a small number of Tiwi men had either worked on Cooper's luggers or had gradually gained employment in Darwin. They were in demand as workers on the mainland. For some, the introduction to alcohol led to social problems, but it is not known whether any were imprisoned in those early years.\textsuperscript{40}

Contact with Europeans and mainland Aborigines exposed the Islanders to several forms of disease from as early as 1911. Cooper's attitude to his honorary responsibilities led to official praise, his attention to the sick and diseased in the islands was noted and Spencer acknowledged his kindness to, and his interest in, the Aborigines residing in the islands.\textsuperscript{41} Tiwi elders recalled his organising a Tiwi mortuary ritual when Josephine, a daughter of Cooper and his Iwaidja consort, Alice Rose Mara-oldain, died in 1914.

For Cooper, his life on Melville Island slowly fractured. The Iwaidja and Tiwi would work only for Cooper, as would other mainland Aborigines who occasionally sought work with Cooper in his timber-cutting and milling operations. The other timber-getters on the island were therefore forced to request Indigenous labour from Cooper. In 1914 timber-getters Sam Green and R. Webb laid a complaint to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, H.E. Carey, alleging mistreatment of several of the 'incorrigibles' by Cooper, shootings by the Iwaidja and the contracting of sexual disease by some Tiwi, allegedly from the mainlanders.\textsuperscript{42} Green, in particular, was unhappy about Cooper's management of the 'prisoners', as he called the 'incorrigibles', and of the lawlessness of the Iwaidja. Both Gilruth and Spencer gave support to Cooper.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, Cooper was faced with the possibility of official action and the fact that Robinson had sold the Melville Island leases to Melville Island Limited. He therefore resigned his Honorary Sub-Protectorship.\textsuperscript{44} He also took action to ensure that firearms used by the Iwaidja were secured when not being legitimately used.

An investigation into Green's allegations and health conditions on the island was held in mid-1915. This was undertaken by WG Stretton, SM, Dr MJ Holmes and Chief Inspector JT Beckett. Stretton concluded that shootings and conflict had take place, but that such 'lawlessness' was, in the main, of the Iwaidjas' doing, and had occurred in Cooper's absence. Cooper's stepson, Ted, was considered to have shot several people. The 'incorrigibles', Stretton found, were properly fed by Cooper. He considered that a large portion of the evidence put to him would not be admitted in a court of law.\textsuperscript{45} Only 20 unidentified Aborigines were found to be suffering from sexual and other diseases.

\textsuperscript{39} Report of the Administrator of the Northern Territory for the Year 1913, p 49.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p 36.
\textsuperscript{41} NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT003220/15, Holmes to Administrator, 27 May 1915, pp 3–4; NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT007080, Spencer to Hunt (Secretary, Department of External Affairs), 19 Nov 1914, attachment p 1.
\textsuperscript{42} NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT006824/1914, Green to Minister for External Affairs, 6 Nov 1914.
\textsuperscript{43} NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT007080/1914, Spencer to Hunt, 19 Nov 1914; NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT003220/1915, Gilruth to Minister for External Affairs, 4/6/1915.
\textsuperscript{44} NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 - NT003220/1915, Gilruth to Minister for External Affairs, 4 Jun 1915, pp 2–3; Report of the Administrator of the Northern Territory for the Year 1914–15, p 24.
A decision was taken to deport all mainland Aborigines employed by Cooper and other Europeans on Melville Island. Before this was accomplished Cooper narrowly missed being tomahawked by a Tiwi man over the stealing of the women by the Iwaidja.46 In another incident a Tiwi man was accidentally shot by an Iwaidja.47 Worse was to come for Cooper. Late in 1915, at the beginning of the Wet Season, Cooper lost a lugger, the second to sink with its cargo in the islands. By 21 December 1915, all of the Iwaidja, together with some of the Tiwi women and their children, had left the islands.48 Cooper and his family departed early in 1916. The association between Cooper, the Iwaidja and the Tiwi, particularly the Mandiimbula and Yeimpi bands, did not end with this departure. A number joined Cooper in trepanging off eastern Melville Island or in milling or buffalo shooting operations on the Cobourg Peninsula. Tiwi oral history tells of the relationship which continued with the Iwaidja, including those who were related to them.49 When Alice Rose passed away in Darwin on 27 August 1929, some Tiwi participated in a mourning ritual for her, as they did for Joe Cooper when he died in Darwin hospital on 7 August 1936, aged 76 years.

Cooper is seen in two lights by the elders who witnessed so much of the drama which formed the bases for the varying versions of reality. In the first he is seen as a man who established a source of employment which enabled some Tiwi to gain the goods they desired. For those who worked for him on the mainland there was the occasional opportunity to use firearms and horses. On Melville Island, on the other hand, their only employment was to help in skinning the fallen beasts and carrying the hides. In the other light Cooper is held to be a decent man but one whose good character was destroyed by perceived responsibility for the shootings by the Iwaidja and for Iwaidja misuse of Tiwi women.

Socially, politically and culturally the world of the Tiwi was widened by contact with outside peoples and by their exposure to the outside, European controlled world. A low level of technical and epistemological change occurred. On a disturbing note, new diseases and social problems were introduced, along with the knowledge of other Indigenous people whose traditional lifestyle, health and social wellbeing had suffered the effects of European movement into their lands. Moreover, they learnt that other Aborigines equipped with firearms could wreak a certain level of violence and havoc among them.

There is no doubt that Cooper had a social and economic impact on the Tiwi. As for the Iwaidja, their impact on islands' linguistic and material culture is evident but not of any great magnitude. Rather, their impression on the Tiwi was more of a cultural-political one, intruding into an established marriage arrangement system, resulting in an inter-tribal kinship movement that is recognised to this day.

48 NAA Series A3/1 Item NT16/245 – NT005954/1916, Gilruth to Secretary, External Affairs, 21 Dec 1915.
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Travellers in storied landscapes: a case study in exchanges and heritage

Isabel McBryde

We are all travellers. Despite Beaudelaire's claim that the true traveller is driven solely by the impulsion to move on ('pour partir'), most travel with intent to arrive. Some of us explore daunting landscapes in search of knowledge, or seeking spiritual awareness in the solitude of such vast spaces. Others may journey in the mind to find further intellectual or spiritual depths. In societies of many traditions travel of both kinds has a long history, as have religious pilgrimages to places of sacred associations and power (Dessaix 2000). The western European medieval Christian pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela (El Camino de Compostela) comes to mind, as does the Hadj, the holy journey to Mecca in Islamic tradition.

This paper explores the movement of people and goods across a landscape - how and why they travel. It considers what meanings and values are ascribed to places within that landscape or to the lines of travel followed. The context is the Aboriginal landscape of east central Australia, considering as a case study the cultural routes that converge on the famous ochre deposits of Pukardu Hill near Parachilna in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia. As well as discussing the traditional Aboriginal values for these routes and the ochre mines, it will consider how we Australians as a nation regard as heritage and protect these Aboriginal places, still of vital importance to the custodial culture. This resonates with questions of Reconciliation and cross-cultural respect at a time when they are major social and political issues in Australia. Such issues were important to anthropologist Isobel White, who throughout her life cared intensely for social justice and equity. The discussion I dedicate to Isobel (Sally) White, whose research on the life of Aboriginal women in arid Australia included work with the Adnyamathanha of the Flinders Ranges. These people had ceremonial and exchange links with groups in Arandic central Australia and the Cooper/Lake Eyre Basin as well as with Western Desert speakers of the Nullarbor Plain whose lives Sally White shared over many years. In earlier times similar links existed between people of the Ranges and the Wirangu and Mirning of the Nullarbor. The culture of these groups was recorded by Daisy Bates whose life and work were the subject of major research by Sally White (White 1985a, 1993).

Sally White herself was a traveller. Her life's journey involved constantly re-establishing herself and her family as she and Michael White moved from England to the United States and then to Australia to an appointment in Canberra. A return to the
States was followed by Michael’s taking up a chair in Melbourne. His research took them back and forth across the Nullarbor, giving Sally exceptional opportunities for long-term work with the women of the Yalata community (see White 1985b and Aboriginal History vol. 23).

In the early 1970s Sally White joined Luise Hercus to work on Adnyamathanha social organisation as part of a socio-linguistic study of language components as indicators of the categorisation of certain social relationships. The study developed from Schebeck’s challenging interpretation of Adnyamathanha personal pronouns (Schebeck et al. 1973).

Sally White’s field journal for the three-week period in January 1970 reflects the intellectual drive and energy of these dedicated researchers, as well as their field work ethos. Each day had its crowded programme of travel and work with the Aboriginal people consulted. Yet always this could be stretched to accommodate the needs and concerns of their Aboriginal colleagues. Long hours of driving and tight schedules are recorded with few hints that this was field work in the arid zone in January. University vacation was the only time that these two academic teachers could spare for the luxury of field research. In the few weeks they achieved much, all with cheerful enthusiasm and consideration for those who shared their linguistic knowledge and traditional stories with Luise Hercus and guided Sally White through the intricacies of their social relationships and terminology. The research was a pioneer cross-disciplinary study.

In the field they travelled the western slopes of the Flinders Ranges north to Marree (Fig. 1). The route took them through Adnyamathanha lands to Arabana country and the southern fringes of the Simpson Desert to that of Wangkangurru speakers Jimmy Russell Wangamiri and Mick McLean Irinjil, Luise Hercus’ long-term linguistic associates (Figs 2, 3). Their line of travel followed the early settler road and rail links, routes determined by the location of water sources. It also followed a more ancient line of travel: the traditional route of Wangkangurru expeditions from the desert southward to acquire red ochre from the great quarry at Pukardu Hill near Parachilna (Fig. 1). Along the eastern flanks of the Ranges lay the line of travel used by the expeditions of Diyari and Yandruwantha men to Pukardu Hill. They were also annual, ritual journeys following strictly prescribed routes.

So we can situate Luise Hercus and Sally White as travellers in search of new knowledge and understanding. Their research was based on the tenets of western knowledge systems, creating its own academic cultural landscape. Yet they also moved within the cultural landscapes of their Aboriginal associates. Further, they followed routes long established by Aboriginal groups who travelled not only to acquire valued ochre but also to fulfil ceremonial obligation and the education of young initiates (Jones 1984). On their journey the groups visited and celebrated in song places of numinous power, for they followed routes established and prescribed by ancestral beings. Among these were the beings responsible for the creation of the ochre deposits at Pukardu Hill.

Sally White and Luise Hercus completed their January 1970 fieldwork where it had begun, at Port Augusta. The Aboriginal women there celebrated this with an inma: among the songs sung by the two groups of women involved was part of the Urumbula cycle (White field journal for January 1970).
Context for a case study: story lines, exchange, cultural routes and cultural landscapes as cultural heritage

In 1993 Spain nominated the Pilgrim Route *El Camino de Compostela* for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List. In doing so it made a significant statement about relationships between human culture, human history and the landscape. That the nomination could be made, and successfully, marked significant changes in national and international perceptions of cultural heritage - from emphasis on the monumental, architectural or archaeological 'site' to recognition of the social values of related places within a landscape. Although this nomination itself included a string of monuments and sites, it opened the way for the inclusion of places that might present no archaeological documentation of those social values. Such recognition was especially significant for evaluation of places of non-western, non-urban cultures of the indigenous peoples of the New World, the Pacific and Australia.

The contrast between the urbanised western cultures and those of non-urban societies provides the framework for fascinating essays in a recent World Bank publication. Its editors note (Serageldin et al. 2001: 334):

> The World Heritage list contains 100 historic cities and about 200 entries referring to sacred places. The widespread representation of these categories demonstrates that they are at the very core of the concept of cultural heritage, serving as strong roots of people's identities, and are the basis of the definition of any culture.

Lévi-Strauss (2001: 375), author of the chapter on historic cities and sacred places, recognises that 'non-built sacred sites are an extremely important subject to which sufficient attention has not been paid'. In his view they show specific attributes in their size, their simple components, their spiritual function and sacred status. However, he stresses that beyond these differences are deep ties that bind them, specificities that make them different from other categories of properties and to which special attention must be paid when we have to preserve or restore them.

This comment has wider reference, as he would recognise. It is applicable to such places in the cultural heritage of non-urban cultures. It is clearly demonstrated in Patricia Parker's chapter on Native American cultural heritage places in the same volume.

Significant cultural heritage places of these non-urban cultures often comprise linked sets. Each component might be unspectacular in itself but might contribute to a total system which could be of paramount value. The Aboriginal cultural heritage of southwestern Tasmania provides an example. Its status as World Heritage of 'outstanding universal value' was strongly contested in the 1980s on exactly this issue.

From 1992 the range of cultural places recognised in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the World Heritage Convention 1972 included a new entity: cultural landscapes. It 'embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.' (UNESCO 1999, para 37) with three main categories (UNESCO 1999, para 39 i-iii). The first is the humanly designed or created landscape such as a garden or parkland. The second, the organically evolved landscape, results from human imperatives (e.g. social, economic) developing over time distinct forms in response to the natural environment. This includes both 'relict', in the sense of past, no longer in use, but still visible landscapes, and 'continuing landscapes' which fulfil active social roles in contemporary traditionally-oriented societies. The third cate-
gory is the ‘associative cultural landscape’ described as holding high values ‘by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence’. This may ‘be insignificant or even absent’. The first cultural landscapes to be inscribed as such on the World Heritage List in 1994 were Tongariro in New Zealand and Uluru Kata Tjuta in Australia. Both were nominated as associative cultural landscapes for their spiritual associations and traditional roles in local societies, respectively Maori and Anangu.

Recently considerable attention has been directed to the question of ‘heritage values’ in both national and international arenas. The creation of new categories reflects this concern, as does continuing debate on questions of the diversity of human cultural heritage. Was this adequately represented in the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines categories? Many argue that these reflect primarily the values which have dominated the evolution of heritage conservation in western societies. In their view the ‘monumentalist’ approach evident in practice, and in the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines until recently, necessarily ensured a neglect of the heritage of Oceania, Africa and much of Asia and the Americas. Secretary-General of International ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), Jean Louis Luxen, has since acknowledged this (Luxen 2000: 2). So ‘authenticity’ and questions of ‘representativeness’ and the recognition of cultural diversity have been central to ongoing debates in ICOMOS and UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee (Domicelj and Marshall 1994; Larsen 1995; Buggey 1996; Titchen 1996; McBryde 1997a) focused on developing a global strategy to accommodate the concerns identified (see von Droste et al. 1995). Seminal in this has been the new emphasis on what are termed intangible values. We might simply call them social values. Jane Lennon (1997) has stressed that within the tangible layers of the material physical record of human use of a landscape (the landscape as cultural artefact):

are human meanings related to the fact that landscapes are a record of history where memory, symbolism and signs of the past, as well as tangible physical remains, are held. Herein lies the basis for contemporary cultural significance found in landscapes because meanings are at the heart of community attachment to places and to the development of cultural heritage places.

For those concerned with Australia’s Indigenous cultural heritage such changes, both conceptual and procedural, are particularly welcome. They allow consideration of a range of places significant to Indigenous groups previously ill-accommodated by the categories and criteria of the World Heritage Committee’s Operational Guidelines. Until recently many of the registers of national and state heritage agencies in Australia also lacked categories relevant for cultural landscapes or for places whose primary values are social or symbolic.

So far Australian attention has focused on ‘associative’ or ‘continuing’ cultural landscapes, embedded in enduring Indigenous traditional practices and beliefs. Aboriginal Australia can provide many outstanding examples of these, well justifying the recognition of heritage listing at national and international levels. However, categories recognised by International ICOMOS, and so acceptable to UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, now include other relevant entities. These are Associative Sites, Commemorative Sites, and Cultural Routes or Itineraries. For the last, though the line of travel may be marked by specific places with identifying material traces, it is the route itself
which is regarded as the ‘cultural property’ (Luxen 2000). This is of course, an intangible, memorialised in the mind and seen with the mind’s eye. Examples include pilgrim routes such as that to Santiago de Compostela (El Camino de Compostela), and the Hadj routes to Mecca, as well as trade routes like the Silk Road, the slave routes, or Australia’s extensive networks of Aboriginal exchange systems and the Pacific Island routes of Moana Vaku. Further examples would be routes of exploration or migration.

Landscapes may have many layers of successive historical development and emotive associations allowing us to read, in our visual analysis, their past histories (Hoskins 1960: 13–19). They may also contain distinct contemporary cultural landscapes of use or interaction, as Baker found in his study of the Yanyuwa’s move from bush to town life in the Borroloola region (Baker 1999: 20–3). Meinig (1979: 34) reminds us ‘Thus we confront the central problem: any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads’. Meinig’s stimulating discussion presents ten ways of interpreting a landscape. Curiously these do not include ‘landscape as story’, a vital concern of this paper.

So any one landscape viewed from varying perspectives assumes new values and meanings. To quote Susan Buggey; ‘Landscapes have always been seen in many different ways by different viewers’ (Buggey 1999: 1). These differences resonate with powerful memories of my own fieldwork near Lake Eyre in 1982. Linguist Luise Hercus, senior Aboriginal men Ben Murray (Fig. 2) and Arthur Warren were recording important places, significant for religious or mythological associations in local tradition or with more recent historical events. My concern was with the archaeology associated with these places. As we travelled that immense desert landscape I was constantly impressed by how different were the landscapes Ben Murray and Arthur Warren were viewing from those I was observing. Theirs were numinous landscapes of the mind, peopled by beings from an ever-present Dreaming whose actions were marked by the features of the created landscape. It was certainly, as Salman Rushdie had perceptiveiy recognised (when travelling in central Australia with Bruce Chatwin), a landscape ‘mapped by stories’ (Rushdie 1992: 232). My landscape, apart from a personal response to the beauty of those arid lands (landscape as aesthetic?) was a more scientific, mental construct. It was phenomenal, based on the physical evidence, a story of landscape formation reflected in geomorphology, and of past human activities reflected in accumulations of discarded artefacts. Different sets of values and meanings thus emerged, intangible and tangible, for components of the landscape we crossed together, derived from intangible and tangible evidence. Yet each had validity. They established complementary sets, both vital to understanding a multi-layered past and its present significance.

To consider Aboriginal cultural landscapes therefore involves awareness of a range of significant meanings that may be daunting to those of other cultural traditions. It is no hard task to regard the features of the landscape as representational, symbolic of the presence of ancestral beings from the Dreaming. To move beyond this to accept these features as embodying the actual living presence of spiritual power and involving embodied, direct interaction with this makes demands of a different dimension. Yet the move is essential to understanding. Even if the encounter cannot be shared fully by those of other traditions, its cultural importance can be recognised and respected.
Deborah Bird Rose, in a recent article (Rose 2000: 289-90) considering performance and ceremony in the context of place and country, writes ‘place can be understood as a site of multiple presences and encounters ... [it] is also intensely political’.

Aboriginal nomadology, unlike transience, is set within the political and sacred geography of country. The place is not pause ... as much as it is return. Living things are coming and going, and, most importantly, returning.

A country includes a plurality of places, and people have rights to travel in, learn about, and undertake ceremonial and daily responsibilities for more than one country ...

Dreaming tracks and marks endure as memories and sites of power; human traces last for a while until they are washed away. The traces that remain when the person that made them is gone are both memory and promise ...

Every departure promises a return, and every return is a moral action, a promise fulfilled.

The case study: a cultural route in the storied cultural landscape of exchange, Pukardu Hill red ochre expeditions

Long distance exchange and social, ceremonial linkages are a feature of Aboriginal Australia. The continent is overlain by a matrix of such networks, often continent-wide, binding individuals and societies.

The routes along which people and goods move were, and are, traditionally ordained in the lines of travel of the ancestral beings when, in the Dreaming, they created the land and its features, at the same time establishing the law governing human actions within them. These lines of travel, or cultural routes, are often called Dreaming Tracks or, if associated with particular mythology or song cycle, Story Lines, Song Lines. The ancestral presence and power is maintained by ceremony and by singing the stories of the Dreamtime events at the relevant locations, regarded as places of power. This also maintains and disseminates cultural knowledge of the routes, their distant components and the geography of the landscape (see Strehlow 1965, 1970; Myers 1986; the current research of Hercus and Potezny in the Lake Eyre Basin). As Myers stresses, the land, like its people, is made of stories, not atoms.

The Urumbula song cycle and its route exemplify this. One 900 kilometre-long part of the route and its associated places are the subject of an Eastern and Lower Southern Aranda song cycle (the Urumbula or Native Cat story — see Strehlow 1965, 1970). This song cycle crosses the country of several distinct social and linguistic groups, linking Amewara (modern Port Augusta) with distant centres on the northwestern fringes of the Simpson Desert. Each group would care for their sections of the route and its significant places, where they sang the appropriate parts of the song. These would be in the Aranda language, not that of the local area, even when celebrating a feature located at Port Augusta, where the Parnkalla (Punkala) language was spoken (according to Strehlow 1970: 94-5; it is now regarded as situated on the boundary between that language and the area of Nukunu language — Hercus pers. comm. 2001). Strehlow (1965; 1970) cites several similarly extended song cycles rooted in places and the routes linking them, as does Myers (1986: 61-4). Myers stresses that these routes, with their stories, illustrate how the Dreaming and landscape ('country') relate, and how 'country' is a continuous entity. The stories are 'punctuated by place', and spatial
relationships. The narrative also 'emphasises the motivations and appropriate relations between people “from one country” (sharing), the geographical expanse of such relations, and the violent consequences of failing to respect the rights of others' (Myers 1986: 61 and Myers 1993). The practical wisdom of such law in harsh, uncertain desert environments need not be laboured. However this is but one social aspect (a ‘mutual claim to hospitality and protection’) of what is primarily a matter of group and individual ritual cooperation and affiliation (Elkin 1934: 174).

In the 1930s, Elkin undertook field work among the groups of the Lake Eyre region and the Musgrave Ranges. It impressed upon him the importance of the entity of the ‘track’ or ‘path’ with its stories as distinct from ‘country’ or ‘place’. It determined a person’s ‘dreaming’, so was fundamental to personal and group identity. Relationship to the extended story lines could forge important links: ‘myth and ritual constitute a cooperative possession and activity, which binds together local groups even of different tribes’ (Elkin: 1934: 171).

The extent of these storylines and associated exchange networks is measured in thousands of kilometres. They are among the world’s most extensive systems of human communication recorded in hunter-gatherer societies. Their significance, however, lies not only in their extent and our anthropological or archaeological construction of this, but in the social importance accorded them by Aboriginal people.

Goods moved along these routes through personal/individual transactions at nodes in the exchange networks, those special meeting or ceremonial centres where groups came together for social, political or ritual events. Some items, however, were acquired through special expeditions to their source, such as the cakes of red ochre from the famous deposits at Pukardu Hill near Parachilna (Howitt 1904: 711-12). Pukardu Hill lies at the southern extremity of a complex exchange network running through the Lake Eyre/Cooper Basin in eastern central Australia (Fig. 1). It spans the continent, linking the Gulf of Carpentaria in the far north with the southern oceans (see McBryde 1997b).

This case study raises interesting comparisons with El Camino de Compostela. For the Diyari of the Cooper to collect ochre from Pukardu Hill was also to make a ritual, ceremonial journey. Those participating were specially chosen senior men and young men still undergoing their training in the law and ceremonial life. The route taken was prescribed by convention as were the camping places along it, where ceremonies would be held.

The routes followed by various groups undertaking expeditions to the ochre quarries (Diyari, Yandruwantha, Wangkangarru and Wangkumara) followed closely the actual path taken by the ancestral being concerned. This was seen as a ‘ritual necessity, for ritual is a re-enactment of the past, a past which is recorded in mythology’ (Elkin 1934: 173). Elkin stresses that the line of the track is as important an entity from this perspective as the special site or sanctuary. The approach along the correct path is thus both ritually and historically determined:

Travellers following the path of their totemic hero or heroes are free and safe, at least as far as other members and local groups of their own cult totem are concerned. A notable instance of this is the expedition for red ochre from north-eastern South Australia down to the deposits near Parachilna. The group used to
Figure 1 Lake Eyre Basin showing the exchange linkages through which red ochre from Pukardu Hill travelled and the routes followed by the red ochre expeditions.
follow the route of the mythological actors, who were ultimately responsible for the formation of the deposits (Elkin 1934: 174).

The journey took place each year in late winter, members of the party (the 'Bookartoo men') being chosen in July or August. This ensured that the expedition was made when conditions for travel along the difficult desert route of over 500 kilometres would be optimal. The journey south took several months following the Strzelecki Creek and then the eastern slopes of the Ranges before turning west near Blinman to reach Pukardu Hill (Fig. 1). The Diyari's neighbours to the east, the Yandruwantha people, made similar expeditions along this route. The Wangkumara of northwestern New South Wales travelled to Pukardu Hill for ochre as well, following Yandama and Calabonna Creeks to the eastern slopes of the Ranges. Knowledge of Wangkumara expeditions comes to us from senior man George Dutton, also Cecil Ebsworth (Jeremy Beckett pers. comm. – Beckett worked with George Dutton over many years – see Beckett 1958: 19 and Beckett 1976; for Cecil Ebsworth's life pers. comm. Luise Hercus; Cecil Ebsworth pers. comm. to writer February 1991).

Groups living northwest of the Ranges also made special journeys following designated routes along the western slopes of the Ranges. These were the Wangkangurru of the Simpson Desert and the Arabana who held country south of the Desert and Lake Eyre. Direct records of these journeys come from Mick McLean Irinjili, senior Wangkangurru man from the Simpson Desert (Fig. 3). His father was a member of one of the last expeditions from this area to Pukardu Hill in the 1880s. Mick McLean Irinjili and Jimmy Russell Wanga-mirri (Many Mornings) and his brother Leslie Russell Wanga-pula (Two Mornings) (Fig. 3) shared their experiences and knowledge with linguist Luise Hercus in the 1960s and 1970s. They stressed the importance of the red ochre expeditions and the special qualities of the ochre from that quarry (Hercus pers. comm.).

Jimmy Russell Wanga-mirri belonged to a Wangkangurru group of the Kallakoojah Creek on the eastern side of the Simpson Desert. When he was a youth in the early 1900s the ochre expeditions were under severe pressure as they were considered disruptive to pastoral activities (see Jones 1984). Also, by then most Wangkangurru had already left the Desert (Hercus 1985). In about 1920 Jimmy Russell Wanga-mirri joined a group of Diyari and Yandruwantha men who travelled from the Desert via Marree to Pukardu Hill. On this journey, he learnt the song of those returning from Pukardu Hill; in 1976 he sang it for Luise Hercus:

They sing the Pukardu song ... for setting out and returning. They sing the song of Pukardu Hill, they sing it for a long time.

The words match those of the song of the Bookartoo men recorded by Gason (a mounted police officer stationed in the Lake Eyre region in the 1870s) who wrote of Diyari expeditions to the Flinders for ochre (Gason 1879: 282, 1886: 44ff). This record testifies to the power of oral tradition as well as to the prestige of the ochre expeditions and participants.

For all these groups ochre was locally available in their own territories (cf. Horne and Aiston 1924: 34). However, that from Pukardu Hill was especially valued. It was reserved for decorating bodies and equipment for the great inter-group ceremonies, while some was kept as a prized good for important exchange transactions at such meetings. Having been brought hundreds of kilometres from the Flinders Ranges to
Cooper Creek or the Simpson Desert it might then travel equal distances to exchange centres such as Goyder Lagoon or Boulia, and from these be taken even further. The term *yamparnu* was used for the prized Pukardu ochre. Pigment from the small local sources which lacked its symbolic values was called *arkapa* by the Arabana and Wang-kangurru, and *karku* by the Diyari and speakers of languages to the south of Lake Eyre. It was said that none of these other ochres had the same sheen as *yamparnu*.

The expedition itself followed careful preparations. Messengers carrying specially incised batons were sent ahead to advise the owners of the quarry that ochre was required. Mick McLean *Irinjili* and Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri* described their experiences for Luise Hercus, drawing also on their memories of talks with older senior men. Members of the expedition carried goods to exchange for the red ochre. Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri* spoke to Luise Hercus in 1976 of the goods brought south for the quarry owners (Luise Hercus pers. comm.):

They came on foot, from far away, from beyond, they came from the sandhill country ... carrying big fighting boomerangs ... In exchange they give black (manganese), boomerangs, sticks suitable for rubbing to make fire, they give down-feathers - and sometimes even grass-seed flour in a bag, a bag meshed in the same way as when they make a net. And they take nets too.

The journey had its own rituals. The Bookartoo men always followed the same route, and carried special seed cakes called *malhiri* for ceremonial meetings with other Aborigines on the way. Their bodies appropriately painted, they performed the songs and dances specific to particular places as they travelled (Fig. 4).

At Pukardu Hill they fashioned round cakes from the soft quarried ochre and 'baked'm like a damper' (Mick McLean *Irinjili*) (Fig. 2). These carefully prepared cakes were then carried on the long journey north, each man taking a load of up to thirty kilograms. Their return to the prearranged camp site in their own country was the occasion for formal reception and ceremonies. Those who had remained behind prepared elaborately; huts were built, the men made head-dresses for the ceremony and the women special seed cakes to feed the participants. The ceremonies were often associated with that called the *mindari*. This was an important element in the ritual life of Lake Eyre groups, and associated with emu mythology (Elkin 1934 : 187-9). The roles of ancestral emu beings in some of the creation stories for Pukardu ochre deposits will be discussed later.

Reverence for the Pukardu Hill ochre has been recorded among all Aboriginal groups of the Lake Eyre/ Cooper area; the rare qualities of its colour may to a great extent account for this. It is a brilliant, shimmering, deep violet-hued red. In many parts of northern and central Australia such shimmering brilliance is considered symbolic of life and wellbeing. It is associated with, and can even represent or bestow, ancestral power; hence its importance in art and ceremonial. Morphy (1989) has analysed this and the concept of *biryun* (shimmering brilliance) recorded by Thomson as significant for Arnhem Land people.

Pukardu Hill itself is a place of great traditional importance for local people and to those of the Cooper, Lake Eyre and the Simpson Desert as well as northwestern New South Wales who made the journey to Pukardu Hill to acquire ochre. These expeditions were part of ceremonial life for these groups associated with song and ritual performances en route and following the return. They are still remembered as significant,
Figure 2 (top) Ben Murray and Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri* at Ditjiminya in 1976. Photograph from the collection of Luise Hercus, reproduced with her kind permission.

Figure 2 (bottom) A cake of Pukardu Hill ochre from Coopers Creek in the collections of the South Australian Museum. Photograph by Philip Jones, reproduced by courtesy of the South Australian Museum.
Figure 3 (top) Leslie Russell *Wanga-pula* and Mick McLean *Irinjili* at a meeting with Luise Hercus and Sally White at Marree, January 1970. Photography by Sally White, from the Isobel White collection, AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive, reproduced courtesy AIATSIS.

Figure 3 (bottom) Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri* photographed by Sally White at the Marree meeting. Reproduced courtesy the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive (Isobel White collection).
though it is eighty years since such journeys were made. Of the ochre itself symbolic values were paramount, derived from the quarry place itself and from the spiritual importance of the journey. Any rarity value of the ochre is associated with these two aspects. Certainly the colour is distinctive, clearly an important quality. These physical and symbolic values ensured that Pukardu ochre was reserved for special use. Ochres are readily obtainable in the local environments of those who travelled to Pukardu Hill (Horne and Aiston 1924: 81 — referring to Wangkangurru country) as well as from Arroona near Pukardu Hill (Masey 1882). However they were not seen to hold symbolic values, and were used in more mundane contexts. This [ochre from the Blinman group’s quarry] is considered the "proper" ochre ... although plenty, hundreds of miles nearer, could easily be obtained (Horne and Aiston 1924: 34).

Confirmation of the special qualities of Pukardu Hill ochre, and the importance of the journey itself emerges in the unhappy history of conflict between pastoralists and Aborigines from the 1860s (Jones 1984). In 1874 the government decided to resolve the problem and end the expeditions, by providing ochre to Aboriginal groups in the north. Unable to recruit local carters to collect and transport Parachilna ochre north they sent four tons of ochre from a Kaurna quarry near Adelaide to the German mission on Cooper Creek to be distributed to the Diyari. The missionaries did not report on the reception of this largesse. However Masey writing to the Port Augusta Dispatch in 1882 commented 'The natives would not use it. It did not give them that much-coveted shiny appearance that filled them with delight and admiration'.

Important stories recount the creation of the ochre deposits at Pukardu Hill. One of our earliest records comes from the nineteenth century traditional custodians (the Blinman subdivision of the Kuyani) of the ochre quarry. It was presented in the context of a conflict of land-use values that speaks poignantly across the years. In December 1904 Dr Shanahan of Hawker wrote to Dr Stirling, Director of the South Australian Museum, requesting his support in obtaining urgent government intervention to set aside the area of the ochre deposits as an Aboriginal reserve (Jones 1984: 3–6). Its continued use by its Aboriginal custodians was under threat from European mineral exploitation. Adelaide prospecting interests had taken out a lease, under the outrageously unfortunate name ‘Sacred Land’.

In August 1904 local land holder Matheson of Nilpena Station had written to Hamilton, the Protector of Aborigines, presenting the fears of custodian King Harry and his hopes for reservation of the area. Matheson advised Hamilton of King Harry’s own political initiatives, his plans for a ‘muster of blacks’ in Brachina Gorge. Matheson offered to escort Hamilton there to meet the Aboriginal chief custodian (Jones 1984: 19, note 34). Shanahan also contacted Hamilton, advising him not only of King Harry’s concern (which he regarded as totally justified) but also warning of the projected meeting as a prelude to violent reprisals if the Aborigines’ just claims were ignored (Jones 1984: 14).

At the end of the year Matheson and Shanahan, accompanied by a government geologist, visited the quarry guided by King Harry. Shanahan then wrote urgently to Stirling soliciting his support (Jones 1984: 3–6 gives the full text of this letter; see also Brock 1985, 1993). Stirling took the case to the Premier arguing the special Aboriginal value of the ochre: ‘To deprive the natives of this would ... be a real act of unkindness’.
In January 1905 the area was gazetted an Aboriginal reserve (Jones 1984: 19, note 35 – Government Gazette SAO 26 January 1905).

In his letter to Stirling, Shanahan provided documentation of the quarry’s significance. He records the local legend of the creation of the ochre deposits (text from Jones 1984: 4, SAM Archives No 162 26/12/1904; Brock 1985: 33) (see also Figs 1 and 4).

Two dogs (= Kintacawoola) named respectively Kilowilinna and Perilingunina chased an emu (= Kuringii) starting from near Innamincka, down the Cooper passing through Tinga-Tingina, Caraweena, Monte Collina, Mr. (sic) Freeling (here the emu had a drink and left in the solid rock the imprint of its foot) the emu then skirted the western slope of the Flinders Ranges to Mr. (sic) Alick (this mountain the blacks maintain is the emu petrified), here it turned and ran through the Lake Torrens Plain, dodged once more and made for the Flinders travelling due East, the first hill it met was a man who had a pack of dogs one named (Thorijurra), a savage brute. The bird raced up the staircase. (I will define the staircase later on) but the dogs caught it on top of the hill. The man assisted in the bird’s despatch with a yam stick and was instantly turned into a hill ... The blood from the emu (Emu’s blood = Kuringie Warragurta) now forms the ochre (Murragurta) deposit at the sacred cave (Yerkinna).

Opposite the Yerkinna cave, due west on the next steep hill and situated about a quarter of a mile from it is another cave into which the dogs went for a rest and there died, the dogs which perished there after death rolled down the hill and are now symbolised by huge dolomite limestone boulders rounded off by the influence of rain.

The original dogs of the chase — Kilowilinna and Perilingunina — are represented by two high mountains, one St. Mary’s Peak the other unnamed in the Flinders Ranges.

In the same letter Shanahan outlines some of the ritual activities undertaken by parties arriving at the site, having previously advised the custodians of their intentions through special messengers. Neglecting this courtesy was a serious office (Jones 1984: 8 citing Reuther’s reference to the rules of exchanges). Ritual activities took place in specified locations while certain areas around the quarried deposits were restricted to all but senior custodians. Women were not allowed to approach the area at all; they could however act as messengers for an impending expedition.

The area of the quarry was regarded as ‘not only sacred, but their richest resource’. Considering this, as well as the widespread distribution of its products to distant groups, and that it ‘is used in nearly all of their ceremonies and is essential in the performance of the majority of their rites’ Shanahan concluded ‘we can easily understand the attitude of the aboriginals and the justice of their demands’ (Jones 1984: 3).

Appropriation of this resource by mining interests would thus have catastrophic impact on vital cultural activities among many Aboriginal groups of the region. King Harry told Shanahan also that loss of access to the deposit would result in his death, and endanger his successors, no longer able to fulfil their responsibilities to this sacred place.

For the decades following the end of the ochre expeditions, anthropologists working in the Flinders Ranges and adjacent regions record continuing knowledge of the quarries, their famed ochre and the stories of its origins. Jones refers to the work of
Mountford, Fry and Tindale. Tindale was told of the trade in Pukardu ochre by Ngadjuri people living south of the Ranges — a link mentioned by Mick McLean Irinjili talking with Luise Hercus in 1968. In 1937 Mountford recorded Diyari ceremonial songs known to local Adnyamathanha at Nepabunna, attesting both to the ritual links created by the red ochre expeditions, and that their songs could still be sung despite severe social dislocation and cultural loss: ‘the song still remains which names the land over which it sings’ (Heidegger 1971: 97).

In their own countries the Lake Eyre groups also maintained stories of the ochre deposits in distant southern lands, known from the days of the expeditions. Jones notes Reuther’s reference to Dieri/Diyari stories of the ochre’s formation in the emergence from the earth of a mura (Timpiwalakana) (Jones 1984: 7). Other stories involve different ancestral beings who have links with, or who travelled through, the lands of groups sending expeditions to Pukardu Hill. Some of these stories were recorded in the 1920s by George Aiston who lived in Diyari country for many years. He was a serious student of Aboriginal culture, with direct knowledge of the red ochre expeditions, presenting in publication local accounts of the ochre’s creation from the blood of the dog Marindi (Horne and Aiston 1924: 128-30).

In the old days, before men were, there lived in this valley a jecko lizard. Adnartiina was his name. Every day this lizard would climb a big rock and would sing aloud so that all could hear. ‘Come out and fight, come out and fight.’ Now the big dog Marindi came past that way, and hearing the challenge, he bounded up the dry creek bed yelling all the way: ‘I am come, I am come’. Adnartiina had a look at the dog. He saw beneath his sharp pricked ears the enormous fangs. He saw the huge bulk over which the white tip of his tail waved, and the more he looked the less he liked the prospect of the combat. ‘I will fight you later’, he said. ‘Later you will make a feast for my pups’, returned the dog, as he curled himself up at the foot of the rock. Now, like all jecko lizards, Adnartiina sees best when it is dark. So as the sun went down he tied a hair string round the root of his tail to make him fight better, for then his courage could not run into his tail. It was now dark, for when the sun goes down the darkness springs out. He crept to the ground and once more rang forth his challenge. ‘Come out and fight’. Marindi the dog leapt up and tried to catch Adnartiina by the back of the neck and shake the life out of him. But the lizard ran in low beneath the terrible fighting teeth. He seized the dog by the throat and hung on. In vain Marindi shook him and scratched at him with his claws. The sharp teeth sank in and in, until at last the red blood spurted out. And so from that time on all jeckos — now a puny race compared with their ancestor — have a constriction around the root of their tails.

The blood of Marindi the dog dyed the rocks on the banks of the creek, and from this the red ochre is obtained to this day.

The little creek became the Mecca, not only of the Kooyiannie, but also of the Dieri, the Wongkonguru, the Ngameni and the Yaurorka tribes. There only could the real dog’s-blood ochre be obtained, and none other should be used ...

Crooked-foot Peter, the headman of Cowarie … tells the following story:

Figure 4. Coorawannie Waterhole on Strzelecki Creek, a traditional place for red ochre expeditions to camp and hold ceremonies. Photographs by Isabel McBryde, September 1986.
words. And ever since, he tells us, the good ochre came from this district. From Queensland, the Cloncurry tribes sent their bean-wood shields in exchange. From New South Wales were traded the light shafts for spears. From Alice Springs worked kirras were sent. Then, loaded each with 50 pounds of red ochre, they must begin their toilsome way homewards. Over 300 miles they travel, keeping clear of hostile people, through whose territory they must pass.’

In the 1930s anthropologist AP Elkin during his field work with the Lake Eyre groups encountered a number of emu myths related to the Parachilna ochre (Elkin 1934: 187–9).

I learnt bits of it (the emu myth) here and there. Thus, some Yauarawaka men near Birdsville said that the emus started from the Mulligan in south-west Queensland and travelled south, dancing. Near Apamana they were joined by two other emus, itikaru and tjapara, who accompanied them to Cuttapiroie, where they were killed.

Some Yantruwanta informants said that two emus, a male and female (in some version there were four of the birds), called Turkurendja, were feeding around Cutrabelbo water-hole and Kunapuru, about twenty-five miles (40 kilometres) down the Cooper from Innamincka Station. A man and woman were travelling along not far off, the woman looking for grass seed to grind, and the man hunting and making for his next camp at Kudriemitchie water-hole. His dogs started the emus and chased them south-west and around the western side of the Flinders Range to Parachilna, where the emus went into the hill and were changed into a deposit of red ochre. A steep hill standing by itself near Parachilna is the female dog.

I obtained another version from an old Dieri man whose patrilineal cult-totem is pandjini, an emu mura-mura who ‘made’ red ochre; this old man spoke of himself and his father and others of his country at Lake Peragundi as all ‘red ochre mob’. His myth was that five dogs chased an emu from two mindari water-holes near Innamincka past Murnpeowie, across to Stuart’s Creek and down to Port Augusta, where it went into the ground for a time, but after a while it came up again and travelled north to Parachilna, where it went into the ground altogether, and gave rise to the deposit of red ochre in that vicinity.

The Arabana version is slightly different, for though emus are chased by dogs, yet the ochre is said to be associated with one of the latter, rather than with the former. But I may only have received a fragmentary account. It runs as follows:

Two wild dogs chased some emus from Kalburugwa, a small salt lake near William Creek in Arabana country, to a cave at Beltana, where one of the dogs, a female, gave birth to pups. The blood associated with this event caused the local deposit of red ochre. The two dogs then sang. The male dog had a white mark down its forehead and around its neck. The dogs, changed to stone, can now be seen at this cave. It is said to be very dangerous to touch the female dog: in fact to do so would cause the world to come down. No women, not even if this be their cult-totem, can enter the cave, though one informant said that women with this cult-totem know the songs; such a woman plays a string game during the singing.

For Elkin this range of evidence from Lake Eyre groups strongly reinforced the association of red ochre, especially the Parachilna deposits, with the emu ceremony and emu mythology. In one ceremony he recorded the red ochre men entered the ceremonial ground with the emu’s heart wrapped in string. They represented the returning expedition members with the prized ochre, their arrival celebrated with a mindari ceremony.
The stories of the emu and the creation of Pukardu Hill ochre deposits were passed across the generations. In 1968 Mick McLean Irinjili, Jimmy Russell Wanga-mirri and Murtee Johnnie discussed them with Luise Hercus. All men remembered ‘Crooked-foot Peter’ (Aboriginal name Thalka-nguyu), whose version of the story is in Aiston’s account we have just considered. Mick McLean Irinjili made the following comments (Luise Hercus transcript of recording 1968).

The ancestral emu walk about there and go down south then, the dogs been chase ‘m then. He goes right down to Parachilna, further than that, to Point Pearce. Turn ‘m back then and comes back this way and chase ‘m all the way to Parachilna then, that Pukardu piti [quarry], kill ‘m there. Those same two dogs from Cowarie are in all the history, all the Mindari history. They go down as far as the Nukunu crowd and the Point Pearce mob. People from the Peterborough side (Ngadjuri) come in it too.

The red ochre expeditions’ line of travel as an Aboriginal cultural route of outstanding heritage significance

The long-distance lines of travel for the red ochre expeditions from the countries of Lake Eyre groups and that of the Wangkumara from the northeast are clearly of outstanding significance as cultural routes. They focus on the quarried deposits of ochre at Pukardu Hill. This place holds paramount social values as cultural heritage in its custodians’ country. Beyond, it holds comparable mythological and spiritual significance, being revered by groups throughout the region whose members once took part in the red ochre expeditions. From other perspectives significant values may be cited. To anthropologists and archaeologists it is famous as the region’s most important source of red ochre, of pigments transported and exchanged across vast distances in a cultural landscape of exchange that has outstanding significance in global contexts (Mulvaney 1976; McConnell 1976; McBryde 1997c). This significance relates not only to the extent but also to the complexity of its social contexts.

The cultural routes of the ochre expeditions link this focal resource with series of storied places associated with the ritual life of the societies involved as well as their acquisition of a valued good. The locations constitute places of power joining the present to the plane of being of the Dreaming. The ceremonies held at each constitute ‘the pulse of continuous creation’ (Rose 2000: 294), their numinous force being still accessible. They hold vital past and continuing spiritual values (Morphy 1996). The lines of travel themselves are a distinct entity, clearly defined by tradition, still known and respected as such by relevant Aboriginal groups. Indigenous perceptions would thus, as we have seen, substantiate the recommendation to International ICOMOS by its Vice-President that the line of travel itself be the entity to designate as the cultural property rather than specific places along the routes. These then may be regarded as holding associative value derived from the intangible entity, the mental construct of the cultural route with all its powerful meanings.

Through the period of European settlement of these lands new meanings and values may have been attached to those places, even to the line of travel. These meanings derive from their associations with human activities in the historical, remembered past. They may range from the ceremonial to the social, associative in relation to belief systems or commemorative, marking events important collectively to the group or to its
individual members. Research by archaeologists and anthropologists is adding new layers of meaning from other perspectives, from the knowledge systems of western science opening alternate windows onto the distant past of this continuing cultural landscape (Peterson and Lampert 1985; David et al. 1993; Smith et al. 1998).

Susan Buggey reminds us that such traditional cultural landscapes, in Canada or Australia, (Buggey 1998:16)

are not relics, but living landscapes which encompass the cosmological, mythological, and spiritual worlds interwoven with their peoples’ day to day activities of living from the land. The seasonal round of life on the land, practised over millennia, relies on the intimate connection of human and animal movements. Bequeathed through oral tradition from generation to generation, Aboriginal traditional knowledge embodies the relationship of the people to the land through narratives, place names, sacred sites, rituals and behaviour patterns.

The cultural landscape of exchange, and its expression in such cultural routes as the red ochre expeditions’ line of travel, are outstanding elements in Australia’s Aboriginal cultural environment. They demand recognition at national and international levels. But this must involve cross-cultural consultation, appropriate documentation and management that is sensitive to complex demands. Above all it must be fully responsive to the concerns of the custodial societies, recognising and respecting these as fundamental to cultural identity. As such they become issues of wider social concern. Jonas argues thus in the context of social justice, discussing considerations of the past, of history, and protection of cultural heritage places (Jonas 2001). It therefore also becomes an issue in national Reconciliation, creating another layer of meaning beyond concerns over the representativeness of the international listing of World Heritage properties.

Elsewhere I have discussed these aspects in the context of heritage management, especially the criteria that might assist evaluation of such cultural entities (see McBryde 1997c: 12). Here it is sufficient to stress the multi-layered nature of the task and the respect and sensitivity it demands of all involved in the exercise.

In considering recognition of cultural heritage places so far explicit stress has been given to the international level of UNESCO’s 1972 Convention. However further considerations arise. At present Australia is engaged in important debates on national, state and local levels of significance for heritage places. This is in the context of major changes to heritage legislation and management responsibilities within the three tiers of Australia’s federal government.

In this context the red ochre expeditions’ cultural routes demonstrate the permeability of such levels or categories. They cannot accommodate the multi-layered complex values these components of indigenous cultural heritage hold in national and regional contexts. The cultural routes can only be seen as holding national (or international) significance by accepting that this derives ultimately from their special social values within the cultural traditions of one particular group in one particular regional setting within the national demographic and geographic entity. Further, that group is now an Indigenous minority within a multi-cultural Australia. So plausible arguments might be made for ‘local’ significance and local heritage recognition in a schema designed to accommodate a limited range of ‘national icons’.
Yet the international recognition of the importance (in terms of global themes in human history and achievement) of those particular regional cultural traditions and history expressed in the ochre expeditions' cultural routes ensures that its national values cannot be denied. Further, it is easy to argue its strength when considered as comparable to the World Heritage listed cultural routes such as El Camino de Compostela. If Australian national lists are to be 'representative' in the same sense that I have argued for the World Heritage Conventions' listings, then the issues raised by places holding such multi-layered particular values must be resolved. Otherwise we risk not only diminishing the range of our national heritage but also denying due recognition and respect for the culture of our Indigenous societies. So the issue becomes vital for national Reconciliation as well as for questions of allocating the responsibilities of heritage protection and management between the three different jurisdictions of Australia's governance (local, state and Commonwealth).

If this process is to have integrity, then it must proceed with sensitivity to, and direct involvement of, Indigenous voices on cultural heritage, both the intangible and its embodiment in place. Management must respect the full 'voicefulness' (in Ruskin's sense) of the significant place in its cultural context, however strong the values and meanings it may have acquired in other contexts, such as the archaeological, scientific, aesthetic and historical (non-Indigenous). Here cross-cultural dialogue and understanding may develop, and ultimately resolve conflicts of competing values. The partnership of traditions, if not their melding, in joint-management regimes (as at Uluru Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks) provides important opportunities for such Reconciliation.

The complexity of heritage assessment and management for the cultural routes across storied landscapes such as those chosen here as case study, will match the complexity of their roles in Aboriginal society, past and present. However it is a complexity that must be addressed. To incorporate them appropriately into the realm of recognised and protected heritage holding vital importance for the creating culture will not only extend and enrich our national perspectives on cultural heritage. It will also ensure that this is more representative of the richness and diversity of human culture, whether it be considered at local, national or international levels.

Such concerns resonate with Sally White's lifelong vision of an equitable society. They also explain her quick understanding of her Yalata friend Mangkatina's reference to her family's spinifex country homeland as 'orphaned country'. It expressed the sadness felt by Yalata families that those whose care should sustain its sacred places were living elsewhere in lands once Wirangu country, itself thus also 'orphaned'. Yet, as in the Flinders Ranges, the songs may still be sung, across the named but altered land, for travellers returning to memorialise significant places and renew contact with their numinous power.

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from her work in the field with Mick McLean *Irinjili* and Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri*. The insights it provides have been important.

Special thanks are due to those whose country and history was traversed in the field. They generously shared their knowledge and I am grateful for the kindness of Cecil Ebsworth, Chippy Flash, Willy Harris, Pearl McKenzie, Ben Murray and Arthur Warren. It will long be remembered, also the brief meeting in 1982 with Jimmy Russell *Wanga-mirri*, then unable to travel with us.

It was a great pleasure to illustrate this paper with Sally White's photographs from her 1970 field trip. My thanks to Ronda Ramsay and Alana Harris at AIATSIS Audio-Visual Archives for their assistance in this, also to Geoff Hunt. Dick Barwick kindly and skilfully prepared the illustrations for publication. Winifred Mumford drew the base map of ochre exchanges with her usual flair and expertise. My thanks to them, and in particular also to Charlotte Palmer for advice on Sally White's fieldwork and records which gave their own special insights.

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'[The Sydney school] seem[s] to view the Aborigines as forever unchanging': 1 southeastern Australia and Australian anthropology 2

Geoffrey Gray

From 1926 onward research into the culture of the Aborigines and into problems of contact was undertaken systematically. The aim was primarily to learn all we could before it was too late, because all this was changing rapidly through contact with settlers, administrations and missions. 3

This paper reviews the relationship between anthropology and the Aboriginal people of the southeast of Australia since the creation of the chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney in 1926. I argue that social anthropology as practised in Australia has not recognised the southeast as a legitimate domain of Aboriginal culture and thus of anthropological interest until recently. (Because of a change in the law, brought about by the High Court's 1992 Mabo decision and the Commonwealth's legislative response in developing native title legislation, anthropologists are now re-examining the large body of ethnographic knowledge about the southeast created in the 19th century). One could simply argue the ethnographic history of the southeast is one of erasure and closure. It is not that twentieth century social anthropology ignored the southeast per se, but it was not seen as a worthwhile area of anthropological study. Those anthropologists, particularly in the 1950s, who did work in the southeast did so partly as a consequence of limited research funding and partly because they were marginal rather than being orthodox, often not of their explicit choosing. Fieldwork in the southeast was seen as somewhat less important because it was often concerned with assessing the success or otherwise of government policies, especially assimilation. 4

2. This is a revised version of the paper originally presented to the collegium 'Aboriginality in the Southeast', held at the Humanities Research Centre and the Centre for Cross-cultural Research, Australian National University, 18–19 June 1997. I would like to dedicate the paper to Jeremy Beckett in whose honour the collegium was held. I would like also to thank Jeremy for all those enjoyable conversations some of which were about the southeast; Christine Cheater and Fiona Paisley for their ideas about the problem of history and anthropology, and Ian Keen and Christine Winter, as well as the two unnamed referees, for their editorial advice. Elkin 1963b: 34.
Some anthropological views of the southeast

The southeast of Australia is often defined as being south of a line drawn from north of Sydney to Adelaide and thus includes southern and northwestern New South Wales, Victoria and southeastern South Australia. (Tasmania is treated as a different category).\(^5\) The primary characteristic of the southeast is the dispossession, death, dislocation and forced removal of Aboriginal people from their country onto mission reserves in the nineteenth century. The Aboriginal people of the southeast were subjected to the full destructive force of colonisation and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was generally accepted by the settlers that Aborigines were rapidly disappearing and thus doomed to extinction.\(^6\) This leads to the main defining characteristic of the southeast for anthropology: it viewed Aborigines in the southeast as not authentic, people who did not live as Aborigines, people who had lost their 'Aboriginal' culture and had only a fragmented memory of their (past) culture.\(^7\)

A consequence of the invasion and settlement of their country is that many Aboriginal people are of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent; the categories of blood and 'race' were expressed by referring to such people as 'mixed-blood', 'half-blood', 'mixed-race', 'half-caste', 'part-Aborigine', 'quadroon' and so on. This 'mixing' further undermined their status as 'real' Aborigines.\(^8\) This history of dispossession and removal has affected the way in which anthropology has dealt with Aboriginal life in the southeast. Culture and blood were conflated. The historian Charles Rowley argued that Australia could be divided into 'remote' and 'settled' Australia.\(^9\) 'Remote' Australia contained 'remnants' of traditional Aboriginal people who lived their lives on the margins of European economic and social life; 'settled' Australia included all those areas that had been invaded, pacified and settled, and where Aboriginal people were incorporated economically, socially, politically (and sometimes biologically) into the dominant non-Aboriginal society.\(^10\)

In their general work on Aboriginal society *The world of the first Australians*, Ronald and Catherine Berndt said of the southeast:

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4. Anthropologists such as AP Elkin and Donald Thomson, who by their membership of their respective states Aborigines' Welfare Board, must have compromised their knowledge through their interventionist role in assessing the success of assimilation as government policy. See Elkin 1957, Cowlishaw 1990, Gray 1998a.

5. The history of Tasmania is usually presented as one in which Aborigines are erased from contemporary life; this of, course, misrepresents histories of survival and continuity. See for example Vivienne Rae-Ellis 1996; also Tindale 1963, 1966.


7. Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who worked with Aboriginal people at Murray Bridge and in Adelaide in the early 1940s, described these as 'memory cultures'; see Introduction, Berndt and Berndt with Stanton 1993; also Chase 1981: 4–8.

8. More work needs to be done on the changing categories of blood and caste and the persistence of race in the ethnographic literature. Anthropologists generally reflected current beliefs and concomitantly developed a lexicon of blood and caste to help identify degrees of Aboriginality based on lifestyles. See, however, Cowlishaw 1986, 1989; also Goodall 1996 and especially 1982.

9. See Rowley 1972a,b.

10. Perhaps a more workable division of anthropological Australia is a tripartite one: the north, the desert and the south. Nevertheless, regional differences are hard to classify. See also Keen 1988.
Not only did the Aboriginal population in the south decline. The survivors were beginning to adopt some European ways... And a growing number were of mixed descent, offspring of European or other alien fathers and Aboriginal mothers. This dual process has continued all through the southern part of the continent: diminishing 'Aboriginality', in physical as well as in cultural terms; and on both these scores a growing resemblance to Europeans. A decrease in the full-Aboriginal population and the disappearance of most aspects of Aboriginal culture have been paralleled by a rise in the number of 'part-Aborigines', people only partly Aboriginal in descent, and with more complete and more widespread acceptance of Australian-European habits of living.11

'Real' Aborigines therefore were those who lived in remote Australia and thus lived a traditional lifestyle, what Ronald Berndt referred to as 'traditionally-oriented'. 'Traditionally-oriented' was, he stated, a 'convenient shorthand way of alluding to people whose life was still meaningful in traditional Aboriginal terms, and that alien change was part of that picture but not dominantly so'.12 Aborigines were always in a state of imminent change from 'traditional' (uncivilised) to 'non-traditional' (modern and civilised). To put it another way contact with non-Aborigines, wrote Ronald Berndt, inevitably led to 'Aboriginal elements [being] pushed further and further into the background'.13 The possibility of extinction was ever present.

The dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Aborigines weaves its way through anthropological discourse about Aborigines. Peter Sutton has attempted to remove this clumsy dichotomy of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' by suggesting the use of 'classical' and 'post-classical' but this seemingly places Aboriginal people in a historical dichotomy of before and after colonialism (and denies implicitly the ability of people to adapt and change while retaining the core of the culture).14 It is the old argument about 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' dressed in new clothes without questioning why these divisions are created.15 The southeast is not adequately explained by this dichotomy of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' not least because Aboriginal people live(d) in both rural and urban spaces as Marcia Langton pointed out, 'large numbers of Aboriginal people have migrated towards the cities since the Second World War ... [W]hile urban life has its attractions ... a feeling for the people and country 'back home' is always maintained.'16 The deeply embedded notion that real Aborigines are those who live a traditional life in remote Australia is difficult to remove from anthropological discourse.

Until the change in definition by the Commonwealth, a consequence of the 1967 referendum, Aboriginality was defined as a biological construct rather than as a relational construct.17 Aboriginality was defined by combinations of blood, skin colour,
physical characteristics and manner of living. Anthropologists were part of this discourse and helped to sustain it. Gillian Cowlishaw has argued that terms such as ‘mixed-blood’ or ‘half-caste’ and ‘full-blood’, ‘Aborigines’ and ‘part-Aborigines’, ‘lighter coloured people’, when used by anthropologists carry information about culture. Simply put, ‘full-blood’ carries with it the sense that such categories also are ‘full-culture’; ‘part-Aborigine’ is suggestive of a lack, a partial culture. Yet paradoxically Aboriginal culture is caught in time, trapped by blood, and presented as unchanging.

Social anthropologists such as Elkin and WEH Stanner supported and frequently advocated assimilation as government policy from the 1930s until the late 1960s. There is some dispute over the meaning of assimilation and when it was introduced as government (particularly New South Wales and Commonwealth) policy. Elkin, for example, saw the need to change the structure of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board and he encouraged the appointment of an anthropologist in the workings of the board — thus when the act was changed in 1940 and it became the Aborigines Welfare Board, Elkin was appointed vice-chairman, a position he held until 1969 when it was disbanded. I have argued elsewhere that Elkin (as did many others) saw the future of ‘part-Aborigines’ as being assimilated, that is (biologically and culturally) absorbed into the wider white Australian community. With regard to ‘full-bloods’ Elkin is ambiguous, suggesting that this will take time (there is an inference that ‘full-bloods’ will slowly disappear but it is unclear whether this will occur either biologically and/or culturally).

In response to a query in regard to defining ‘Aborigines’ from JA Carrodus, Secretary of the Commonwealth department of the Interior, Elkin wrote:

> Though the definitions of half-blood and quadroon are not identical they do overlap; the trouble arises with the person who is three-eights aboriginal, that is, has three great-grandparents aboriginal. Is such a person to be called quadroon or half-caste? Or are we to invent a new term? ... You will notice that I suggest that in the case of the quadroon, ‘such a person would normally have two great-grandparents (sic) who were full-blood aborigines’, and in any case such a person would be less than fifty per cent aboriginal. ... Obviously if ever the Act were altered and we wanted precision, we might well include in the definition of quadroon persons who are three-eights aboriginal. Even then that is not mathematically correct. It would, of course, be ideal but impractical to decide each case on its merits, so that a light three-eights might be classed as a quadroon, and a dark one as a half-blood. ... As the years [go] by the mathematics will become even more difficult. We will be dealing with sixteenths, but probably by that time we will

21. The board included an ‘expert on sociology and/or anthropology’; it was amended in 1943 — membership was increased from 10 to 11 of ‘whom two [had] to be Aborigines (at least one of whom was to be full-blood).’ See John McCorquodale 1987.
only be concerned with full-bloods including three-quarter castes, and with half-castes perhaps including three-eighths to be regarded as white.23

It serves to underline that Elkin, like other anthropologists and social scientists of the period, was profoundly influenced by discourses of blood and culture. The future of 'part-Aborigines' was the social and economic (if not biological) absorption into the wider dominant culture; but it was not specific to them. Ronald and Catherine Berndt, students of Elkin's, believed that 'the Aborigines ['full-bloods'] must inevitably learn to adjust themselves to the introduced pattern of living, if they are to survive in their present minority position;'24 Aborigines cannot continue to live in their old ways, and indeed few of them are able to do so now. Life is changing for them ... the white man is the new power in the land. It seems certain that they must, in the coming generations, become more fully absorbed into the mainstream of Australian life. ... [Aborigines are] 'forced to choose between two worlds, in such a way that the outcome is never, really, in doubt.'25

The closer Aborigines came to the sites of European cultural dominance the more likely they were to lose their Aboriginal culture:

[N]early all the people whom we now call Aborigines are inevitably involved in processes which could lead to assimilation. Those nearest that goal are to be found in the cities and in the large towns. Few of them have any coherent knowledge of their Aboriginal traditions. ... There are virtually no Aboriginal groups which have not had some contact with Europeans, by hearsay or repute if not through direct face-to-face association. People whom we call traditionally oriented are harder to find than they were a few years ago. ... Just how long this orientation can be sustained is a matter for conjecture. ... That is not to say that traditional elements will cease to survive in some form or other, but that Aboriginal life, as a way of life, will have ceased to exist.26

Aborigines were presented as unable to change unless they lose their Aboriginality. 'Traditional Aborigines', in much of the anthropological literature, are presented as the past (loss), although anthropologists claim to be writing about the present: it is, it seems to me, a valorisation of an imagined past without context. As well there was a reluctance to deal with the social and political realities of Aboriginal life in 'remote' Australia.27 The problem of acculturation versus assimilation has not been adequately explored in the literature on assimilation: civilisation (modernity) always means loss rather than gain or adaptation and the development of a new way. (This is an avenue that requires further exploration). Thus anthropology was confronted in the southeast with a series of problems: who were Aborigines, what was the nature of Aboriginal cul-

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23. Elkin to Carrodus, 7 December 1944. 177/4/2/213, Elkin Papers (hereafter EP). Compare this with the 1937 Commonwealth conference during which AO Neville, Chief Commissioner for Aborigines in Western Australia, asked the question: 'Fifty years hence ... are we going to have a population of a million blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into the community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?'


ture, where did Aborigines live and how resistant was Aboriginal culture to the encroachment of European culture?

**Beginnings of a professional and academic discipline**

In a recent review of Les Hiatt’s *Arguments about Aborigines*, Ian Keen made reference to ethnographic descriptions of people in the southeast. He states that for 150 years ‘anthropologists have argued over the right way to discuss [Australian] indigenous social life and culture.’ Keen — as well as de-historicising the discipline — ignores the importance of other disciplines, particularly anatomy and physiology in the development and practice of Indigenous Studies rather than ethnography. Anthropology is usually understood by its practitioners as having a long historical lineage, tracing its beginning to those armchair anthropologists (often jurists, philosophers, theologians) who were interested in uncovering humankind’s past or discovering early forms of sociality. They are the precursors to the professionalisation and institutionalisation of anthropology; but they were not social anthropologists. A most important distinction between these so-called armchair anthropologists and professional social anthropologists is systematised participant-observer fieldwork. Elkin, for example, set out four phases in the development of scientific knowledge about Aborigines: firstly, a phase of incidental anthropology (c1788 to c1870s); secondly, a compiling and collating phase (1870–1900); thirdly, a phase of fortuitous, individual field projects; fourthly, a phase of organised, systematic research (1925–1961 (present)).

Grant McCall argues there are five phases: firstly, development of social science phase, pre-1788; secondly, casual or incidental phase, 1788 to mid-nineteenth century; thirdly, a compiling and collating phase, mid-nineteenth century to late nineteenth century; fourthly, systematic research phase, late nineteenth century to 1925; and finally, professional anthropology phase, 1925 to present. Thus, like Elkin and McCall, I place the professionalisation of social anthropology at 1925, the creation of the chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney. Acceptance by the academy was critical in creating social anthropology as a professional discipline; the academy provides institutional and scholarly support; it also marks a point where the discipline is self-conscious about its methodology and theorising.

Baldwin Spencer and Frederick Gillen may have conducted the first systematic field research in Australia although Alfred Cort Haddon is credited with introducing the method of participant observation when he led the Cambridge Expedition to Torres Strait in 1898. Other early field researchers included AW Howitt, Lorimer Fison, WE Roth, AR [Radcliffe-] Brown and Daisy Bates. This early research provided a foundation for reliable material about Aborigines rather than securing a place for anthropology in the academy. There was an anthropology section in the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) from its inception in 1888 which was mainly concerned with a range of matters which were placed under the rubric anthropology.

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31. Mulvaney et al. 1997: 23–49. Baldwin Spencer was instrumental in advocating anthropology in Australia and was associated with the establishment of the chair of anthropology.
In 1895 the Anthropological Society of Australasia was founded by Alan Carroll but this society was short-lived; moreover its concerns were 'holistic in the extreme'. The Museum of South Australia participated in and its members often led scientific expeditions to examine all aspects of the flora and fauna including examining all aspects of the Aboriginal body and way of life. After 1926 the University of Adelaide's Board for Anthropological Research joined with the Museum's expeditions in research which was primarily museum and medical-based, although they did engage in a project — Aboriginal sexuality and family life — sponsored by Clark Wissler of the American Museum of Natural History.

The attempt to establish a chair of anthropology in Australia starts with the meeting of British Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Melbourne and Sydney in 1914. The Pan-Pacific Science Congress of 1923, however, was instrumental (Elkin called it the 'key event') in the establishment of a chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney; the meeting passed the resolution:

"[In] view of the great and particular interest of the [Aborigines] as representing one of the lowest types of culture available for study, of the rapid and inevitable diminution of their numbers, and of the loss of their primitive beliefs and customs under the influence of a higher culture. ... that steps be taken, without delay, to organise the study of those tribes that are, as yet comparatively uninfluenced by contact with civilisation."

This specifically excluded Aborigines who had been colonised, dispossessed and dispersed, although this desire to record everything 'before it was too late' was a direct consequence of colonial occupation and dispossession; at the same time this ethnographic enterprise denied the social and political realities of Aboriginal people who acted as its informants. Joe Birdsell argued that Australian anthropology as practised in the Sydney department viewed Aborigines as 'forever unchanging in spite of onslaughts of time, depopulation, and a shift from a pre-contact ecology to a food support base dependent upon European charity or exploitation.' It ignored such disturbances as occurred a 'number of decades before the investigating anthropologists arrived on the scene.' This is perhaps exemplified by Ronald Berndt's assertion about Aboriginal people living on the Birrundudu outstation as people 'with minimum alien contact', who devote 'much of their time and energy ... in food collecting and in performing ceremonies which are considered vital to their very existence'. The people on Birrundudu had had their lives disrupted by the introduction of cattle and labouring for the cattle industry which — as Ronald and Catherine Berndt pointed out in *End of an era* — had affected their economic, social, political and religious lives.

36. Jones 1987; Cleland Papers, Museum of South Australia.
37. Extract from Minutes of General Meeting of the Second Pan-Pacific Congress, held in Sydney, September 1923. National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA) A518, N806/1/1, Part I.
38. This call of 'before it's too late' predates the calls at the Pan-Pacific Congress. See McGregor 1998.
In July 1926, when Radcliffe-Brown arrived to take up the Chair of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, he was confronted by the belief that Aborigines were facing extinction. He agreed. He reckoned that with the rapid disintegration of Aboriginal society there was only fifteen years left to make an adequate record of the culture of Aborigines. It was therefore incumbent upon the Australian government to assist in the 'preservation of some record of the aborigines, who are in [the] process of rapid extermination as a result of the appropriation of their lands'. Anthropological research 'must take the form of a general extensive survey of all surviving tribes, and a more intensive study of a certain number of selected tribes. Its aim was not merely to collect information on native customs and belief, but to arrive at an understanding of the Australian culture as a functioning system.' This research would 'give the world a great deal of very valuable knowledge about this most interesting and rapidly vanishing culture'.

Radcliffe-Brown left for Chicago in May 1931. Raymond Firth was made acting Professor; in September the following year he left for London and a position in the London School of Economics. Elkin was made lecturer-in-charge. During this time the future of the chair was under threat. When the chair was created, the Commonwealth and the states had provided funding; the financial crisis of late 1920s and early 1930s led to all the states except New South Wales withdrawing. By the end of 1933 the Commonwealth government assured the university that it would fund the chair until 1935. The Commonwealth was left as the main benefactor. Rockefeller funding for research was dependent upon continued government funding for the chair which the Rockefeller Foundation subsidised pound for pound. Elkin was appointed to the chair on 22 December 1933, taking up his position on 1 January 1934. Elkin's appointment led to a change in the anthropological enterprise.

41 Berndt 1950: 184–5. They wrote to Chinnery after they returned from Birrundudu: 'We are sorry that we were not able to show you the material which we have collected, but perhaps this may be possible later on. As a sideline, we obtained a series (several hundred) of adult drawings (lumber crayon and pencil on brown paper); many of these are extraordinarily good (although not of course, in the style of Albert Namatjira), and all show excellent prospects for development. It is unfortunate that there is not some person who could collect such drawings from various areas. We ourselves regretted that there was not some person with us who could record in this way may (sic) aspects of everyday and ceremonial life which could not be obtained by medium of either camera or descriptive writing. It is a pity that something of this kind could not be done before it is too late.' RM Berndt to EWP Chinnery, 24 June 1945. CP.

42 Berndt and Berndt 1987.

43 See correspondence between Radcliffe-Brown and Minister for Home and Territories, NAA A518 P806/1/1, Part 1. He noted that Elkin had made a survey of a considerable portion of the Kimberley district in Western Australia; Warner had likewise made a survey of Arnhem Land and an intensive study of the Murrin tribe of the extreme northeast of that area; CWM Hart had made an intensive study of the Tiwi tribe of Melville and Bathurst Islands; Ursula McConnel and DF Thomson had made important additions to 'our knowledge' of the tribes of the Cape York Peninsula. Elkin was engaged in a systematic survey of all the surviving tribes of South Australia. Ralph Piddington had undertaken the intensive study of a tribe in Western Australia.

Practical anthropology

I have argued elsewhere that Elkin focused on the relationship between anthropology and native administration — what he called ‘practical anthropology’. To facilitate this he emphasised the helping and understanding role of anthropology. Thus the training of colonial officials for work in native administration in New Guinea and Papua, as well as the training of missionaries, was an important task for the chair. Anthropology was foremost in the colonial context a science available for the use by government and mission; research was critical to the success of this enterprise. Elkin oversaw those he sent to the field as part of that larger helping enterprise, and to answer particular epistemological problems in Aboriginal anthropology. Aboriginal life, as they understood it, was in a state of disintegration. Each field worker was part of Elkin’s team and they read and used each other’s field notes (including Elkin’s) and from the correspondence with Elkin were eager participants in this project.

Anthropology had not had the same sympathetic reception by governments in Australia as in the Australian external territories of Papua and New Guinea. Nevertheless, anthropology was regarded as useful by the army in responding to the immediate perceived threat of invasion by the Japanese. The army sought from anthropologists, particularly WEH Stanner and Donald Thomson, comment and advice on how best to use Aborigines in the war effort. Elkin continued to provide unsolicited advice to both army and government on Aborigines and the war effort.

The general enlistment of Aborigines received little support from army or government authorities, concern being expressed, especially in the north, that it would alter the relationships between Aborigines and white people. Nonetheless the army employed Aborigines under much the same conditions as it did other persons, and thus created a new model which had far-reaching consequences not only for social and economic relationships in the north but also for the way anthropologists, especially Elkin, revised their views on the ability of Aborigines to make adjustment to changing situations and adapt to new ways of living. Thus the relationship between the army and Aborigines, and the manner in which Aborigines were employed by the army, raise issues that were of interest to anthropology as a practical discipline and to individual anthropologists. The changes initiated by the army had also a profound impact on post-war Commonwealth government policy and practice, particularly in regard to wages, working conditions and facilities on cattle stations.

Elkin, who had no official government or military role during the war, had heard reports of changes introduced by the army in their treatment and employment conditions of Aborigines which could be regarded as beneficial to the future of Aborigines. By 1943 he was engaged in two projects; one was preparing a national policy for the

46. Cowlishaw 1990.
49. The Guided Projectiles Project is an example of the way Elkin’s altered views were received by humanitarians and others who continued to promoted protectionist and isolationist views of Aboriginal welfare. Gray 1991.
Aborigines and their administration in case powers for this purpose were handed to the Commonwealth either by the states or by the planned 1944 referendum.\textsuperscript{50} This was a preoccupation of Elkin's, who believed the Commonwealth should be responsible for Aboriginal affairs. The other project was the effect of economic development on Aborigines in the northern parts of Australia. He wrote that it was possible that as a 'result of putting down aerodromes, strategical (sic) roads and artesian bores and the visit to the north of soldiers, there may be some attempted intensive development by white folk.' Such development would react on the 'remaining Aborigines, and judging by the past the Aborigines will be required to play their part in it. Indeed they will be essential to it. This is going to mean very wise [postwar] administration, for otherwise it will mean a hastening of the process of extermination of the Aborigines.'\textsuperscript{51} Both health and 'reproductive power' had been undermined by inadequate diet plus the fact that 'their country is invaded, their ritual life broken down and that they are reduced to parasitism ... In the middle of this is the refusal of women to have children face this parasitic future and in some cases their inability to do so because of disease contracted directly or indirectly from white men.'\textsuperscript{52} The 'preservation of Aborigines', stated Elkin, was linked with the continuance of the pastoral industry in the North.\textsuperscript{53}

From March 1944 Elkin sent out his students to obtain what he called 'vital statistics' (health) about Aborigines throughout Australia; this involved what he called 'the whole question of Aboriginal vitality'\textsuperscript{54} particularly infant mortality rates and fertility rates as well as the 'reproductive, physical and mental vigour of mixed-bloods'.\textsuperscript{55} Ronald and Catherine Berndt had been sent to Menindee in late 1943;\textsuperscript{56} Marie Reay and Grace Sitlington\textsuperscript{57} went to Bourke, Brewarrina, Gulgambourne and Coomable in northwestern New South Wales to investigate these problems.\textsuperscript{58} (Elkin noted to all heads of Aboriginal Affairs departments in the states, the army authorities in the

\textsuperscript{50} See Attwood et al. 1997: 5-12 for a brief discussion of the campaigns to alter the Australian constitution and grant Commonwealth control over Aboriginal affairs.
\textsuperscript{51} Elkin to Mary Durack Miller, 18 May 1944. EP 73/1/12/205. During the interwar years a great deal of consideration was devoted not only to the preservation of 'the Aboriginal race' but also to evergrowing problem of 'half-castes'.
\textsuperscript{52} Notes, Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Welfare Authorities, Darwin, February 1948, EP 55/1/12/6.
\textsuperscript{53} Elkin to Evatt, 9 October 1944. EP 197/4/2/573.
\textsuperscript{54} Elkin to FR Morris (Director Native Personnel, Army HQ, NT Force), 21 September 1945. EP 73/1/12/206.
\textsuperscript{55} Marie Reay and Grace Sitlington, c1944, 'Vigour of half-castes', typescript; also Reay's correspondence with Elkin and Elkin to Bray (WA), 20 March 1944. EP 73/1/12/206.
\textsuperscript{56} RM Berndt and CH Berndt, 'A short study of acculturation at Menindee Government Station, Darling River'. Typescript, 92 pp + tables and diagrams, maps. Adelaide 19 November 1943. This research was funded by the Australian National Research Council. See also RM Berndt, 'Wuradjери magic and iclever menf, Oceania 17(4), 1947: 327-65; 18(1), 1947: 60-86; see also Menindee Mission Station 1933-1949, compiled and edited by Beverley and Don Elphick, Canberra, 1996. Privately published.
\textsuperscript{57} Marie Reay in a letter to the writer wrote: 'She was a lay person who accompanied me as a chaperone at the request of my mother, who did not like the idea of me going alone to the blacks' camps in the rough outback. Elkin tried to persuade her to study anthropology but she was not academically inclined. I deeply regret allowing her to bully me into citing her as co-author of one of my better juvenilia in return for incorporating her observations on mothers and children. She was an informant not a co-worker.'
Northern Territory as well as to some mission stations such as Cherbourg, seeking information on mortality rates and fertility of Aborigines.\(^{59}\) Elkin wrote that the ‘results of this work, now carried out ... for a period now extending over four years or more, are of first-class importance, both from our understanding of Mixed Blood social and psychological problems, and also for the way they adjust themselves to the environment.’\(^{60}\)

During the war most of the research was funded by a combination of Carnegie Foundation funds, the residue of the Rockefeller Foundation funds, the Aborigines Welfare Board of New South Wales, the Northern Territory Department of Native Affairs, and university grants provided by both the university and the Commonwealth: ‘field-work went on ... but usually on inadequate budgets’.\(^{61}\) The Berndts were the main recipients of this funding. During the second half of 1941 Ronald and Catherine Berndt undertook research in Ooldea, South Australia.\(^{62}\) After Ooldea the Berndts continued their ‘valuable work among the remaining Aborigines of the Lower Murray region’, which included their statewide survey of Aborigines in South Australia between 1941 and 1944.\(^{63}\) Ronald had started his work at Murray Bridge in 1939 among the descendants of those who were referred to then as the Yaraldi (Jaralde), now more commonly known as Ngarrindjeri.\(^{64}\) He was joined by Catherine.\(^{65}\) Elkin provided funds for the writing up of this and the Ooldea work.\(^{66}\) There was one notable funding exception, the survey of Vestey's pastoral stations by Ronald and Catherine Berndt between 1944 and 1946. They were employed by the Australian Investment Agency as welfare and liaison officers; it had the support of Elkin and EWP Chinnery, the then director of the department of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory.\(^{67}\)

Near the end of 1943 Elkin outlined a plan to the Commonwealth government for research both in postwar Papua New Guinea and in Aboriginal Australia.\(^{68}\) The Australian National Research Council (ANRC)\(^{69}\), because of its past experience, ‘would be

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58 Marie Reay and Grace Sitlington, c1944, ‘Vigour of half-castes’, typescript; also correspondence with Elkin. EP 73/1/12/206.
59 Typical was his letter to Bray (WA), 20 March 1944. Correspondence with FR Morris, director of Native Personnel, Army HQ, Darwin 1945. Letter to Matron, Cherbourg Aboriginal Station, Queensland, 1945. EP 73/1/12/206.
63 From Black to White in South Australia (1951) was produced as a result of this survey. For a contemporary critique read Phyllis Kaberry, Review (p. 140), Man, September 1953. The Berndts were upset by this review: ‘We feel rather annoyed about Kaberry’s review’, RM Berndt to Elkin, 2 May 1954. EP 41/4/2/375.
64 This type of research, that is, recording the memories of old people, was a common practice by members of the Museum of South Australia, especially Norman Tindale. Albert Karloan was Tindale’s informant.
Table 1 - Elkin’s proposed three year research plan c1943-45
A three-year plan of Anthropological Research amongst the Australian natives.

A. Research is required into the effects of the war situation in northern Australian regions on the social, economic and psychological life of the Aborigines. When possible, Anthropologists who have worked in these regions should be invited to return and spend a year in them. Three regions could be selected with advantage. This is of importance for the development of Northern Australia.

Three (3) experienced workers and expenses. £3000 for a year and £1200 for preparing reports, during the following six months. Total = £4200.

B. Intensive study of Aborigines where they still maintain much of their old way of life.

Two (2) workers a year and expenses £1500 p.a. (3 years = £4500)

C. Research into social and psychological problems of mixed-bloods.

Two (2) workers a year and expenses £1500 p.a. (3 years = £4500).

Total of A, B, & C = £6000 first year; £4200 for second year; £3000 for third year.

The programme in the first instance should be for three years to allow completion of work to be undertaken.

Total = £13200.¹

willing to act as trustee and administrator of funds made available for anthropological research in Australia’s dependent territories and amongst the aborigines’.⁷⁰ There was no formal response from the Commonwealth.⁷¹ In February 1950 Elkin wrote to EO

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¹ See Ronald Berndt, ‘Some aspects of Jaralde Culture, South Australia’, Oceania 11(2), 1940: 164-85. Their research was not published until 1993, three years after Ronald’s death: Ronald M Berndt and Catherine H Berndt with John Stanton, A world that was. the Yaraldi of the Murray River and the Lakes, South Australia, Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press 1993; cf Diane Bell, Ngarrindjeri Warrawarrin: a world that is, was, and will be, Melbourne, Spinifex Press 1998. Catherine’s role in this research has been the subject of serious investigation as a consequence of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission and its aftermath. It has been suggested that Catherine’s research was minimal — it was Ronald’s project and Catherine assisted him rather than conducting her own research.

⁶⁶ Elkin to Hon Sec ANRC, 26 February 1943. EP156/4/1/14. Only the Ooldea work was written up.

⁶⁷ The Berndts published this research as End of an era (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press) in 1987.

⁶⁸ See Table 1.

⁶⁹ The ANRC was disbanded in 1955 and with it the anthropology committee which had overseen the spending of Rockefeller and Carnegie funds for anthropological research. It was replaced by the Academy of Science.

⁷⁰ Elkin to Halligan, 11 October 1945; ANRC to Prime Minister, 3 December 1945. EP 163/4/1/100.

⁷¹ He did discuss these proposals with both Halligan, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, and Carrodus, EP 176/4/2/210; see also Elkin to Carrodus, 30 April 1947. EP 163/4/1/100.
Hercus, honorary secretary of the ANRC, that 'the whole plan and these recommendations have gone into a hidden file'.

**The impact of war**

The Pacific War had several consequences for Australian anthropology. The creation of the Australian National University broke the dominance (hegemony) of the Sydney department; there developed an institutional separation between Australia and Papua New Guinea (including the South West Pacific); and finally a growing distance between scholarly research (ANU) and training of government officials and mission workers for work in Papua New Guinea, the South West Pacific and the Northern Territory (University of Sydney).

During the war the army's directorate of research and civil affairs recruited several prominent anthropologists such as Camilla Wedgwood, H Ian Hogbin, Ralph Piddington, Lucy Mair and WEH Stanner, with the view to developing policy for post-war Papua and New Guinea; it was also responsible for establishing the School of Civil Affairs (later the Australian School of Pacific Administration) which it hoped would replace the anthropology department in the University of Sydney as a training school for colonial officers. As the Sydney department increased in size — Hogbin and the linguist Arthur Capell were appointed Readers and student numbers increased — there were a number of events which were to diminish its authority and that of the professor. The Commonwealth government, keen to support research into problems it perceived to be important in administering its colonies, created the Australian Pacific Territories Research Council to advise on matters of policy and administration. The Council was a peacetime successor to the army's directorate of research and civil affairs. The Research Council met for the last time in April 1947, and was replaced by the Council of the Australian School of Pacific Administration, previously the School of Civil Affairs. It was intended that the school would train colonial officials for Papua New Guinea. By 1953 the Australian School of Pacific Administration was responsible for training officers for the Northern Territory service. The School could only 'conduct research activities in the subjects appropriate to the courses of the School and for the needs of the Territory as approved by the Minister'.

The *Australian National University Act, 1946*, empowered the university's interim council to 'establish such Research Schools as are deemed desirable, including ... a Research School of Pacific studies'. Raymond Firth, Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics, was invited by the interim council of the Australian

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75 NAA A518, Item R815/1/1, 19 June 1945. The proposal was originally made to the Cabinet subcommittee on 15 September 1944 and referred to the interdepartmental committee for consideration. Cabinet Agendum, No 104 of 15 September 1944.
76 Australian School of Pacific Administration, Monthly Notes 1(9), May 1947: 7.
77 *The Research School of Pacific Studies: Its Future role and organisation, A Report by the Faculty Board*, Australian National University, 1958 p. 1. Marie Reay was sponsored by the Australian School of Pacific Administration to conduct research in the Northern District of Papua. Her research was cut short by the eruption of Mt Lamington in 1950.
National University to advise in the setting up of the School of Pacific Studies, and was consulted with regard to the making of appointments as well as research programs. Firth asked Ian Hogbin to prepare a report on anthropology in Melanesia in view of his long field experience in the area. Firth did not ask Elkin for advice although Elkin had sent him a copy of the research proposal which he had submitted to the commonwealth government. Elkin lamented the way in which the ANRC — and he as chair of the anthropology committee — had been ignored:

It is interesting to notice that in spite of the fact that the ANRC was established to be an authoritative advisory body on scientific matters of national importance and was the main means of developing anthropological research in the South-west Pacific, it has not been consulted with regard to present plans at all. What is even more interesting, though pathetic, is that I was told at least three years ago that an effort was being made to develop research in the South-west Pacific and that the [Australian National] Research Council and this Department were to be bypassed.

The importance of the Sydney department and the control the professor of anthropology exercised over research in Australia and the South West Pacific were being undermined by both the establishment of the Australian National University and the shortage of available funds. Elkin assessed the situation at the end of the 1940s: the ANRC's anthropological research committee was 'not active for the simple reason that we have no money for research purposes and at present no problems have been referred to us.' It might be opportune, he suggested, to renew their approaches to the Commonwealth Government 'at least for money for research into all aspects of the anthropology of the Australian Aborigines', which meant asking the Prime Minister 'whether an answer could be given to our letters regarding the proposed plan of Anthropological research in Australia and the South-west Pacific.' Research in the South West Pacific would, he presumed, be undertaken by the School of Pacific Studies although he wanted the ANRC's committee for anthropology to oversee all anthropological research emanating from Australian universities. Firth had assured Elkin that the School of Pacific Studies was not concerned with the Australian Aborigines and did not want the Australian National University to be part of such an arrangement. The Research School was to focus on the Pacific, and other Australian universities could undertake work with Aborigines. Nor would the Research School of Pacific Studies be a training school for government officials; Firth believed such 'career training [would] definitely cut across the research commitments of members of the school'.

78. The Interim Council chose three prominent Australians to head the four research schools - Howard Florey (Medical Sciences), Mark Oliphant (Physical Sciences), Keith Hancock (Social Sciences) and — because there was no prominent Australian anthropologist — New Zealander Raymond Firth to head the Research School of Pacific Studies (including Anthropology). See also Firth, Memorandum, ANU file 6.1.1.0, Part 1.
81. Elkin to Firth, 1 July 1948. EP 174/4/2/178. See also letter from Copland to WD Forsyth, in ANU file, 6.1.1.0, Part 1.
83. Firth, interview by Margaret Murphy, Australian National Library, p. 16.
In February 1951 SF Nadel, foundation Professor of Anthropology in the Australian National University, put forward the main research problems which the Department of Anthropology was concerned with.84 He set out five areas of research: firstly, 'the social organisation ... and types of society occurring in the Highlands of New Guinea'; secondly, 'social change on the Pacific Islands', concentrating on the 'appearance of Cargo Cult' and the 'recorded striking changes in population'; thirdly, a study of 'process of assimilation among the recent European immigrants to Australia'; fourthly, what he described as 'the many-sided problem of the adjustment of a primitive population to modern values and way of life' particularly in places such as Western Samoa and Fiji where 'ethnic mixture and the influence of western civilisation are most strongly pronounced' and finally, a study of an Indonesian community 'which I should like to carry out myself'.85

There was no formal liaison between Elkin and Nadel. Despite Firth's assurances to the contrary the Australian National University did engage in anthropological research in Aboriginal Australia, albeit forced in part by the refusal of the Commonwealth government to allow anthropologists into Papua New Guinea who were either members of the communist party or who — because of their association with the communist party — were thought to constitute a risk to the good order of government. Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, 'always refused to admit certain people ... because we do not wish to have in the territory, persons who, by their activities, might impede or distort our work, or in other ways prevent Australia from fully discharging its responsibilities to the native peoples under trusteeship'. Peter Worsley86 fitted the latter category. Worsley, who originally planned a study of cargo cults in Papua New Guinea, was sent to the Northern Territory.87 Jeremy Beckett suffered a similar fate when he applied to do work in Papua New Guinea. This brought him to work in northwestern New South Wales and later the Torres Strait.

Paul Hasluck's appointment as Minister for Territories in 1951 oversaw the further diminution of anthropology's policy role in Australian. Elkin hoped for a continued role in formulating government policy but Hasluck, an interventionist minister, saw no need for Elkin or anthropology.88 Yet the 1950s were to usher in a golden age of anthropological research in the highlands of New Guinea (the last bastion in many ways of

84 SF Nadel's Research plan, May 1951. ANU file 6.1.1.1 part 1. See also Hogbin's report to Firth; Firth's memorandum of January 1948 (ANU file, 6.1.1.0, part 1).
85 SF Nadel, Research Projects in Anthropology, February 1951, typescript. See also ANU file 6.1.1.1, part 1.
86 Located in ANU file 6.4.1.49. It is ironic that Worsley was able to do field work amongst Aborigines who it appears were not subject to such threats from the outside. See also McKnight 1994: 146–7. The ANU engaged in self-censorship by ensuring that scholars who were considered a security risk would not be appointed to positions of responsibility. See Gray 1998b for further discussion on these matters; also Beckett 2001.
87 Although he never went to PNG, Worsley wrote The trumpet shall sound which was a result of his study into cargo cults. His doctoral research was entitled 'Social structure of the Groote Eylandt Aborigines'. See ANU file, 6.4.1.49, Peter Worsley. Cargo cults was an area Nadel wanted investigated. Peter Lawrence, who was a student of Reo Fortune's in Cambridge, did work on the Rai Coast (near Madang) before Nadel was appointed. See correspondence with Fortune and Copland, ANU files.
Australian colonial rule). This was not so with Australian Aboriginal anthropology. (The way Australian anthropology dealt with the postwar changes remains largely unexamined). In all these proposals the southeast as a site for anthropological research was ignored.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies

The theme of 'before it is too late' was heard again in the formation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS). This call characterises much of the motivation for orthodox social anthropology in the twentieth century. WEH Stanner, a key figure in the formation of the Institute, argued that 'there was a case for a national research effort; ... in some fields the last opportunities had gone and in several others only a little time remained, much might be done to obtain basic information'. It was formally established in 1964 with the view that Aboriginal life was of interest in understanding the evolution and development of western civilisation. One of its founders, the politician William Wentworth, wrote: 'from an academic viewpoint, these people are among the most primitive races in the world, and perhaps even the most interesting. Certainly they are in many respects unique'. He listed the following characteristics: the nomadic nature of their hunter/gatherer society, the complexity and rigidity of the social structure, their spirituality, their lack of material possessions, their isolation from contacts with other races, that they were probably of Caucasoid stock, and therefore in origin nearer to the white races than the native peoples of Africa and East Asia. He emphasised how little remained of the Aboriginal field, stressing that 'within ten years there will be nothing but a fraction of a fraction left'.

At the conference, attended by the leading lights in anthropology and Aboriginal studies, that set up the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies there was the prevailing view that 'recording and analysing the distinctive way of life was an important aspect of our duty to posterity, and at the same time, a contribution to scientific understanding'. It was a lofty if pretentious aim. Ignoring Australia's history as a settler dispossessory nation the conference stated that 'at a time when Aboriginal life is changing...'

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90 In April 1997 I conducted a seminar on the practice of anthropology between 1950 and 1970 at which Ruth Fink, Jeremy Beckett and Les Hiatt spoke about their work. John Barnes spoke about his time as professor of anthropology at both the University of Sydney and the ANU: Gray 2001.
91 Elkin established the Australian Institute of Sociology in June 1942; it was intended that this institute would oversee sociological research in urban and rural centres, migration and acculturation (Elkin 1943). For an example of the sort of work he wanted to encourage see Caroline Kelly, 1943; see also Gray 2001: 1-29. Elkin also created a journal, Social Horizons, as a vehicle for the publication of research results.
92 Stanner 1963.
93 The Act [The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Act, No. 56 of 1964, assented 2 June 1964] establishing the Institute made it clear that it was not to be concerned with current problems as they affected Aboriginal people, but that its work was to be scientific and anthropological. The Act defined 'Aboriginal Studies' as 'anthropological research ... in relation to the aboriginal people of Australia'. Aboriginal history as relations between settlers and Aborigines was left out: if there was any history it was a history of cultural and biological extinction, recognising a loss to western knowledge.
94 William Wentworth, 'An Institute for Aboriginal Studies', pMs, AIATSIS Library, Canberra.
rapidly, it is important that the fullest amount of information on their characteristics and conditions should be readily available to all those concerned with their welfare. There were ‘considerable gaps in existing knowledge of social organisation, education, value systems (including religious belief), informal leadership, individual variations, and the economic bases of traditional Aboriginal life. It is obvious that these are all matters where opportunities for acquiring or extending our knowledge and understanding are disappearing very rapidly because of the influence of white (sic) culture’. It was a holistic desire premised on the belief that a totality of Aboriginal (‘primitive people’) life could be mapped.

There was reference to the need for anthropological research in settled Australia but it was insignificant in comparison to those projects in ‘remote’ Australia. Aboriginality as ‘full-blood’ and ‘traditionally oriented’ was dominant; the persistent and largely unchallenged belief was that Aboriginal people who lived in settled Australia had limited knowledge of their ‘past’ cultural and social lives. Ronald Berndt commented that ‘a certain amount may be obtained from Aborigines and people of Aboriginal extraction who are no longer traditionally-oriented: that is, from those who no longer live in an Aboriginal environment but who, because they were brought up in such a situation as children or adolescents or were told about it by their parents or grandparents, are able to recall something about it’. In a sense this denied that there existed an Aboriginal life in settled Australia as described in the late 1950s and 1960s, for example, by Diane Barwick and Judy Inglis.

The purpose and task of anthropology had however altered in the 1950s. The interests of anthropology as we have seen shifted to problems associated with assimilation and the ability of Aboriginal people to make the move to modernity. This was reflected by post-1945 research promoted by Elkin; he enabled research to be conducted in northwest New South Wales, including urban centres. As well as Reay, Catherine Webb (Berndt), Ronald Berndt and Caroline Kelly (who worked mostly pre-war), there was Malcolm Calley who did his PhD among the Bandjalang (northern New South Wales), Ruth Fink at Brewarrina, Jeremy Beckett in the far west of New South Wales (Walgett), Pamela Nixon’s MA thesis was on La Perouse, James (Jim) Bell did his PhD on La Perouse, Alison Beauchamp did an education degree which dealt with the patterns of relationships between Aboriginal and European children in the senior class of the primary school at La Perouse, and Esther Wait did a study of Aborigines in the metropolitan area of Sydney.

Many of those who conducted research in the southeast were not trained anthropologists. In fact Elkin told David Hollinsworth that research in the southeast was an ‘example of Australian sociology’. The work of Judy Inglis, Fay Gale and Diane Barwick was not, in Elkin’s terms, social anthropology, and nor was it recognised as such.

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97. RM Berndt 1963b: 397. This makes interesting reading when compared with Berndt and Berndt with Stanton 1993.
100. Hollinsworth 1992: 152, footnote 4 (Hollinsworth’s emphasis).
by the newly formed Institute.\textsuperscript{101} The Institute claimed a role for an orthodox anthropology by focusing on its ‘traditional’ subjects and method. The Institute thus disengaged Aboriginal anthropology from the social and political realities of Aboriginal life in settled Australia, which had been developed in the Sydney department.

Research dealt with urban and rural Aborigines and was concerned, for example with demographic and genealogical surveys in Victoria; the psychological effects of the ‘part-Aborigines’ awareness of differences and similarities between themselves and the full-blooded [Aborigines]’ in rural townships in South Australia. Nevertheless, the overriding impression is that this research problematised the Aborigine: ‘there appeared to be no one Aboriginal or mixed-blood problem, but a series of problems varying enormously from place to place.’\textsuperscript{102}

\textbf{Changing interests}

In 1964 Marie Reay edited \textit{Aborigines now: new perspective in the study of Aboriginal communities} which was a compilation of essays by younger anthropologists and other social scientists ‘who had done significant work among aborigines’. Reay decided to ‘collect a number of essays by people whose professional acquaintance with aborigines dated back no further than about 1950 and who had not yet begun to pronounce orthodox views on aboriginal questions’.\textsuperscript{103} It was also a critique of government assimilation policies; Reay suggests that Aboriginal views on the subject should be considered.\textsuperscript{104} Reay pointed to two recurring themes in the papers which underlined the break with what she saw as an orthodox past (she chose Stanner to write the introduction because she regarded him as sympathetic to her enterprise). These themes were:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Firstly, the authors stress that the aborigines’ own wishes and choices are important in planning successfully for their future; secondly, they draw attention to the presence of aboriginal \textit{communities} and urge that the method of administering native policy … should change from a pre-occupation with individual assimilation to an emphasis on community development.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{itemize}

These were a precursor to other factors, such as the changing political climate and the increasing demand by Aboriginal people for land (rights) and justice (equality), which have had a profound effect on anthropological practice. These changes were rarely instigated by anthropologists, although anthropologists such as Ronald Berndt saw themselves as the guardians of Aboriginal welfare and advocates for their advancement.\textsuperscript{106}

JA Barnes, albeit not addressing Berndt specifically, made a pertinent observation about social anthropology in Australia post-1960 which has relevance to the role of anthropology in the southeast. He said:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{101}] See Reay 1964.
  \item[\textsuperscript{102}] Discussion, Sheils 1963: 435–40.
  \item[\textsuperscript{103}] Reay 1964: xv.
  \item[\textsuperscript{104}] Cf. Catherine Berndt’s review of \textit{Aborigines Now}, a particularly carping review; it seems her main complaint is that members of her generation (those who worked in Aboriginal Australia pre-1950) were not asked to contribute nor were their views given an airing (CH Berndt 1966: 505–8).
  \item[\textsuperscript{105}] Ibid.: xvi.
\end{itemize}
Anthropologists and other social scientists became involved in one way or another with some of these events [namely, the Gove case, the beginning of arguments about the constitutional basis for the British occupation of the Australian continent, land rights, and the equal wages case in the Northern Territory] but none of them... occurred as a result of initiatives taken by [anthropologists]... This dependence on events not of our own choosing is particularly marked in the case of the land rights industry [what we might now refer to as the native title industry] which has provided so many opportunities for employment for anthropologists.\textsuperscript{107}

Barnes' assertion has considerable substance. Don McLeod was invited by a group of people to assist in the organisation of a strike in the Pilbara;\textsuperscript{108} McLeod wrote to Elkin seeking his advice and assistance. Elkin, initially interested, refused.\textsuperscript{109} In the southeast there was the continuing struggle for equality, land and citizenship;\textsuperscript{110} the more notable events were the formation of FCAATSI (1957) to bring about constitutional change which culminated in the 1967 referendum which gave the Commonwealth the ability to legislate for the benefit of Aborigines,\textsuperscript{111} the Freedom Ride (1965), the Tent Embassy outside of Parliament House (1972), the introduction of self-determination rather than integration or assimilation as government policy and the granting of land rights in the Northern Territory (1976); all served to underline changes in Aboriginal affairs, that is the relation between Aboriginal people and the state.\textsuperscript{112} It also brought about a change in relations between Aboriginal people and anthropologists and had consequences for the practice of anthropology.

Land rights invigorated and privileged anthropological knowledge but were confined primarily to so-called traditional people in the Northern Territory (remote Australia); pressure on state governments led to grace and favour land rights and Aborigines in the southeast were confined to seeking to retain what little they had left, viz mission stations. In Victoria, for example, this led to the communities on Framlingham, Lake Condah and Lake Tyers being given freehold title. Anthropology and anthropologists were not required nor did they seek a role in this process.

The High Court's Mabo decision changed the way anthropology is practised in Australia in quite significant ways. It is not only a matter of showing continued occupation but — in the southeast — of demonstrating continuity of cultural practices. One of the aims of the collegium 'Aboriginality in the Southeast' was to address the problem of continuity and discontinuity of cultural practices in the southeast, problems addressed

\textsuperscript{106} 'For several decades, persons who showed particular concern with Aboriginal advancement... were anthropologists, who served as spokesmen for the virtually inarticulate Aborigines, as they were then.' RM Berndt 1976: 32. There is more work to be done on the role of anthropologists as advocates and political activists, and the tricky situation in which anthropologists were placed needing to point out the obvious abuses and shortcomings of administration policy and practice, and the demands of academic scholarship. See Gray 1994b and 1998a for some discussion about these matters in the Australian context

\textsuperscript{107} Barnes 1988: 272.

\textsuperscript{108} McLeod 1984, Palmer and McKenna 1978.

\textsuperscript{109} See correspondence between McLeod and Elkin, EP.

\textsuperscript{110} See Goodall 1996.

\textsuperscript{111} Attwood et al. 1997.

\textsuperscript{112} See Howard 1982.
by Jeremy Beckett and Ian Keen. Both turned their attention to the problem of ‘Aboriginal identity’ in settled Australia. Both books dwell on problems of continuity and discontinuity which beleaguered understandings of Aboriginality in the southeast; this found further expression in cases such as Hindmarsh and Yorta Yorta.

Conclusion

The southeast was largely ignored by orthodox anthropologists until 1993 because no ‘real’ Aborigines were to be found there, and if they were, they did not live as Aborigines. People were placed on mission stations, reserves, which were sites of both protection and modernisation; here people were to be prepared for introduction into the dominant white community in the belief that their culture had been lost. This is reminiscent of Ronald Berndt’s continuum of Aboriginal change: ‘at one extreme are those who are still traditionally oriented, at the other extreme are persons of Aboriginal descent who ... are for all intents and purposes are ordinary everyday Australians - except for the heritage of their past.’ Wayne Atkinson proposes another view, an Aboriginal view, of the southeast, specifically Victoria:

The present day Koorie community in Victoria is still closely-knit by strong family kinship ties, shared experiences and on-going cultural and social links with specific places. These attachments are to the regions surrounding the reserve, or mission stations where our ancestors were settled last century [nineteenth], which in most cases was part of our tribal territory. ... Aboriginal culture today in Victoria is alive and well. ...We still retain many aspects of out traditional culture and through historical circumstances and necessity have blended with many aspects of European society. ... However, regardless of where we live we all retain a strong sense of pride in our Aboriginality, in our own tribal regions and communities and in our own history and cultural heritage.

Native title provides an explanation, but not the only one, for the present interest by anthropologists in the southeast. ‘A consequence of the external requirements of a legal system, formed by the workings of the Northern Territory Land Rights practice, which understands that only anthropologists can properly interpret and understand Aboriginal people and culture. This has privileged anthropological knowledge above all other knowledge(s) about Aborigines. Anthropologists have, however, contested their knowledge about Aborigines, as is the case in two landmark decisions in the southeast, the Hindmarsh Bridge Royal Commission and the Yorta Yorta native title claim. It has broken the hegemony of common anthropological understandings through a contest over histor-

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114 The problem of ‘identity’ as discussed by Beckett and Keen is deserving of a wider discussion, not least because the problematic of Aboriginal identity in settled Australia assumed such importance in political debates during the 1980s and 1990s. This is not to say that such issues are no longer important but they do not assume such central significance now. The excursion by anthropology into the problematic of Aboriginal identity in the southeast was in itself problematic. The title of the 1997 conference ‘Continuity and Discontinuity in the southeast’ was altered partly because of concern expressed by Aboriginal people about its implications for understandings of their identity. In terms of anthropological interest the collegium looked to the work of Reay et al. in the early 1960s and that of Beckett and Keen and its implications for native title in the late 1990s.
ical interpretation of past ethnographies. Hence a more significant development, revealed in both cases, has been the importance of history because of the lack of historicising and contextualising the ethnographic material by anthropologists.\(^{117}\)

The change in dealing with ethnographic material has created a problem for both anthropology and history. Anthropologists expect the historian to re-analyse the anthropologist’s work, and this is an understanding anthropologists have brought to Native Title matters in the southeast (see for example the Yorta Yorta native title case).\(^ {118}\) That is, they are interested in the epistemological developments of the discipline: their presentation of ethnographic material has emphasised this aspect rather than setting the ethnographic material in its historical and political context. The notion that the circumstances under which the anthropologist worked may influence where and how they did fieldwork and the knowledge produced as a consequence, as a legitimate field of historical inquiry, is resisted by many anthropologists. In fact some anthropologists act as a ‘gatekeeper’ for the discipline, keeping out articles that interrogate the social and political history of the discipline.\(^ {119}\)

It has led to a questioning of anthropological models for understanding historical accounts of Aboriginal life. A discipline that has traditionally ignored the southeast and built its theory (and reputation) on Aborigines living in the desert and tropical Australia now brings these models to bear on the southeast: the archetypal hunter-gatherer. As Heather Builth\(^ {120}\), writing about the Gundjitmara of southwest Victoria, states, ‘the resource rich wetlands of western Victoria encouraged different modes of exploitation and cultural development. The Gundjitmara cannot be compared to any society of central or northern Australia. Their landscape requires a more appropriate interpretative approach which recognises rather than misconceives the distinctive archaeological, historical and cultural records of the region.’

The practice of anthropology might, in the future, be influenced by the historicising of nineteenth and twentieth century ethnographic texts, but at the very least it will lead to a new way of thinking and writing about the southeast by anthropologists and historians.

\(^{117}\) A good example of this occurred at a recent Australian Anthropology Society conference in Perth; a session on Daisy Bates and the significance of her work for native title cases revealed the interest anthropologists (linguists as well) have in mining these past texts for information regardless of its quality and context. Tom Gara, a historian who has worked extensively on native title cases as well as on the work of Daisy Bates, presented a finely nuanced analysis of her work within the political and social context of her time. The anthropologists in the audience expressed no interest.

\(^{118}\) In May 1999 I helped organise, through the Native Title Research Unit in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, a workshop on history and native title. These and other issues such as expert witnesses were raised (to be published in 2001).

\(^{119}\) I would like to thank Christine Cheater, Fiona Paisley and Peter Gifford for their discussions with me on such issues. An example: I recently received a reply from an anthropological journal to which I had sent a article which examined the political context in which anthropologist conducted their fieldwork. It was rejected on the grounds the paper has ‘neither anthropological perspective nor adequate conceptual underpinning’. Another referee was of the opinion that ‘the author seems not to be anthropologically knowledgeable at all’ as if this was a criteria for such a discussion. The article has since been published in another anthropological journal.

\(^{120}\) Bluith 1996: 138–9.
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‘Sea long stretched between’: perspectives of Aboriginal fishing on the south coast of New South Wales in the light of Mason v Tritton

Brian Egloff

Umbara, an Aboriginal elder and seaman, composed this song during the closing years of the nineteenth century1 (Howitt 1887: 331):

- capsizing me
- striking me
- wind blows hard
- sea long stretched between
- striking hard hitting
- striking me
- dashing me
- striking

Today, Aboriginal families are fighting to both regain and retain their access to maritime resources. The complexity of regulations governing coastal fishing and the merging of traditional or customary rights to fish with commercial pursuits threaten their livelihood and cultural heritage.

Background

In 1992, three archaeologists were commissioned to draft reports in the defence of seven Aboriginal men charged with ‘shucking abalone’ in the waters of the south coast of New South Wales and with possessing an excessive number of abalone contrary to the Fisheries and Oyster Farms (General) Regulations 1989 (NSW) (Cane 1998; Strickland 1994: 28). In their defence to criminal charges, the accused stated that they had exercised a traditional and customary right to fish. A report by Sarah Colley (1992) addressed the nature of prehistoric abalone and shellfish exploitation and Scott Cane (1992) compiled a report on the family fishing traditions of the defendants. A third report was prepared on the historical significance of coastal maritime resources (Egloff 1992). This study was to form the basis of a submission to the Minister for Natural Resources seeking amend-

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1. Umbara, also known as Merriman, had a boat which is described as being built in Sydney (Howitt 1904). See Egloff (1981: 10) for a picture of Merriman and a discussion of his involvement in the 1883 initiation at Mumbulla Mountain to the north of Bega (also refer to Howitt 1904: 529; Howitt nd; Mulvaney 1970).
ments to the *Fisheries and Oyster Farms Act* 1935 and for possible inclusion in the legal proceedings.

It is the merging of the past with the present, in particular the recent historical context, which is the focus of the body of this paper. It is extremely difficult to discuss in brief our knowledge of Aboriginal maritime activities on the south coast and how it might contribute to demonstrations of native fishing rights as a defence against criminal charges. The paper focuses on the relatively rich information gathered before and during the preparations for Mason v Tritton which pertains to two different kinds of maritime activity, both practised on the south coast of New South Wales, one which has lapsed and the other which is continuing. The first is the whaling activity of the Thomas family which demonstrates a rapid adaptation by a family whose roots lie in the tablelands to the limited economic opportunities which British colonisation brought (Morgan 1994: 16, 121). The second is the fishing tradition of the Brierlys, a coastal family, which documents the merging of native custom and commercial practice.

**Mason v Tritton**

Scott Cane presented his perspective of the Mason v Tritton case at the 1996 Australian Anthropological Conference (Cane 1998). In the paper Cane did not consider a detailed analysis of Mason v Tritton in the *Australian Criminal Reports of 1993–1994* (Strickland 1994). In addition to this summation, the case is discussed in five publications entered by 1998 in the *agis* data base (Behrendt 1995; Butt 1996; Hiley 1996; Stieniswensen 1995; Austin 1995) and has been referred to in other publications, for example an article by Kennedy (1996) which discusses the case of Dershaw v Sutton on the exercising of native hunting rights in Western Australia.

Preparation for the case was extremely rushed. Cane and Colley finished their studies in less than three weeks, while the report by Egloff was awaiting review by the Aboriginal community at the time the hearing commenced. Cane drafted an exemplary report under considerable duress as in fact there were seven defendants and it was not known which would be called. Perhaps because this was one of the first cases of its kind in eastern Australia, the instructions from the defence to the researchers did not focus on a critical matter. Colley reviewed prehistoric matters and Egloff researched Aboriginal historical and contemporary use of the sea, both of which were not being questioned. One of the essential matters at issue was the Aboriginal system regulating fishing and abalone gathering. This matter was not addressed in detail by the three researchers. During cross-examination in the Magistrates Court, Cane was asked ‘Apart from the fact of fishing by aboriginal people in the coastal waters are you aware of an aboriginal law that deals with fishing rights or practices’, the answer given by Cane was ‘no’. Strickland (1994) states that:

> There is no material in Mr Cane’s report indicating an assertion by Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal members of communities of exclusive rights to fish in an area of the coasts of New South Wales.


> The highest evidence went was to show that some Aboriginal people enjoyed eating and harvesting abalone from time to time prior to 1788. However, there is no evidence that the eating and harvesting represented some right in the nature of land right or was under a recognised system of Aboriginal law and custom.
Reports by Colley and Cane were admitted by the Magistrate but the report prepared by the latter was considered to be presented in a ‘a strange form’ which could have been interpreted as ‘wishing to please the person who had asked for the opinion’. Strickland (1994: 35, 45) goes on to state that he believes that the plaintiff relied upon ‘quasi-scientific information which did not focus on the point at issue’.2

Reviews of Mason v Tritton suggest that the case failed upon evidentiary grounds (Sutherland 1996: 26). The only witness for the defence was Scott Cane with neither the defendant or any Aboriginal elder providing testimony. Judge Priestly of the Court of Appeal commented harshly on the absence of testimony by Aboriginal elders which in his words had proved so effective in other cases, particularly in Mabo [no. 2].

In summary, the body of legal publications reporting the case of Mason v Tritton recognises native or customary rights to fish but indicates that the evidentiary burden is exacting and that four matters need to be demonstrated (Sutherland 1996: 26):

- traditional laws and customs extending the ‘right to fish’ were exercised by an Aboriginal community immediately before the Crown claimed sovereignty over the territory;
- the appellant is an indigenous person and is a biological descendant of that original Aboriginal community;
- the appellant and the intermediate descendants had, subject to the general propositions outlined above, continued uninterrupted, to observe the relevant laws and customs; and
- the appellant’s activity or conduct in fishing for the fish in question was an exercise of those traditional laws and customs.

Whaling and the Thomas family

British colonial occupation on the far south coast of New South Wales at Eden and Bega took place in the 1830s as pressure on grazing properties caused stock to be brought down off the tablelands on to the coast as far south as Gippsland3 (Thompson 1985). It was at this time, or perhaps earlier, that the whaling station at Kiah on Twofold Bay, near Eden, was established. In the report for 1841 Commissioner Lambie wrote:

At the stations bordering on the Coast a good many ... of the natives are employed in sheep washing, hoeing maize and reaping, and last year three boats’ crews, in number eighteen, were employed by the Messers Imlay in the Whale Fishery at Twofold Bay on the same lay or term as the whites. The blacks were stationed on the opposite side of the Bay to the other Fisherman, and they adopted the same habits as the whites. They lived in huts, slept in beds, used utensils in cooking, and made flour into bread; but as soon as the fishing season was over, they all returned to their tribe in the Bush’ (from Cameron 1987: 81).

2. Other matters discussed in the summation by Strickland are instructive but outside the bounds of this paper, such as:
- does a licence which seeks to regulate act contrary to the customary rights of indigenous people; and
- is the restrictive nature of fishing regulations acting contrary to the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (C’th)?

3. Refer to Wesson (2000: 98, 120, 129) for a discussion of the movement of the Aboriginal population of the tablelands to coastal places.
ABORIGINAL FISHING ON THE SOUTH COAST OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Figure 1. Map of southeastern New South Wales showing the location of Twofold Bay at Eden where the shore-based whaling station was located. To the north is Moruya, a small coastal town which is home to the Brierly family.

Twomey (1981) comments that whaling complemented traditional skills with spotting and harpooning as specialities while the dangers of whaling promoted mutual respect with sufficient profits for all, and was not prohibited (hunting and moving across the country in groups were prohibited)\(^4\). Willy (Bill) Thomas (William Lindsay Thomas) was one of the last Aboriginal whalers to be interviewed and recorded. He was born in 1903 at the place where the cannery was later built, in Eden. Albert 'Bukal' Thomas\(^5\) was his brother and Charaga was Willy's father. Young Albert Thomas\(^6\) and

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4. Commissioner Lambie commented that 'when most required ... [Aborigines] are frequently found absent on some hunting or shooting expedition' (from Cameron 1987: 81). Presumably this meant that Aboriginal people had and used firearms. No doubt this prompted unease amongst the colonial settlers as it was not until the 1850s that incidents of sniping and wife stealing abated and fatal conflicts diminished throughout the south coast.

5. A picture of an Aboriginal whaling crew at Twofold Bay includes Albert 'Bukal' Thomas (in 'Whaling at Eden', *Lone Hand* July 1908).

6. The grave of Albert Thomas is marked with a plaque reading 'Albert Thomas / Last King of the Mankutas / Born 11th February 1876 / Died 11th July 1976 / Respected Citizen of Wreck Bay'.
Willy worked with the whalers. Six people including George Davidson’s sons Jim and Wallace were employed at the whaling station. Bert Penrith, another Aboriginal whaler, was Bill’s uncle. Willy was 23 years old when the last whale was killed. It was ‘92 feet’ long and it took about one week to render the oil.

During the annual migration, killer whales came to the mouth of the river, surfaced, making their presence known (Davidson 1987, Mead 1961). The men would ride out to the look-out by horse to see if the ‘killers’ had a whale, then ride back. It was best hunting whales at night as the phosphorescence indicated the direction they were turning. Willy Thomas went on his first hunt at 21 and in his words when he recounted his experiences, ‘was a bit frightened’:

Davidson had a five ‘oared’ boat and a seven ‘oared’ boat. Alley Greg would follow in a launch and pick you up if your boat got smashed by a whale. They never used the launch to kill whales. They had a bomb gun in the boat but did not use it. Horses were not in use at the station so a winch was employed to move the greased whale carcass. Generally speaking they produced ‘80 to 90 pounds’ of oil per ton of whale.

Killer whales migrated with the whales and according to Willy, when whaling stopped at Eden, they were never seen again. Mrs Davidson cooked food for all and they ate in common with the family. There were three separate sleeping huts for the men. In leisure time Willy played football at Eden or had a cup of tea at the convent. One afternoon, Jack Davidson’s son, daughter and wife went out fishing with him, the boat overturned, his wife swam to shore and he drowned holding onto the children. It is believed that the killer whales patrolled to protect his body. His remains were found next day on the beach. After that tragic event whaling ceased. During the depression Willy left Eden for Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve. Arthur Ashby, Bert Penrith, Charlie Roberts, William and Albert Thomas, Dan Parsons and Charlie Adgery are mentioned by Eileen Morgan’s *Calling of the spirits* (1994: 119, 121) and Tom Mead in his *Killers of Eden* also refers to Sam Haddigaddi, Charlie Adgery, Bert Penrith, Peter and Albert Thomas, and Dan Parsons as members of the whaling crews.

**Fishing and the Brierly family of Moruya**

One of the links between the whaling station and coastal fishing is through the Brierly family. Brierlys have lived in the Moruya locale for a considerable number of years. Oswald, the Aboriginal patriarch of the family, was named after the British colonist who adopted and raised him at a cottage near Kiah (Bassett 1966, Brierly 1842-44). Oswald Brierly was the manager of the whaling station at Twofold Bay. He accompanied the *HMS Rattlesnake* expedition to Papua and was to become the Maritime Artist to the Queen. Scrutiny of Brierly’s painting ‘Coming out of Eden’ reveals a ‘black man’ as a member of the crew in pursuit of a whale.

During the 1870s and 1880s, fishing boats were provided by the government to Aboriginal families on the south coast and fishing seems to have been a widespread activity (Carter 1979, Cameron 1987, Egloff 1992, Goodall 1982, Twomey 1981). The

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7. The biography of Daryl Tonkin (Landon and Tonkin 1999) provides insights into Aboriginals and white Australians working and living together in the forest industry during the period following World War II.
Out of Eden was painted in 1867 by Oswald Brierly, the maritime artist and one-time manager of Ben Boyd's whaling station. A young Aboriginal man at the whaling station took his name from the manager and was also known as Oswald Brierly. He is the direct ancestor of the Brierly family of Moruya.

Although this is one of the most reproduced paintings in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, to the best of the author's knowledge no one has speculated that the 'black' oarsman could be the Aboriginal Oswald Brierly. Australian Aborigines are recorded as being employed both on the maritime whaling ships and at the coastal whaling station. (Courtesy of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.)

Report of the Protector to 31 December 1882 (in Organ 1990: 339-40) states that there were 41 Aborigines and 26 'half-castes' living in Moruya with

Three half-casts working for wages. All very well off. Four boats in this portion of district in fair order, and properly cared for. Impossible to say what they earn. ...

The half-castes in this district are remarkably well off, and can earn the same wages as Europeans. The half-casts generally use the boat.

Living memory extends back to shortly before World War II when the Brierly family had a '22 foot' vessel and at first used hand-lines and then employed nets. Initially, Walter Brierly worked for a British family in order to get enough money to buy a net. They fished for salmon, mullet, blackfish, garfish and bream, later acquiring trucks to haul the fish.

An arrangement was made with a Sydney firm who supplied the Brierly family with a '45 foot' launch, the Jean, with the payment for the boat being taken out of the catches. The Jean had a Buick 6 engine. With that boat Walter worked with a white man, Roy Davis an Aboriginal and Walter's son Ernie; others were recruited to handle a big catch. At that time a licence was two shillings and six pence and although it was common to have unlicensed people on the boat they were never booked. The boat was lost in the big flood which swept away the Moruya bridge in 1945 or 1946.
After the Jean was lost, Ernie Brierly bought a ‘16 foot’ boat, which was never named. He was then old enough to have a drivers licence and worked to pay for his own gear. Ernie only had two other jobs in his lifetime; one in the 1940s to 1950s as a sleeper cutter, and a short period of work on the Moruya aerodrome. By and large throughout his life, Ernie’s livelihood has come from fishing with a bit from trucking. The Brierlys would take the catch to Sydney in a truck owned by the Nyes. Ernie was one of the first locals to dive for abalone and to send them to Sydney for sale. He also sold lobsters for one shilling and six pence apiece. In those days fish were worth one shilling and six pence a box, then the price rose to two shillings and a six pence just before the war. As today, when it was rough there was no fishing. Women worked with the nets and would help ‘shoot’ (launch) the boats. The fishing camp ate whatever fish they had at the time and liked them all. Changes in technology were few, with nylon nets coming in during the 1950s. The Brierly crew regularly fished from Durras to Bermagui, down to the Victorian border and occasionally up to Jervis Bay, particularly later when Ernie had the Kamila I, which was used for tuna fishing. Ernie sold that boat about 10 years ago, in the 1980s.

Ernie’s son John Brierly was born in 1953, left school early and has spent the greater part of his adult life fishing. Starting in 1968 he helped with beach fishing and working with the nets. At that time they had small boats which had to be rowed to haul the nets. The team worked the Broulee area by sitting on the hill and spotting the mullet. With the addition of trucks they were able to move from place to place. At first, a common truck was the old army blitz which was hired. Later Ernie acquired a Chevrolet truck.

In the 1970s, the Brierlys worked with the Kamila I. They fished between Eden and Wollongong for tuna. John was ‘poling’ (catching tuna with a lure, line and pole) from the time he left school. It was a good time, like a holiday, but not good for money as the family was never into fishing in a big way, only enough to get along. Now, in John’s words, it is difficult with the big American purse-seine rigs taking all of the tuna. Once, they only had to go out a few miles to get their catch but before they quit tuna fishing, say in 1982, they had to go out up to 150 miles to get a catch. John believes that 1978 to 1979 were the last good seasons before the high-tech electronic gear moved in.

Abalone or muttonfish was not regarded as anything special as they were always there to be eaten. They were smashed off with a rock or levered off with an iron tool made from a car spring with the handle covered with a bit of rubber tube; ‘they just waited for the tide to go out and waded into the sea’. In the past people dived at shallow depths for the plentiful abalone. Gear was simple with a face-mask and snorkel, if these could be afforded, and then wetsuits which were described by John ‘as not the best’. Throughout the 1970s abalone furnished most of John’s income when he was not away from the beach. They were plentiful, John states, and it was common for the fishermen to barter abalone with the locals for vegetables. During this period, John damaged his eardrum and no longer dives. John remembers a price of 30 cents a pound which rose to $1 a pound. He suspects that the abalone were worth a lot more, but that was all that the agent was offering them. From Moruya beach to Broulee they gathered ‘conks’, ‘bimblers’ (cockle) and ‘pippies’, with oysters coming from the Moruya River.

Beach fishing was preferred, ‘almost an instinct’ (refer to La Perouse Aboriginal Community 1988 for a description of beach fishing). They never looked at the dollar
value as when there were fish to be had from the beach they went after them even if a
catch in the lakes could have been more valuable. In 1992 John Brierly stated that ‘there
is good money in mullet as the roe is in demand fetching up to $3.70/kilogram if it is of
good quality’. John has four boats and a Range Rover utility which the Aboriginal
Development Commission helped him purchase. The boats are all-purpose built vessels
of ‘14 to 15 feet’ in length; one has a flat bottom for ‘meshing’ in the lakes. The other
boats are also used for ‘prawning or meshing’ in the lakes. Today they catch mostly
mullet and then bream and whiting.

The seasonal round is as follows:

January — the last of the lobsters are being gathered but prawning in lakes such as
Kiola, Broulee, Durras, Illawarra and Tuross is more profitable. A bit of mullet
meshing is carried out from time to time.

February — continue to mesh for prawns while looking for an early run of mullet.

March — begin to work full-time on the mullet while on rough days will work the
lake or go for garfish, with a special net, on the rocks.

April, May and sometimes into June — pattern described for March continues.

June — begin to dive for lobsters, do some meshing and chasing salmon and mul­
et (it all depends on the weather and if they can get out). During the cold weather
the fish seem to be dispersed, are more difficult to find and the catch can be
reduced to half a box.

October — prawn season starts and lasts until January. Prawns continue to be in
demand and bring a good price.

September, October, November and December — season for lobster-potting in the
day and prawns at night. They go after which ever is the most plentiful.

John regularly works with Alan and Wayne and with his 14 year old son Christo­
pher. Many Aboriginal families have been in and out of the fishing game and over a
period of time people have given up licences as the fees increased. Aboriginal fishing
families on the south coast identified by John are Squires at Eden, Brierlys at Moruya,
Nyse at Mogo, Butlers at Bawley Point, Ardlers at Wreck Bay and Connollys at Orient
Point (see Cane 1992 for additional family names).

They were fishermen, not businessmen as John points out, and really had no idea
what the fish or abalone were fetching outside of the local area. As the price went up in
the 1970s and 1980s there was an influx of divers who only needed a $2 licence and a rig
to make a lot of money. When licenses were only $2 there was little hassle from the
Inspectors; they even used to help with the haul. Today, John perceives a problem in the
way quotas are established. In his words, ‘fisheries look at your catch and reduces the
quota if the previous year’s quota is not reached’. This is regarded as unfair as the fish­
ermen may not choose to catch fish because the price is low or may not be able to if the
sea is rough. Also, the complexity of the regulations is increasing, with talk of endorse­
ments for particular species coming into effect in the near future. John feels that Aborig­
inal extended families should be given gathering rights as they have been carrying on
coastal fishing for as long as they can remember.
Conclusion
Stuart Cameron (1987: 76), in a study of the history of New South Wales far south coast Aboriginal communities, states that ‘Aborigines very rapidly came to occupy an important, if undervalued, place in the new local economy both through the exploitation and extension of their traditional skills and by means of their swiftly acquired mastery of new skills’. He suggests that this negates the notion that Aboriginal people were unsuited for the modern world and supports the counterargument presented by other researchers that Aboriginal society did not fade away but was ‘suppressed’.

The available evidence reveals a rapid adoption by many Aborigines both during and after colonial dispossession ... The view that traditional practices and attitudes provided an unsurmountable barrier to Aboriginal employment is simply misleading. It would appear to be more an article of faith than an empirical assessment. The material presented here endorses Keesing’s suggestion that although colonialism brings; ‘great devastation’, it also reveals the ‘enormous resilience and adaptive capacities of indigenous people’, a dramatic ability to survive in the face of oppression and devastation as long as life survives (Cameron 1987: 76).

The historical picture that emerges is one of British colonists attempting to push out and marginalise coastal Aboriginal people as they expropriate Indigenous lands. Then, as the new settlers moved inland, Aboriginal people re-established their hold over the coastal margins that were perceived by the settlers as wastelands. The process was assisted by people such as Oswald Brierly at Kiah who had fostered a relationship with Aboriginal people which encouraged them to come to and remain at the coast. It was not until recently that Australians began to perceive the coast not as a wasteland but as a recreational and retirement paradise. Much to the amazement of many Australians they found the coastal margins to be occupied by Aboriginal reserves, camps, settlements and individual householders.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Aboriginal beach fishing enterprises contributed considerably to the economic position of Aboriginal people (Egloff 1990, Fox 1978, La Perouse Aboriginal Community 1988). Fishermen are known to have operated at La Perouse, Port Kembla, Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Moruya and Bermagui as well as at fishing camps between these major centres (Cane 1998). As the costs associated with beach or long-shore fishing increased over the last few decades, particularly licensing, family businesses which had thrived for many years — but which had a limited economic and managerial horizons — were forced out of operation (John Brierly interview 1992, Scott 1969). Gradually pursuits which once formed the basis of Aboriginal economies, particularly agricultural work, timbering and fishing, have been removed without replacement, thus worsening the financial position of Aboriginal communities (Castle and Hagen 1978, 1984).

Involvement by archaeologists in the Mason v Tritton case varied markedly from their successful participation in earlier land-use controversies on the south coast of New South Wales (Cane 1988; Egloff 1981, 1990; Egloff et al. 1995. They now found that their research was being scrutinised by a court of law, and it fell short of requirements. The participation of Egloff in 1978, leading to the declaration of Mumbulla Mountain as an Aboriginal place and the granting of the Wreck Bay reserve to the community, may have given the impression that a demonstration of Aboriginality and attachment to place were the only essential elements of the native claim process. Today, that compla-
cency may be further reinforced by the successful transfer of Jervis Bay National Park, now Booderee National Park, to the Wreck Bay Community Council. This process involved a report to the Minister by three archaeologists (Egloff et al. 1995).

From the perspective of one of the scientific experts who contributed to the Mason v Tritton case, there are some fields of expertise which are perhaps best dealt with by anthropologists, historians, geographers and archaeologists, and other instances where the voices of the Aboriginal insiders must be heard together with that of outside ‘experts’. The defence was criticised by the court for not bringing forward testimony by either the defendant or community elders. Although there may well have been sound reasons for this action on the part of the defence, how did the defence expect to gain a favourable outcome without essential testimony? Reviewing the subsequent case of Sutton v Dershaw in Western Australia, it is doubtful if Mason v Tritton could have had a favourable outcome given the kind of evidence required by the court (Kennedy 1996). The offences of the seven defendants in Mason v Tritton ranged from the possession of 1450 abalone, with ten as the legal limit, to possession of eight undersized lobsters (Cane 1998). The decision to run with all seven cases, instead of defending the individual most likely to succeed, is questionable. It certainly made Scott Cane’s task seven times more difficult and perhaps deflected him from more pertinent research.

The Court of Appeal was not entirely hostile to the defence. Judge CJ Gleeson in his summation states:

Enough has therefore been said to show that a claimant making a Mabo claim faces a difficult evidentiary task. That task is not made easier by former policies concerning Aboriginal Australians and the ignorance of their history and culture which fosters those policies. What is sufficient evidence to maintain a particular claim will vary according to the particular circumstances of the case. ... I do not underestimate the difficulty of gathering and adducing such evidence (Court of Appeal 1994)

Last century when Umbara composed his song of the sea, was he continuing the native tradition of fishing or was he the forerunner of a commercial industry carried on today by the Brierly family and other coastal Aboriginals? The more we record the ‘stories’ of members of the south coast families, the more likely we are to convincingly bridge the divide between the past and the present.

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French anthropology in Australia, a prelude: the encounters between Aboriginal Tasmanians and the expedition of Bruny d’Entrecasteaux, 1793

Stephanie Anderson

Encounters between Indigenous Australians and French explorers in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth are a well-documented but not particularly well-known facet of Indigenous and Australian history. The accounts of these encounters open, however one-sidedly and scantily, a window onto Indigenous cultures at the time of European contact. In terms of French intellectual history, they are also significant for the construction of anthropological knowledge, both biological and ethnographic, in France during the nineteenth century. There are a number of important French voyages between 1791 and 1840 that deserve to be examined from this perspective.¹ My concern in this two-part article is to examine the first two of these expeditions: that of Bruny d’Entrecasteaux (1791–1793) in the first part and in the second part Nicolas Baudin’s (1800–1804). From both expeditions a reasonable amount of anthropological material was amassed which, for Tasmanian society, has been most usefully collated by NJB Plomley.² The d’Entrecasteaux expedition’s sojourn in Van Diemen’s Land was a model of engagement in a brief encounter across cultures. Baudin’s expedition was less successful in terms of cross-cultural interaction but more complex in its anthropological dimension.

Enlightenment and exploration

There are two interrelated domains in which to situate the early voyages that I shall refer to: that of the Enlightenment and that of two outstanding Enlightenment voyagers, Bougainville and Cook. Without ascribing a homogeneous intellectual framework to what is termed the Enlightenment, I think that the voyages of d’Entrecasteaux and Baudin can be placed in what is paradigmatically thought of as the spirit of the Enlight-

¹ French voyage accounts that describe encounters with Indigenous Australians come out of the expeditions of Bruny d’Entrecasteaux in Tasmania in 1793, Baudin at Shark Bay in 1801 and in Tasmania in 1802, Louis de Freycinet in Western Australia and Port Jackson in 1818 and 1819, Louis-Isidore Duperrey’s officers Dumont d’Urville and RP Lesson in 1824 in the Blue Mountains, Hyacinthe de Bougainville at Port Jackson in 1825, and Dumont d’Urville on the first Pacific voyage under his command at King George Sound, Jervis Bay and Port Jackson in 1826.

enment: a voracious scientific appetite for knowing the natural world, including human beings, as part of nature even if they were still dedicated to God, and the view, partly because the divine perspective still held sway, that human beings though different in different climes, were one. Belief in a universal human nature and a universal human rationality prevailed. Nonetheless to consider the study of human beings as the natural history of man, as a branch of zoology, was already to look at them in a fundamentally different way. It was to consider humans, not each one in themselves in their divine uniqueness but as a species, part of a taxonomic system.

At this time voyages to the Pacific were widening knowledge about different peoples. Bougainville's voyage is famous as the source of the myth of the South Seas paradise and Bougainville brought back the Tahitian Aotouru to France where he was feted by Parisian society. Cook brought back Omai, and in France as in England his voyages aroused tremendous popular interest. The voyage accounts were quickly translated into French. France and Britain were imperial rivals but Cook's voyages made for scientific rivalry as well. Contemporaneous with hardening imperial ambitions, by the early part of the nineteenth century human others were no longer necessarily thought of as less advanced or even degenerate brothers and sisters, yet siblings nonetheless, but were being classified by European scientists into hierarchical racial groupings. By this time, too, there was a history of closer acquaintance with Pacific peoples through voyaging, colonisation and trading that from a European perspective increasingly called into question the natural goodness of the noble savage. Cook had been killed in Hawaii, Marion du Fresne and some of his party had been attacked and killed by Maori in the Bay of Islands in 1772, La Pérouse's expedition had suffered the loss of a number of crew members to Samoan attack before its mysterious disappearance in the Pacific after leaving Botany Bay in 1788.

The scale of the scientific operations the voyages entailed was immense in terms of the range of subjects to be studied, recording and collecting, and later publication of the results: the aim was to note, measure, describe and classify this new part of the world in its entirety. The task of contributing to the 'accroissement des connaissances humaines' is highlighted in the instructions to d'Entrecasteaux, as is the pride in the new instruments embarked to assist in it. Baudin's expedition was exemplary. It brought back a prodigious number of specimens of plants and animals, and discovered, according to Cuvier's report, 2500 new species. The empirical passion is exemplified in the observatories the scientists would set up on the beaches as a base from which to make their observations of natural phenomena. If indigenous people were encountered — and no doubt they often themselves observed the strangers unseen — short stays on a beach typically produced descriptions of their physical appearance in the way that animal species would be described.

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6. ibid.: 256.
8. Ibid.
What was much more problematic under such circumstances was acquiring ethnographic information of any value. This was the domain not then known as the ethnographic but as the ‘moral’ which embraced customs and character as opposed to anatomy and physiology or the ‘physical’. Time and language were the main constraints, but in a vast continent such as Australia of which so little was known, as the blank map of the continent produced by Baudin’s cartographers shows so graphically, the geographical setting of predominantly beachside meetings was severely limiting as well. Furthermore, since the responsibility for observing and recording was that of scientists or scientifically trained naval officers, it is not surprising that what was characterised as the moral domain was not uppermost. In fact it was sometimes the artists on board who showed a better grasp of intercultural communication.

D’Entrecasteaux’s expedition

D’Entrecasteaux had a twofold mission: to find out what had happened to La Pérouse and his ships and if possible rescue them, and at the same to undertake ‘un voyage de recherches et de découvertes’. It was instigated by the Society of Natural History. While it had the distinction of being the first French expedition to refer to ‘anthropology’, Baudin’s was not the first to specify the study of human groups as part of the task of the scientists. La Pérouse’s instructions had contained brief mention of this and the same instructions were then issued to d’Entrecasteaux. Observations about indigenous peoples came under the heading ‘Operations related to Astronomy, Geography, Navigation, Physics and the various branches of Natural History’. The Captain was instructed that at landfalls observations were to be made on ‘the genius, character, customs and ways, temperament, language, diet and the number of inhabitants’. Natural objects were to be collected and catalogued and note taken of the use made of them by the inhabitants. Cultural artefacts were to be dealt with in the same way: ‘clothing, weapons, decoration, furniture, tools, musical instruments and all the implements used by the different peoples he will visit’. The artists were to draw not only sites and land profiles, and natural history specimens, but also portraits of indigenous inhabitants, their dress, ceremonies, games, buildings, sea-going vessels. The relations to be conducted with indigenous peoples were spelled out. Every attempt was to be made to establish friendly relations while exercising caution, objects were not to be obtained under duress, trade was to be conducted and the commander was to bring fruits and vegetables cultivated in Europe to the natives and instruct them in their cultivation. Particular concern was expressed that force should be used only as a last resort.

D’Entrecasteaux’s expedition embarked in 1791 in the wake of the French Revolution. The Société d’Histoire Naturelle prepared various memoirs for the expedition. The Académie des Sciences sent d’Entrecasteaux a copy and a summary of La Pérouse’s instructions plus an additional memoir. The Société Royale de Médecine issued a
memoir to the surgeons concerning indigenous diseases and their remedies, indicating the possibility that information obtained about savage society might be able to profit the knowledge of savants at home.\textsuperscript{17}

The French expeditions preceding d'Entrecasteaux's that touched on the shores of New Holland, those of Marion du Fresne and La Pérouse, had suffered catastrophe. Despite its geographic discoveries and scientific achievements, that of d'Entrecasteaux had its own share of disaster. The officers and crew on the \textit{Recherche} and the \textit{Espérance} were divided between republican and royalist sympathies and d'Entrecasteaux reportedly suffered from depression caused by the divisions between his men. His health broke down and he died in 1793 not far from Surabaya where the new political situation in France and strained relations with the Dutch led to the break-up of the expedition. Political considerations aside, the first purpose of the mission could not be fulfilled. No trace of La Pérouse was found by d'Entrecasteaux, and early in the expedition he had followed what turned out to be a wild goose chase diverting him from his route. As well, relations with indigenous groups in the Pacific were a source of concern and ultimately bitter disillusionment to d'Entrecasteaux. The interlude in Van Diemen's Land stands out from the difficulties and disappointments of the rest of the voyage.

The meetings that occurred between d'Entrecasteaux's crew and Tasmanians — Lyluequonny people at Recherche Bay and Nuenonne people of Bruny Island\textsuperscript{18} in February 1793 — are usually seen as fulfilling for the French a Rousseau-esque ideal of life in the state of nature. This appears to be particularly valid when viewed against later less idyllic encounters. But while the crew may have been predisposed to seeing indigenous people in such a light and their instructions spoke of the need to use gentleness and humanity,\textsuperscript{19} things might have gone differently as they had for Marion du Fresne's expedition twenty years before when initially friendly relations turned sour, the French returning an attack of stones and weapons with gunfire, resulting in the death of a Tasmanian man.

But in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in 1793 goodwill on both sides seemed to flourish. What happened there is instructive in terms of certain themes that would recur in later voyages but also for its contrast with them. There are a number of accounts of the encounters which comprised several meetings over about a week at Recherche Bay and one on Bruny Island. Plomley has summarised the anthropological information obtained — important because of the subsequent fate of Tasmanian culture and more detailed than the description given by Cook from his Third Voyage in 1777\textsuperscript{20} — concerning such things as dwellings, tools and foods.\textsuperscript{21}

From the perspective of the French it was a wholly positive experience. There is a tone of gaiety and delight, even joy, a word used several times in the reports, about the meetings that is quite rare in expedition narratives. The crew had found shelters but

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.: 144.
\textsuperscript{18}I have used the band names of Aboriginal groups given by Lyndall Ryan for these districts (1981: 16). Horton (1994) refers to both of these groups as the Nuenonne.
\textsuperscript{19}Dunmore and Brossard 1985: 38.
\textsuperscript{20}Cook 1999: 446-50.
\textsuperscript{21}Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 264-79.
had barely sighted the Van Diemen's Land inhabitants on their first call the previous year so after the first shore party had made contact they were extremely curious to encounter the inhabitants at close hand. Meetings took place with mixed groups and children. At one point between 150 and 200 men had come from the ships on to the beach to see a group of only six Tasmanians who were seemingly unconcerned by being so hugely outnumbered.

The voyagers were initially impressed by what they saw as the innate goodness of the people because some of the Tasmanian men conveyed to them that they had come across members of the shore party sleeping and had left them undisturbed. The good impression remained. There are reports of great solicitousness on the part of the Aborigines as they guided a group through the bush, of sailors and Aborigines linking arms, of a young Aboriginal man playing a joke on one of the sailors. One of the men went on board ship to the delight of those with him and, it is reported, his own wonderment. The Aborigines are referred to as 'our good friends'.

Most surprise was shown by both groups for the other's behaviour in the area of relations between men and women. The Tasmanians were amazed about something that was quite unremarkable to the French, namely the absence of any women among them. They very actively investigated the more smooth-faced young men to see if this was indeed the case. For their part the French were aghast that the women of Recherche Bay seemed to be the sole providers of food, which they obtained by diving for shell fish. The diarists wonder in shocked tones how it could be that it was the weaker sex who was condemned to this drudgery. Had the voyagers been able to spend more time with the Aborigines they may have formed a different view about the division of labour and the composition of the diet. They did assume, though, from the kangaroo skins worn as cloaks by some of the inhabitants, that kangaroos were hunted or trapped.

What the French observed of Tasmanian society was limited to what they could see from the beach.

Both groups were fascinated by each others' bodies. Nicolas Ladroux, one of the sailors, wrote in his journal that 'we stayed five hours examining them, men and women alike, and then they for their part did just the same'.

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22 See Rossel 1808: 55–6. Rossel (p. 60) reports an interview one of the shore party claimed to have with an Aboriginal man but there seemed some doubt as to its veracity.
25 Rossel 1808, vol. 1: 232. Rossel's account of the second stay of the expedition in Tasmania has been translated in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 307–12. Rossel edited d'Entrecasteaux's journal for publication so that what appear to be comments by Rossel are more likely those of d'Entrecasteaux himself.
28 Although in fact the steward was a woman travelling with the expedition disguised as a man, with the consent of the captain. Some of the crew were, however, suspicious. See Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993 34-5.
29 D'Auribeau in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 283.
31 'Nous avions rester environ cinq heure d'orloge à les examiné, tant homme que femme; et puis eux de leur côte qui n'ent fasses pas moins' (Ladroux in Richard 1986: 338).
first lieutenant on the *Recherche*, writes in his account that he 'took advantage of their patience and natural gentleness in order to measure the principal dimensions of a man and a woman', recording measurements such as height, length of ears, width of shoulders and so on. The physical appearance of the Aborigines was described in detail: skin colour, hair texture and style, body markings, deformities. On the basis of the accounts of very early explorers, Buffon (whose complete works formed part of the naturalists' library) had described the natives of New Holland in his 'Varieties of the human species' as being 'extremely ugly and disgusting' and 'without a single feature that is agreeable'. Similarly, in later voyage accounts, starting with Péron's narrative of the Baudin expedition, the Aborigines are described as 'hideux', or 'repulsively ugly', an aesthetic judgment that both reinforced and influenced racist notions of indigenous peoples' primitivity and moral worth. But this was not the case in the d'Entrecasteaux expedition accounts. Thus d'Auribeau's description, while exhibiting explicit racial comparisons to a European standard, and to Africans, shows a positive response to the appearance of the Tasmanians. He writes:

The men whom we saw all had an agreeable countenance, gentle expression and small, deep-set eyes with less white than ours. Their nose is not flat, it is broad; the nostrils are large and flared. The teeth are small, regular, not particularly white, but not too dirty. The lower half of their face being much more prominent than ours, they wear a fairly long beard which completes the face to perfection. Only the men had their features totally blackened with charcoal [...]. This deep black contrasted greatly with the natural colour of the rest of their body, which is lighter than that of the African negroes and which one can compare to slightly dark copper. Their hair is short and completely woolly.

And La Billardière's physical description of the Recherche Bay people which states that protrusion of the upper jaw is marked in the children but scarcely present in adults is seen by Douglas as an implicit critique of Camper's theory of differing facial angles between human groups which came to be interpreted as an index of primitivity.

The visitors unfailingly comment on the nudity of men and women which at the level of visible cultural difference was no doubt the thing that most immediately startled Europeans. The modesty of women concerned them and the way women sat to conceal their genitals was a matter for comment in several journals. These and later French voyagers would consistently mention the slender limbs of the Indigenous Australians they met. The Recherche Bay people for their part were reported to have felt the sailors' calves in amazement.

The observers made a count of the people they saw distributed by age and sex. They attempted to work out family structure, though their descriptions of how they tried to gather this information by means of 'expressive signs', does not inspire confi-

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34 Buffon 1866: 260-1.
35 See Part 2 of this article in *Aboriginal History*, forthcoming.
dence that the Tasmanians necessarily knew what the visitors were asking. There was not a unanimous view as to whether the society practised polygyny. It was assumed that the horde was the political group and that there were no chiefs since no man was seen to exercise authority over the others. Wives, however, showed 'great subordination' to their husbands and children to their parents. The diarists were touched by the signs of maternal solicitude and some commented on the gentle admonition of children by their father. Child-rearing was a matter of intense medical and pedagogical concern in France at this time. It was thought that in this regard the practices of indigenous peoples might show if what was assumed to be the reflection of nature could serve as a model for civilised society.

Exchanges
Particularly striking in the reports of these meetings, and tragic in the light of future events, is the character of the attempts at communication that occur on both sides. The tone of the accounts is often patronising but it is unrealistic and anachronistic to expect more than goodwill and an openness to experience and difference on the part of a French crew in 1793. The openness on the part of the Aborigines is more remarkable, especially given the experience with Marion du Fresne in 1772, not long enough ago to have been forgotten.

The effort to establish communication involved different kinds of gifts and exchanges — of materials, plants and animals and symbols (women it seems were not exchanged or offered, although one sailor claimed to have been well received by one of the women). In a pattern reproduced elsewhere, the French showered trinkets on the Aborigines who showed a keen interest in some items, but displayed no lasting desire to acquire the material goods the French could provide. One thing they did want was red material which had been loaded up on the expedition as the colour of the Revolution. As Cook recorded too, the peoplesteadfastly refused any food that was offered. When children were given sweets their mothers took the food out of their mouths. But while food was refused, commensality was not. The French were present at the meal of one group which passed in a relaxed atmosphere. Thinking to advance the inhabitants' means of subsistence, they showed them the use of various implements — fish hooks, axes — and enjoyed impressing their hosts with explosions of gunpow-
der. When La Billardière, the botanist, went to check on the state of various plants the expedition gardener had planted the year before, he noted that the man who accompanied him could identify every introduced plant at once. The garden was not thriving and there was nothing to suggest that the Aborigines had used any of it.53

In small ways each offered something of their culture. At one meeting, one of the crew took up his violin but the Tasmanians indicated that the music was hurting their ears.54 The Tasmanians for their part sang for their guests during one long walk. La Billardière describes the modulation of their tunes as very like those of the Arabs of Asia Minor. He continues: ‘Two of them frequently sang the same air together; but one constantly a third above the other, forming this harmony with the greatest exactness’.55 On one occasion the artist Piron presented himself to be powdered black like the Tasmanians who darkened their skin with charcoal.

Words were exchanged too, not in ways that could allow anything but the most superficial understanding of meaning, but in an atmosphere of linguistic experiment by members of both groups that shows a recognition of the mutual value of each other’s language. Different officers compiled word lists, invaluable as a record for what they are but sadly limited in scope.56 One of the Tasmanians repeated the officers’ names with almost flawless pronunciation. Aboriginal people generally seemed much more adept at picking up European languages than vice versa.57 D’Auribeau concluded that the Aborigines lacked the sound ‘f’ without the relativistic perspective or linguistic knowledge to analyse phonemic distinctions made in the Recherche Bay language that did not exist in French. On the other hand, and this contrasted with later views about the primitiveness and unpleasantry of Aboriginal languages, in line with biological ones about physical differences, he writes that: ‘For the rest, there is nothing disagreeable in their pronunciation — it is crisp and lively’.58

There is poignancy when La Billardière reports that a young girl accompanying his group as they walked talked to them gaily non-stop although she must have realised that they could not understand her. He acknowledges that ‘we doubtless lost a great deal by not understanding the language of these natives’.59 D’Auribeau was more specific about this, concluding — and here again it was not a conclusion that those who assumed Aboriginal peoples to be without religious beliefs would later come to — that the party had spent ‘too short a time with these good natives to be able to discover any religious beliefs’. ‘[M]etaphysical ideas’, he maintains, ‘are not transmitted with the same ease as are physical ones and ... it is only after a long sojourn among a people that one can determine something in that connection’.60

55 La Billardière in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 293.
56 Plomley has assembled a single vocabulary out of a number of separate word lists compiled by officers and crew members, most of which are only available in manuscript form. It contains words such as body parts, plants, some basic verbs and pronouns (Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 312–17.
59 La Billardière in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 293.
60 D’Auribeau in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 283.
The following paragraph from the official account of the voyage epitomises the dichotomy opposing the virtues of the state of nature to the pitfalls of civilisation that runs through the expedition accounts, but which was particularly marked in d'Entrecasteaux’s entries:

We never noticed among them the least sign of temper or anger. They did not ever behave in a way which disappointed us and were always thoughtful of our regard. They seemed to live in great harmony with each other. We did not notice anything, either in their behaviour or in their customs, which could make us deviate from the good opinion in which we had held them from the first. Oh! should not we blush with shame for having, the previous year, suspected them of eating human flesh! They are interesting people in many respects and I wish we had been able to spend with them every minute of our stay at this anchorage.

The people we had observed seem to offer the most perfect image of the initial state of society when people were not yet agitated by passions or corrupted by the vices sometimes met with in civilised society.61

One young officer on the *Esperance*, La Motte du Portail, makes explicit reference to Rousseau in his journal:

One would have difficulty in finding a people who are less far from that of the primitive state of nature, and seen at first hand by a judicious observer they offer strong proof in support of the idea which the immortal J. J. Rousseau has developed in his discourse on the origin of inequality of conditions, and which could be the cause by which the inhabitants of this immense island have remained so far from full civilisation, while their neighbours of New Zealand ... have taken towards it, steps which have astonished the first navigators who visited them.62

But despite the power of a noble savage image that derived from Bougainville as much as the *philosophes*, it is unlikely that d'Entrecasteaux’s officers were so imbued with an idealised view about the state of nature that they found goodness wherever they looked. We saw that they were extremely perturbed by watching the women repeatedly dive for shellfish to feed their families. And they would have been very keenly aware of the fate of some previous explorers at the hands of indigenous peoples.63 Most basically most of what they saw in Recherche Bay society interested and pleased them.

But more than that, I think there is a dimension to this encounter that was lacking in others. That dimension is not just the positive response of the French to the Tasmanians but the perceived positive response of the Tasmanians to them. In Bakhtinian terms this was a dialogic encounter. Bakhtin tells us that we ourselves cannot complete our own lives being absent from its entire span from before our birth until after the moment of our death.64 We cannot even physically see ourselves as a whole person in the way that anyone else looking at us can.65 We need other people to supply this overarching perspective.66 This is especially true for the traveller who is removed from the tacit cultural recognition that operates at home. Each of us travelling has had positive or nega-

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64. Bakhtin 1990: 104.
tive experiences according to our sense of whether, despite obstacles of language and cultural difference, communication has still sparked. These particular French voyagers seemed to need the Van Diemeners to complete them, a sentiment articulated by d’Auribeau after the first meeting: ‘Their eagerness in coming to find us is a most positive assurance that they were infinitely satisfied with us — a thought as sweet as it is pleasant’. La Motte du Portail expressed the same sense of satisfaction: ‘The kindness and gentleness which seemed to be the basis of their character, gave to our meetings rather the air of a reunion of friends than a meeting of individuals who were quite different in every way’.

The French felt that there was communication, even communion, between them and their hosts — phrases such as ‘perfect understanding’, ‘utmost cordiality’, recur in different accounts — despite the fact that neither knew the other’s language. They felt that they were friends, that the Aborigines gained pleasure from them being there, and their descriptions of Aboriginal reactions — curiosity, animation, hospitality — suggest that they did. An immediate impression of the nature of the encounter can be gained from the artist Piron’s tableau called ‘Savages of Van Diemen’s Land preparing their meal’ which appeared in La Billardière’s Voyage. Several of the voyagers are seen conversing animatedly with the Tasmanians as activity takes place around the campfires. One of the sailors is holding up a chubby baby, illustrating the utter trust the French felt the inhabitants had in them.

Lest I convey too idyllic a picture of these meetings, a reading of the various accounts contains elements that leave no doubt as to the Europeans’ conviction of their superiority despite their preparedness to find things to admire in Van Diemen’s Land culture. They are surprised and say so when they see signs of intelligence in the inhabitants as if they expected to find none, and some of them are disgusted when they see parents grooming their children and eating the lice — La Billardière remarking that the same habit is found in monkeys. The enthusiasms of the Tasmanians for the objects they were shown or in their excited shouts when they see the French is depicted as childlike or naively trusting. The descriptions of the people as the closest that may be found to the state of nature though proffered with a measure of admiration — the term ‘brutish’ would be used by later voyagers but only appears in one journal — have the same tone. But the worst that may have resulted from this encounter was unwitting. Plomley reports that his examination of the expedition’s medical records showed that contagious diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis were present among the ships’ crews and suggests that the contact they had with Aborigines in Tasmania may have been sufficient to transmit infection causing epidemic disease in these very early days of contact.

What the Van Diemeners made of the French can only be a matter of conjecture. Bronwen Douglas describes Aboriginal motivations as now ‘irretrievably obscure’.

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68. La Motte du Portail in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 299.
69. La Motte du Portail in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 300.
70. La Billardière in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 294.
72. La Billardière, La Motte du Portail and Rossel in Plomley and Piard-Bernier 1993: 300, 311.
is puzzling that on the first visit the Tasmanians clearly avoided all contact with the expedition at their landfalls even though they knew they were there, but seem to have embraced encounters a year later. Even then they stayed out of sight for two weeks. But there is no denying the convivial tone of the meetings reported in all the accounts. We can assume that no taboos were infringed and that for the time they were there the French were not perceived as constituting a threat either to food and water resources since they stayed on the beach and had their own provisions or, by their restrained behaviour, to women despite the hordes of unpartnered men that must have seemed to spill from the ships. We can assume, too, that this may have changed if the French had looked like staying. The meeting with Nuenonne people near Adventure Bay certainly showed that there was an area into which the Tasmanians did not want the foreigners to stray but it was not clear whether this was because it was the hiding place for their weapons or held religious significance or for some other reason. They showed hesitation, too, about accompanying the visitors to their camp — there were no women and children with them — and in fact the French decided to return to their ship to set sail.

If Van Diemen's Land was a happy interlude for the members of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition in a troubled voyage, looking back on it now in the light of the history of Indigenous/settler relations in Australia, it is hard not to romanticise it as a moment in time when an encounter across European and Aboriginal culture succeeded. At the very least it showed that engagement could occur and that racial disparagement was not the only attitude that Europeans could exhibit towards Aboriginal people. It seems significant, too, that it happened at a moment just before anthropology began to be conceived as a discrete field of study, before human others who looked different physically and were different culturally came to be viewed scientifically as objects of measurement, comparison and observation. As we shall see in the second part of this article (to be published in vol. 25 of Aboriginal History), it was less than a decade later that field anthropology, both physical and ethnographic, was born with the departure of the Baudin expedition from Le Havre on 19 October 1800. Anthropological observation was added to the roster of scientific duties undertaken during expeditions. As a result, encounters between Europeans and Indigenous people would take on a new dimension.

References

74 Douglas 1999: 79.


Péron, François and Louis de Freycinet, 1807–1816. Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l’Empereur et roi ... pendant les années 1800,1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804. 3 vols and 3 atlases, Paris.


The Ayapathu People of Cape York Peninsula: a case of tribal resurgence? 1

Benjamin Richard Smith

The Ayapathu people of central Cape York Peninsula have, at best, received only passing mention in anthropological accounts. 2 This appears to have been the result of colonial impact on the region and its associated socio-cultural disruption. Whilst neighbouring groups faced similar disruption, in the case of Ayapathu-speaking clans it appears to have been great enough to result in the disappearance of an Ayapathu identity in the region for many years. However, with the recent shifts towards self-management and self-determination in northern Queensland, an Ayapathu identity appears to have re-emerged as the focus of land-holding groups. This paper explores this suppression and re-emergence of this 'tribal' identity in the region, what it reveals about Aboriginal responses to the colonial and post-colonial eras and contemporary Aboriginal territorial groupings.

1. The research on which this paper is based took place mostly in and around Coen, far north Queensland in 1996 and 1997, and was supported by a Study Abroad Studentship from the Leverhulme Trust, a Research Grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Emslie Horniman Fund of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the University of London Research Fund. I am immensely grateful to Francesca Merlan and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University who provided me with an office whilst I worked on the manuscript, in addition to extensive earlier support of my research. This paper also draws on my work as a consultant on the Mungkan-Kaanju National Park land claim for the Cape York Land Council, on behalf of Aboriginal claimants, including the Ayapathu ‘tribal group’ and benefits from numerous discussions with colleagues, notably Bruce Rigsby, David Martin, Athol Chase, Louise Goodchild and Peter Blackwood. It draws heavily on the historical work of Ros Kidd, for which I have attempted to provide an anthropological reading. Bruce Rigsby’s comments on a draft of this paper proved immensely valuable. I am indebted to the Ayapathu people living in the Coen region and elsewhere in writing this paper, and in particular to Phillip Port, Lukin Flarold, Joan Creek, Jim Campbell, Doris Harold, Ralph Rokeby and Nicholas and Barbara Ahlers for their willingness to share their knowledge with me and their patience with my more than occasional lack of understanding.

2. They are absent, for example, from the Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia recently published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Horton 1994).
The history of an Aboriginal 'tribe'

Ayapathu is one of a number of indigenous language varieties associated with central and eastern Cape York Peninsula. As such, both in the anthropological literature pertaining to the region and in the exegesis of the region's Aboriginal population, it is also used to denote land-holding groups in the area or areas primarily associated with this language.

In the classical - that is pre-colonial - system of social organisation in the region, these were exogamous land-holding groups formed within a process characterised by patrilocal recruitment. The groups thus constituted, referred to by anthropologists as 'clans', held interests as corporate entities in an area of land and an associated series of tangible and intangible assets - the clan's 'estate'. Part of the intangible property of each clan was its ownership of a particular language (usually in common with one or more other clans), which was held to have a relationship with the creator beings ('Stories') who shaped and remain within the estates3 within which these Aboriginal people lived.

Whilst these groups held the title to land within the region's Aboriginal society, they did not, in any simple sense, form its land-using groups. The latter groups, which anthropologists have generally called bands4, are perceived to have typically had a core of members associated with one or more of the clans on whose estates they camped and ranged. In addition they had other members - including spouses and short and longer-term visitors - who camped, hunted and foraged as band members. Nonetheless, as Peterson and Long have demonstrated, there did remain a direct - albeit complex - relationship between clan and band composition, notably within processes of schism of and succession to estates.5

The earliest mentions of Ayapathu people in European Australian records come in the reports of Parry-Okeden6 and Smith.7 Parry-Okeden was the State Commissioner of Police who made an expedition to the Peninsula to investigate pastoralists' complaints of the inefficiency of the Native Mounted Police in defending them against Aboriginal attacks, and to defend his Native Police force against a recent critical report.8 He recorded a 'Kokoaiabito' (i.e. Koko Aiabito) group, numbering around 400 people, inland from Princess Charlotte Bay. In the same year Smith, the Acting Sergeant of the Musgrave Native Mounted Police Station recorded a camp of 'the Iabitha tribe' at Port Stewart at the mouth of the Stewart River.

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3. In the inland region there is a direct correlation between a clan's totemic Stories and the Story Places found within their estate. This is not the case for neighbouring coastal and pericoastal areas on the west coast (see von Sturmer 1978).
4. Rigsby 1999: 1 makes a similar distinction between land-owning and land-using groups, but suggests the need for distinguishing between a number of different sets of land-users and land-use activities.
5. Peterson and Long 1986. The earlier anthropological confusion of land-owning and land-using groups, unified under the model of a local, patrilineal 'horde', e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1931, also suggests this.
6. Parry-Okeden 1897.
7. Smith 1897. I am indebted to Bruce Rigsby for this reference.
The use of the term 'tribe' here must be treated with caution. The term is anthropologically contentious, although it is one that European commentators, including anthropologists, have continued to use in reference to Aboriginal social life. In reference to the social system encountered by whites in the early years of colonial far north Queensland, the general consensus is that 'tribe' is a label best applied to all those primarily associated with a particular language (e.g. the sum of all clans owning the Ayapathu language), earlier commentators assuming this implied a degree of social cohesion or corporateness. However, from a contemporary perspective it has become apparent that 'tribes' of this kind were not corporate social groups. Although some 'tribal areas', for example Cape York Peninsula's northeast coast, seem to have manifested a degree of social solidarity, particularly regarding major ceremonies, 'tribe' was an ideational rather than a corporate social entity and one more predisposed to appear (and to appear corporate) in European conceptions of Aboriginal society than indigenous ones.

I have not located any further mention of an Ayapathu group or groups in European-Australian records until the intensive period of anthropological research in the region in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although none of the three anthropologists associated with the central Peninsula region during this period – Thomson, McConnel and Sharp – worked with groups they identified as Ayapathu, all of them mention Ayapathu groups and worked with in neighbouring areas with 'tribes' who held traditional links with Ayapathu people in the classical system. For example, Thomson, who worked on the east and west coasts between 1928 and 1933 recorded

*Koko ai-ebadu.* A tribe whose language I believe is allied to that of the Yinchinga with whom it was formerly friendly ... They are disorganised, like all the tribes of the Peninsula, having come into contact with prospectors, miners and cattle men, in the days of the Palmer Goldfield rush. There are [a] fairly large number still living, their headquarters being about Coen and Ebagoola...Their camp at Coen is on the side of the natives' camp facing their own territory, as always.  

Ursula McConnel also conducted anthropological research in the region, in 1927-28 and 1934. She maps an 'Aiyaboto' tribe south of Coen, in the vicinity of Ebagoola and the headwaters of the Holroyd River, neighbouring the 'Kandyu' (Kaanju) to the

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11 As Chase 1996 notes, Tindale 1974 uses language names and associated territories as the basis for his tribal model, although his work on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula in the late 1920s focused on marital patterns. See also Rigsby 1999: 8. Thomson, also working on the Peninsula at this time, considered tribes to be defined by a common language (see also Rigsby 1999: 9) but his work points towards an emphasis of social orientation towards neighbouring (not necessarily linguistically identical) clans, rather than towards the 'tribe' per se (see Thomson 1972: 1).
12 See Chase 1980: 142-4, 72-5 and Thomson 1933. See also Dixon 1976, for suggestions that 'tribes' were bounded, corporate entities in the rainforest areas near Cairns.
13 Although it is apparent that McConnel intended to do so. In a letter to Professor Radcliffe-Brown, head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, McConnel wrote that 'I may turn back after visiting the Munksans [to] take in the Aiyaboto wh[o] are nearly extinct & the Kanchu wh[o] are most friendly and communicative' (McConnel 1928).
14 Thomson 1929: 5-6.
15 Here I follow McConnel's spellings with those in current use (i.e. as used by myself and other anthropologists in Chase et al. 1998).
north, the ‘Koko-olkola’ (Olkola) to the south and the ‘Wik Ianyi’ (Wik-Iyeny) and ‘Bakanu’ (Pakanh) to the west. She describes how the ‘Kandyu’

met the Wik-mukan on Rokeby cattle-run, the Wik-ianyi of the Kendall-Holroyd Rivers on Pretender Creek, and the southern Aiyaboto (Sharp: Ai’abadu), Bakanu (Sharp: Aiabakan) and Koko-olkola of the upper Holroyd, Edward and Coleman Rivers on Ebagoolah cattle-run.  

Here it becomes apparent, as Sharp—who conducted an anthropological survey of the Peninsula between 1933 and 1935—makes explicit, that the inland Ayapathu-speaking clans formed part of a regional block which included other peoples whose primary land and language identity lay in surrounding areas. An ‘Ayapathu-centric’ view of the relationship between the Ayapathu language-associated area (i.e. its constituent estates and the groups ranging across them) and surrounding language-associated areas is shown in Figure 1 (below).

Although the information for the inland Cape York region is sparse—as a result of limited anthropological research in the early twentieth century, and the rapid impacts of colonialism, which removed both a large proportion of this population and the incentive for the involvement of these anthropologists—it is possible to make some assumptions about forms of social organisation in the classical region. Alongside the}

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18. Such ties included affinal ties between clans and associated regional cultural forms, such as the use of named moieties, even where these were not part of the core body of practice associated with these clans. McConnel’s recording of the use of such moieties by Wik Ianyi (Wik-Iyeny) people on the Kendall and Holroyd rivers ‘in contact with their southern neighbours’ (McConnel 1939: 64) – i.e. Ayapathu and Pakanh people – illustrates this practice.
19. In this region of inland Cape York Peninsula, languages to which clans primarily affiliate occur in contiguous blocks. However, this is not the case for the east and west coastal and peri-coastal regions neighbouring the inland Ayapathu area. In the latter areas, languages, including those occurring in contiguous blocks inland (e.g. Wik-Iyeny in western coastal areas and Ayapathu in Princess Charlotte Bay coastal estates) are affiliated with discontiguous estates (see Rigsby 1992, Sutton 1995).
available records of the region, notably those identified by Kidd,\(^2\) these allow us to chart the transformative impact of colonialism on local Aboriginal society.

The ranges of inland bands were focused around a number of main campsites. Contemporary Aboriginal people living in the Coen region say that Polappa, a place to the south of Coen which includes several large, perennial water sources, was *the main camp for Ayapathu people*.\(^2\) It appears that Polappa was associated with dry season camps, a larger wet-season population and ceremonial performance. Dry season activities were based around such main camps, with smaller groups ranging across surrounding estates in order to utilise resources there, visit areas with which they had personal connections and perform ‘increase ceremonies’ to ensure the proper cosmological management of their ‘country’.\(^2\) People also moved between camps across the wider region, attending initiation ceremonies, arranging marriages, trading and visiting kin. In the wet season the bands drew together in larger camps, limiting their movements until the change in season returned the possibility of ranging more widely for social, economic and ritual activities.

The Ayapathu-speaking people of the inland Peninsula appear to have had close ties to both other inland groups to the south, west and north and to coastal groups to the east. As Chase\(^2\) notes for the ‘kaantyu’ (Kaanju) peoples to the north of the Ayapathu, such inlanders were in a central geographical and social position, and they extended relationships both ways into the eastern coastal areas and the western flatlands or mungkan territory. From the available evidence, those ... estates bordering the eastern coastal estates looked to the coast for ceremony and inter-marriage, while those removed further inland looked westward, following the large western-flowing drainage system.

Such bi-directional ties appear to have occurred in the Ayapathu region also. Here ties are most apparent with ‘Mungkan-side’\(^2\) groups to the west of the Ayapathu area, Olkola- and Pakanh-speaking groups to the south, and Yintjingga and other coastal peoples to the east as well as to neighbouring Kaanju-speaking clans. As with the Kaanju-speaking peoples, we can surmise that those clans whose estates lay on the east-flowing riverine areas adjacent to estates of coastal groups ‘boxed-up’ (joined together) with these groups, whilst those whose country lay on western-flowing waters had their

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\(^2\) Sharp, for instance, suggests that much of his survey was of an ‘unsatisfactory nature’ due, in part, to ‘the demoralization of native life which has so swiftly followed the introduction of European and Oriental culture traits into so many parts of the region’ leaving many ‘tribes’ extinct, whilst many others ‘have undergone foreign and inter-tribal acculturation’ Sharp 1938–39: 254.

\(^2\) Kidd 1996.

\(^2\) Here, and afterwards, I use italicised lettering in single inverted commas to indicate terms or phrases used by the Aboriginal people of the region.

\(^2\) See Thomson 1933: 501–4, 513 on increase ceremonies. Thomson drew the term from the earlier work of Spencer and Gillen. The term ‘country’ refers, broadly, to areas of peopled landscape within which Aboriginal people hold particular knowledge, rights (including property rights) and responsibilities. This landscape is itself held to possess agency. See also Chase et al. 1998: 37 and Arthur 1996: 119–21.

\(^2\) Chase 1980: 201.
main ties in this direction. However, it is also apparent that neighbouring easterly- and westerly-oriented Ayapathu groups also boxed-up. In the case of the western groups in particular, in common with the other groups of central Cape York, there appears to have been a strongly riverine emphasis in social organisation. In these areas, the orientation of box-up groups, and the interlinked flows of trade and marriage, appear to have been up and down the region’s major rivers. From McConnel’s association of tribes and rivers, and the siting of campsites along riverine systems,26 we can see that rivers provided a major focus for both land-owning and land-using groups (clans and bands respectively) in the inland area.

As a result of Rigsby’s fieldwork, it has become apparent to anthropologists working in the region that a number of coastal clans (including the Yintjingga with whom Thomson worked in the late 1920s) spoke language varieties similar to the inland Ayapathu ones. As Rigsby27 has written, the Ayapathu language had been thought in the past to be restricted to the inland, centering around Ebagoolah and extending north towards Coen along the [Great Dividing] range, but some knowledgeable older Aboriginal people have told me that it was also the language of several clans whose estates were situated along the coast from Running Creek to the Stewart River. These clans have died out, and rights in their estates passed to descendants whose primary ‘tribal’ identification now is as Port Stewart Lamalama people ... Only a few older people remember the prior Ayapathu clan and language presence in this coastal area.

Nonetheless, it seems that the clans that owned these coastal ‘Ayapathu-speaking’ estates were, to some degree, differentiated from the inland Ayapathu people. Rigsby notes Thomson’s record that an ‘atmosphere of mutual fear and distrust’ existed between inland Ayapathu peoples and the Yintjingga.28 The former were identified (ethno-territorially) as ‘kanichi’ or ‘inside people’, whilst the latter were ‘pama malngkanichi’ or ‘sandbeach people’. But it was not only these social orientations of the two sets of people that were markedly different (one primarily oriented to the inland/riverine west and south, the other to other coastal groups). There were also differences in linguistic identification, territorial organisation and economic practice between inland and coastal Ayapathu-speaking groups.

Thomson, for instance, whilst noting the linguistic similarities of the two dialects, wrote of them as two distinct languages, identifying the inland one as ‘Ayapathu’ (‘Ai-ebadu’) and the coastal one as ‘Yintjingga’. However, the implicit suggestion that the coastal dialect has not been labelled as Ayapathu in indigenous exegesis is contradicted

25. The use of the term ‘Mungkan-side’ by Coen people, including the Ayapathu people resident there, denotes those groups and people - in particular clans and ‘families’ (i.e. contemporary cognatic descent groups - see Sutton 1998) - from ‘country’ primarily affiliated with Wik-type languages (see von Sturmer 1978) and in particular to the inland Wik-Iyeny or ‘Mungkanhu’ language. These people and groups, along with (inland) Ayapathu people, form the eastern most part of the ‘Wik nation’ or ‘Wik peoples’ who are claimants in the current Wik Native Title Claim.


29. In the coastal Umpila language.
by more recent fieldwork. Bruce Rigsby (pers. comm. June 2000) notes that at least as far back as 1972 a number of older Lamalama people identified the coastal Ayapathu-speaking clans as such, whilst Thomson's group name 'Yintjingga' is only used by contemporary Port Stewart people as a place name for a particular site and associated area at Port Stewart, at the mouth of the Stewart River estuary. A similar identification of both inland and coastal dialects by both Aboriginal and white people appears to have been made throughout contact history. This perhaps indicates an indigenous distinction between the two groups of language-owners that was as socio-political as it was conceptual.

 Differences in the regional territorial systems of the two sets of clans are similarly apparent. As noted above, the primary territorial orientation of the coastal Ayapathu clans was to coastal and coastal hinterland sandbeach estates, whilst inland Ayapathu people formed a regional territorial block with their Ayapathu and non-Ayapathu neighbours, focusing on west- and east-flowing riverine systems.

 Nonetheless, there also appear to have been similarities between the inland and coastal forms of Ayapathu territorial organisation. Unlike more southerly non-Ayapathu speaking coastal clans with country south of Goose Creek, but in common with both inland Ayapathu and more northerly coastal clans, including those speaking Umpila, the language-associated estates of coastal clans were not characterised by a 'mosaic' structure in which the estate area was fragmented and where linguistic affiliation of country was discontiguous across the area.

 Similarly, the economic practices of coastal Ayapathu-owning clans were strongly sea-oriented, in common with the other coastal people. These economic practices formed part of a body of common cultural traits, the basis for what Chase (following Peterson) has identified as a common 'culture area'. Whilst the coastal and inland Ayapathu groups spoke similar dialects, their social organisation, both in form and in orientation, was markedly different. When the patrilocal descent lines of the coastal Ayapathu-speaking clans died out, the primary marital and descent ties that permitted the process of succession to their estates to take place were held by other coastal groups, notably including members of the group now identified as the 'Port Stewart Lamalama'. As a result, the identification of Ayapathu as an inland language was further reinforced and, as Rigsby notes, its common use in terms of group identity is for

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30 Rigsby further notes that he was only able to identify Thomson's Yintjingga kin-terms as Ayapathu in 1990 in the course of linguistic work with Rosie Ahlers, a now deceased Wik-Iyeny woman who was the last fluent speaker of Ayapathu living in Coen.
32 See Rigsby and Sutton 1980–82 on the social and political dimensions of language differentiation and Rigsby 1987 on the variable differentiation of 'dialect' and 'language'.
33 The general consensus is currently that inland estates in the Coen region formed distinct, homogenous blocks. Some older people are able to provide 'boundaries' for these (see Land Tribunal (Queensland) 1995), though not always unambiguously.
36 Chase 1980: 204.
38 Rigsby 1992: 357.
the descendants of the inland Ayapathu who now live in Coen. For this reason, this article will deal primarily with this inland group, and the term 'Ayapathu' can be considered as referring to the inland Ayapathu clans and their descendants unless otherwise noted.

The movements and activities of the inland (as well as the coastal) Ayapathu people within the 'humanized landscape' of the region were rapidly transformed by the impact of colonialism. The 1872 gold rush on the Palmer River to the south of Ayapathu country led to more northerly exploration, and to gold rushes in the areas of Coen - where the first miners found payable gold in 1876 - and Ebagoola(h), first gazetted on 2 January 1900. These areas are at the core and the northern reaches of inland Ayapathu country respectively. The gold rushes, in turn, brought the expansion of pastoralism to the central Peninsula. The first cattle station in the Coen region - Lalla Rookh - was founded at Station Creek (in Ayapathu country) about 20 kilometres southeast of the present township of Coen in 1882.

These cattle stations and camps took over important environmental resources - in particular major sources of perennial water - and the cattle station 'runs' similarly occupied and transformed surrounding country, spoiling waterholes and disrupting the local ecosystem. White settlers, fearful of Aboriginal attacks on cattle and on themselves, killed or drove Aboriginal people away from areas of European residence and land use. At the same time, diseases (including venereal disease) added to the effects of malnutrition and violence, causing a sudden drop in population and a rapid decline in birth rates. The effects of this period were so drastic that, by the 1890s, Coen miners and those at other European centres began to seek a 'conciliation' with the bedraggled remnants of the Aboriginal population, 'letting them in' to the new European centres of townships, mining and cattle camps.

These places, often on the sites of previous Aboriginal main camps, became new major Aboriginal camps for the Aboriginal people of the regions surrounding them. In this way the mining townships of Coen and Ebagoola and the cattle stations and outstations at places like Polappa and Rokeby became the focal sites for Ayapathu people in the central Peninsula's colonial era. Through 'coming in' to the Aboriginal camps at these sites, Ayapathu people began a process of adjustment to the white presence and its economic and social forms. Most notably, Ayapathu people, in common with the

39. Similarly, 'Yintjingga' is no longer used as a group name in the region (see Rigsby 1999: 14, footnote 8).
40. I borrow this term from the work of Bruce Rigsby (see Rigsby 1982). Rigsby (pers. comm., June 2000) recalls that he took the term from the work of Charles Rowley, but cannot recall the specific reference.
41. de Havilland 1989: 525-6. The first Coen gold rush (for alluvial gold) began in 1878. Reef gold was first assayed in 1878, but apparently remained unworked. The first reef mining opened up in 1887 and, as a result, by 1889 Coen had developed into a recognisable township with a hotel, store and butcher (Chase et al. 1998: 25).
42. de Havilland 1989: 515.
43. The areas over which the stations ran and worked cattle.
44. See Parry-Okeden 1897: 9 and Kidd 1996: 15. Bruce Rigsby (pers. comm., June 2000) notes various observers' comment on large numbers of Aborigines still living on Cape York Peninsula at this time, and that a 'flu epidemic in 1919 was the probable cause of major depopulation.
other Aboriginal people of the region, began to be incorporated into the cattle industry, providing a necessary (and necessarily inexpensive) labour force for the region’s pastoralists. With the introduction of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* (1897), the Ayapathu people became further incorporated into the region’s new society as indentured labour under the control of local policemen in their roles as ‘Protectors of Aboriginals’.

At the beginning of this period, Aboriginal people remained – both socially and physically – at the periphery of European Australian enterprises. Work agreements were in no way the totality of Aboriginal experience, and work for the most part involved such activities as fencing, carrying and collecting sandalwood and animal pelts in return for food, clothing and blankets. Records from 1906 note the existence of ‘several large camps’ in the vicinity of Ebagoola, Yarraden and Coen, but the Ayapathu-focused bands (alongside others in the case of Coen) who would have constituted these camps would have continued to move between the camps and the surrounding country at this time. The lack of European control and surveillance of these surrounding areas is apparent in the lack of records from this time until the 1930s.

From this decade, the use and control of Aboriginal labour from the camps became increasingly systematised, and the younger generations raised there became more fully incorporated into the new rural industries and a developing inter-ethnic aspect of Aboriginal existence. Aboriginal people begin to appear as named individuals in increasingly comprehensive administrative records, reflecting their incorporation and control within an emergent inter-ethnic domain. The names that appear in these records mark the establishment of a system of European-style naming including Christian names (for the most part biblical – the incorporation included a religious dimension) and surnames. The latter were typically taken from European ‘bosses’ or the European names for areas of traditional association that, alongside the associated Aboriginal population, had become embedded in cattle runs. Thus two contemporary Ayapathu families bear the surname ‘Ahlers’, the surname of an early manager of the cattle outstation at Polappa, whilst another family took (or was given) the surname ‘Ebagoola’ after the mining township that occupied part of their clan country. Large numbers of people were ‘removed’ in this period – not only from their country to towns or coastal missions, but also from these new centres to places outside of the Peninsula, notably the punishment settlement of Palm Island. Nonetheless, as the records demonstrate, there still remained some freedom of movement, and the continuation of camps outside of European control. Records from this time include:

46. Smith 2000a discusses the generation of this inter-ethnic dimension to Aboriginal existence in greater detail.
47. Here I follow Rowse 1992 and von Sturmer 1984 in my use of the term ‘domain’. As Rowse explains, von Sturmer’s ‘Aboriginal domain’ is constituted by those places or contexts in which ‘the dominant social life or culture is Aboriginal, where the system of knowledge is Aboriginal, where the major language is Aboriginal; in short where the resident Aboriginal population constitutes the public’ (Rowse 1992: 19). Similarly the inter-ethnic domain in Coen, the context of which is social action between Aborigines and whites, has its own social life and culture, system of knowledge, language(s) and inter-ethnic public despite its incorporation of a marked racial hegemony.
• ‘several large camps’ in the vicinity of Ebagoola, Yaraden and Coen (1906)  

• a camp at the Holroyd River (1933)  

• the antecedents of several contemporary Ayapathu families living at Coen (1936)  

• an Ayapathu man amongst a group of Coen people who ‘strenuously object to being removed to Lockhart River Mission’, the administrators of the region’s Aboriginal population deeming this removal a sensible option (1936)  

• a number of elderly Ayapathu men and women who had been living in the Coen district ‘for a great number of years’ (1936)  

• ‘active natives’ subsisting by hunting and gathering in the (Ayapathu-associated) Ebagoolah and Bamboo areas (1936)  

• several Ayapathu men whose country lay in the Polappa/Ebagoola area deserting Lockhart River Mission, to which they had been recently removed, for Ebagoola (1937).  

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Aboriginal people remaining in bush camps in the Ayapathu area were mostly elderly. The younger population was all but absorbed into cattle work. Whilst World War II appears to have seen an increase in bush living, its close (and the concurrent collapse of the region’s mining camps) saw great efforts being made to ‘bring in’ all remaining bush-living groups. The records from this time indicate:  

• regular movement of elderly Aborigines between Ebagoola and Coen and blankets being issued at Coen police camp in 1936, 1937 and 1938 to ‘some of the aboriginals supplied with relief recently at Ebagoola’ (1938-39)  

48. Detailed records of such removals are available, in many cases, in the Queensland State Archives (QSA) and the Community & Personal Histories Section of the Department of Families, Youth & Community Care, both in Brisbane. The reasons for removals ranged from fights and (intra-Aboriginal) killings, to ‘giving cheek’ to local whites. Mixed-race children with parents ‘under the Act’ were, in general, also removed to enable their better assimilation into European-Australian society. Such children were common in the fringe camps at mining settlements and, to a degree, at cattle stations, both of which were less segregated than the township of Coen. Due to the early and predominant white presence in the Ayapathu area, it can be imagined that there were many such removals of such children from Ayapathu mothers. The first known removals from the central Peninsula were from Ebagooola – within Ayapathu country – in 1910. Five Aboriginal men, Jimmy Douglas, Jimmy Nichol, Jack, Toby Platt and Romeo, were removed from Ebagoola to Barambah Reserve (later known as Cherbourg) under suspicion of the murder of an Aboriginal man called ‘Baker’ or ‘Jimmy Dummy’. Rigsby (1995: 25-6) notes that ‘[w]ith respect to native affairs policy and practice, Queensland has one of the more distinctive and racist histories of Australian States, and from about 1898 up to the early 1970s, following the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897) and its successors, the State Native Affairs Department carried out internal deportations and removals of Aboriginal people from their home areas to reserves and from reserve to reserve’. Rigsby estimates that these removals number perhaps 10,000 in total, and that he has not been able to check the computerised records of removals for several periods.  

49. The following records are drawn from Kidd 1996: 18-27.  


• a group of elderly people travelling from Coen to Ebagoola during the wet season, as they had the year before. They stated that during the wet season it was difficult to obtain tucker in the bush, as they are all old, and their main bush tucker is only growing, and they are not able to hunt like the younger aboriginals ... They further stated that they would only be remaining here in Coen until after the wet season, when they will be returning to their old camps in the bush' (1940).61

• The 'indigent relief' file from Coen in May 1940 'expands on Aboriginal movements between Coen and Ebagoola', 'these boys originally belong to the Coen area, but they drift back to Ebagoola and the stations thereabout during the dry months ... the ages of the majority would be between 60 and 70 years'. The Aboriginal men interviewed stated that they were unwilling to go to Lockhart River as many relatives removed there had died from sickness (1940)62

• In the 1940s the annual Coen Races pulled in people camping around 'Ebagoola ... and the lower reaches of the Coen, Archer and Kendall Rivers'. After receiving rations 'most of the visiting natives returned to their usual hunting grounds' (1940).63

• Local camps in the Coen Protectorate include Coen and Yarraden. There was 'considerable fluidity of movement in each area' (1942).64

• An Ayapathu man working as a Coen police tracker, helps scour the Wenlock area, a former mining centre in Kaanju country, for Aboriginal people to remove to Lockhart River (1946)65.

• The same Ayapathu man and two other trackers living at Coen police camp 'with their gins' (1946)66

A lack of available records from the 1950s to the early 1970s obscures the movements and occupations of Ayapathu people in this period, but contemporary Ayapathu people recall that they spent it in cattle station employment. Men, women and their...
dependants were housed at cattle stations and outstation camps, with the working men away for several weeks at the time mustering cattle in the surrounding bush, occasionally meeting up for 'joint muster' with Aboriginal cattlemen from neighbouring stations. Such activities allowed the continuation of contact with traditional estates - the cattle station employees, initially at least, tended to be drawn from the Aboriginal people associated with the area of the station's run - and contact with kin working on other stations. This continuing Aboriginal presence and contact allowed the passing on of knowledge about the landscape and its associated cosmology, and the performance of ceremony and ritual, including increase rituals for managing country. 'Holidays' from the station, during lay-off periods, allowed the whole of a station's Aboriginal population similar contact with country.

Over time, the control of workers by white 'Protectors' increasingly dispersed the Aboriginal population. Many found themselves working on less familiar country, gaining knowledge and ties there rather than - or in addition to - their antecedents estates. At this time workers' dependants became increasingly centralised, first at the main homestead and then on the Aboriginal Reserve in the township of Coen. One effect of this centralisation and the European schooling of Aboriginal children in the township was the deterioration of Aboriginal language skills. With the introduction of equal wages for Aboriginal workers and social security payments to Aboriginal people, the ability and willingness of the pastoral industry to maintain general Aboriginal employment collapsed. As a result most of the working-age population, as well as their older and younger family members, found themselves living for most of the year on the Coen Reserve.

Just before this collapse, Chase visited the Coen Reserve during the annual Coen Races, recording the Reserve's population and their 'tribal' identities. This list, an historical document of great importance for Coen's Aboriginal population, is notable for the complete absence of an Ayapathu tribal identity. Nonetheless, a number of people present are identified by Coen people as being Ayapathu, and my own research confirms their descent from Ayapathu clan members, and their primary affiliation with Ayapathu country. Thus, at the same time at which Tindale published a description of

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67. Here I follow Sutton 1998: 26 in distinguishing 'antecedents' (or 'forebears') from 'ancestors', the latter implying a common (landed) identity and interest. I am indebted to Bruce Rigsby for drawing my attention to this distinction.

68. As a result, most of those under fifty speak little of the region's former Aboriginal languages. The Ayapathu language has no remaining fluent speakers in Coen, the last having passed away in 1990. Although no younger Ayapathu people can either speak or understand their own language, loss of linguistic competence is not seen as changing the fact of their affiliation to Ayapathu country or the existence of an Ayapathu group. As Rumsey (1989, 1993) has noted for other 'language-named tribes' in the Northern Territory, the association of people with language is through the ties both share with country. Thus the loss of the Ayapathu language, although the cause of regret to contemporary Ayapathu people in the Coen Region, does not remove the fact of their ownership (under Aboriginal law and custom) of the language and associated country in the region. Recent fieldwork at Pompuraaw by Hamilton (see Hamilton 1997) has found speakers with some remaining knowledge of the Ayapathu language there.


70. Chase 1972.
an Ayapathu ‘tribe’ whose country lay over an area of some 4900 square kilometres,\textsuperscript{71} in Coen the ‘Ayapathu tribe’ appeared to have vanished as a local entity.\textsuperscript{72}

### The suppression of a ‘tribal’ identity

This disappearance - or, as later events indicate, suppression - of the Ayapathu identity in Coen seems to have been due to a combination of factors. These included the depopulation of Ayapathu clans through deaths and infertility, the removal of significant numbers of Ayapathu people and mixed-race children from the area, the presence of two major European settlements and a number of cattle stations dominating Ayapathu country and the centralisation of Ayapathu families in Coen, a township featuring three major, otherwise identifying ‘countryman’ groups.

In 1977, Dulcie Higgins, a State Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement liaison officer previously stationed in Coen, noted three ‘tribal identities’ there:

The Luma Luma [Lamalama], Carngue [Kaanju] and Munkin [Mungkanhu] ... They attend church when a visiting priest comes to town and the same night they will be down the river practising their old tribal way.\textsuperscript{73}

From Higgins’ correspondence it seems that this ‘tribal way’ included the open violence of fighting, and the masked violence (‘quiet war’) of sorcery (or ‘puripuri’) between the factions. It is apparent that these three ‘tribes’ were collectivities of Coen people, based on underlying links of association, kinship and neighbouring countries between constituent families, that had grouped together to provide mutual support within the town environment. As such, these ‘tribes’ were markedly different to the classic ideational language groups, bearing greater similarities to the ‘countrymen groups’ documented by Chase for Lockhart River.\textsuperscript{74} These countryman groups were formed from those fam-

\textsuperscript{71} ‘Ajabatha...alternatives: Aiabadu, Aiyaboto, Jabuda, Koko Aiebadu, Ai’ebadu (with glottal stop), Koko Aiebadu, Kidkahiablo (presumably i=dipthong, l=typo for t)... ['Tribal area'] From north of Ebagoola, south to Musgrave, west to headwaters of Coleman and Holroyd Rivers, east to Dividing Range and Violet Vale’ (Tindale 1974:142).

Contemporary Ayapathu people have described the ‘boundary’ of their ‘tribal area’ as running ‘from just south of the main town at Coen, around Oscar Creek ... it runs west along Coen River (both sides), though Ayapathu mixed with Kaanju and Mungkanhu further north from here ... along Coen River to Catfish Lagoon, ... south of Coen river the boundary runs along the divides. A series of water systems flowing back into Catfish/Tadpole/Coen River from the divide are Ayapathu. These include Horsetailer, Crosstree (locally called Gorge Creek) and the Pinnacle Creek systems ... the divide in this area and the two flows of the water systems mark the boundary between Ayapathu country and the [Wiki-Iyeny] ‘Tablelands’ country ... south of Catfish, Ayapathu areas include but are not limited to Heinemann Spring, Flying Fox Scrub and Shovel Creek ... the ‘line’ running south is demarcated by the divide and the two systems flowing off it ... the Ayapathu boundary runs south to the top part of Strathburn, including Pretender Creek. Snake Creek is inside the Ayapathu boundary ... western Pretender Creek is associated with the Shortjoe family, as is Bally Junction ... the boundary runs south (or southeast) down to Willie Yard near the Lukin River ... Lukin River to Strathburn boundary, then east ... from Willie Yard to Bob Spring Creek ... from Bob Spring Creek along the divide to Old Bamboo ... from Old Bamboo to New Bamboo ... from New Bamboo straight down to Balclutha Creek (Ayapathu to about half-way down Balclutha Creek) ... then back (along the divide?) to Margaret Yard (also called Market Yard) ... from Margaret Yard to Seven Mile Lagoon ... from Seven Mile Lagoon to Joe Lagoon ... from Joe Lagoon to Red Antbed mustering camp, then straight down the divide to Little Stewart River ... from Little Stewart back to Oscar Creek, and along Oscar Creek to Coen River’ (Smith, nd).
ilies who had previously shared large camps on or near their estates, and which continued as mutual support and social groups within the new environment of the Lockhart River Mission (and later 'Community').

Work on hunter-gatherer social organisation, in particular that of Joseph Birdsell, has stressed the importance of 'magic numbers', recurring modal numbers in the composition of groups occurring widely across such societies. In the case of the Coen 'tribal' groups it appears that a certain minimum number of people has been necessary for any social group to remain effective within the region's social life. For this reason perhaps, the few people remaining in Coen who were members of or descendants of Ayapathu clans may not have provided the numbers necessary to constitute an identity group. Colonial depopulation and removals, as is apparent from Ayapathu genealogies constructed in the contemporary township, must have hit Ayapathu people early and with great intensity even in a region where such impacts were generally traumatic. As a result, the numbers of Ayapathu people within the township and perhaps the longer-running bonds between those families that remained, may not have been sufficient to produce a separate Ayapathu tribal identity within the township that provided the necessary support against hardship and inter-ethnic antagonism.

The colonial transformation of the Ayapathu area may also have affected the ability to maintain (or produce) an Ayapathu identity within the township. Merlan has recently described a lack of clarity about the tribal identification of country in the vicinity of the town of Katherine (Northern Territory) and a process of ethnic re-identification of the town itself and of Aboriginal individuals living there. Merlan suggests such processes involve

the play of sustaining difference in a changing field of closer and more distant social relationship, in which territorial difference and relativity continue to be important. This 'play of difference' has in turn combined with a 'particular history' of the town that 'offers impediments to the places within it in Aboriginal mythical terms'.

This situation has clear parallels with that of Coen and the Ayapathu families living there. Coen itself is now described as lying on the border of the Kaanju and Ayapathu linguistic areas, but for the whole of its colonial history was, in European accounts, asserted as being a 'Kaanju' place. Parry-Okeden and Thomson, for instance, both assert that the 'tribe' of Coen was Kaanju. Such attributions are likely to have reflected,

72 Nonetheless, Bruce Rigsby (pers. comm.) recalls at least four local men and women being identified as Ayapathu by others in Coen in 1972 and 1974. This suggests that the loss of Ayapathu was primarily as a group identity and/or that Chase's informants were themselves not inclined to identify people as such. These possibilities are discussed further below.


75 E.g. Birdsell 1953, 1958. For discussions of 'magic number' concepts – and in particular their relationship to Aboriginal Australian material – see Lee and DeVore 1968: 10-11, 245-8, 331-3; Peterson and Long 1986: 38, 137; Sutton and Rigsby 1982: 159–63.

76 Discussion of 'magic numbers' has tended to focus on reasons for the upper limits of group numbers in these societies, emphasising ecological rather than socio-cultural determinants of these number-ranges.

77 Merlan 1998: 140, 142.
and to have fed back into local white and local Aboriginal town identities. An apparent intra-Aboriginal tendency to suppress the town's territorial identification, in order to ease inter-group tensions, is likely to have increased such impediments.

Further, the local Ayapathu families had diverse kin ties to the locally prominent 'tribal' groups. In the township context, rather than territorial associations (which had been devalued, in any case, by the apparently total dispossession of Ayapathu people from any actualisable control over country due to its white occupancy), what became most important was the definition of self-identity in terms of a local (countryman) group within the changed social field of township life. Territorial difference and territorial relativity continued to be important, but in the sense of a performative identity of group coalescence within the township, sustaining Ayapathu families within the social field of the town, rather than a sustained accuracy of language-identity based within links to clan estates in the town's hinterland. Such action sets (whether of shorter or longer-lasting duration) fall within the category of groups referred to locally as 'mobs'. In this way, Ayapathu people living in township coalesced and identified with either the 'Mungkan' or 'Kaanju' mobs living on the Aboriginal Reserve.

The earlier 'tribal' identities of those currently identified as Ayapathu people, as recorded by Chase (1972), illustrate this shift in identification. These individuals and their families appear as distributed between the town's 'Munkan' (Mungkanhu) and 'Kanju' (Kaanju) 'tribes' (Figure 2).

The ties through which such tribal identities were generated appear to include both affinal and subsidiary descent/filiative ties to these groups, but it is likely that another factor in determining the assumed tribal identity was the proximity of clan country to Mungkan(h)u-side or Kaanju estates, particularly along river-systems. Thus, whilst the Ayapathu tribal identity became subsumed within town-based 'countryman'

78. Athol Chase (pers. comm., July 1997) notes that older people he worked with in the region placed the Ayapathu/Kaanju linguistic boundary further south than its current location around the Coen township.

79. Parry-Okeden 1897; Thomson 1929.

80. One example, which I have discussed in greater detail elsewhere (Smith 2000a), is the identity of a 'King' of the Coen Reserve in the 1940s. The man, identified by contemporary Coen people as Ayapathu, was known by his king-plate (see Troy 1993) as 'King Tommy of the Kanjo (Kaanju) Tribe' to local whites.


82. Similarly, on Palm Island, Ayapathu families - whether conscious of holding an Ayapathu identity or not - appear to have amalgamated to the Kaanju 'tribal' group within the island's Aboriginal domain (see Smith 2000b). The nature of such coalitions as primarily processual group identities rather than language-based identities linked to clan-estates is underlined by the amalgamation of Coen and Palm Island Ayapathu people to the 'Kaanju mob' in both settlements. As one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper noted, unlike Ayapathu and Mungkanhu/Wik-Iyeny which are linguistically close, the Ayapathu and Kaanju languages are notably distinct. There is, nonetheless, evidence that inland Ayapathu-affiliated clan-members have long formed groups - both in social action (e.g. bands) and perhaps also more formal land-holding groups - with Mungkanhu and Kaanju-speaking people. For instance, one senior Kaanju man described both the country and associated clan of land just west of Coen as 'half Kaanju, half Ayapathu'. Extension of clan interests to 'company' relationships including groups with both Ayapathu and Wik-Iyeny speaking members (see below) are also common in the region, and appear to have been so for some time.
identities, the importance of the region’s classical territorial system continued as the basis of orientation to these new identity-forms. This is well illustrated by JA and his sister JT, whose father’s clan country lay in close proximity to a Kaanju estate on the Coen River near the township. As outlined by Chase, such neighbouring groups commonly organised marriages between themselves in the ‘classical’ system of the region. Thus the conjunction of territorial proximity and affinal ties in shared tribal/mob orientation in the township in the 1970s is unsurprising, marking developments based firmly within earlier (i.e. ‘classical’) practice.

Figure 2 Tribal identity given for Ayapathu people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person(s)</th>
<th>Age/sex</th>
<th>‘Tribal’ identity</th>
<th>Tie to identity group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JT</td>
<td>Adult woman</td>
<td>(Kaanju)</td>
<td>(Father and mother Ayapathu)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Mungkan-identifying husband. Brother (JA) identifies as Kaanju, brother married to</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaanju woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>(Kaanju)</td>
<td>Kaanju wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(and children)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Father and mother Ayapathu)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sister (JT) identifies as Kaanju.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>(Munkanu)</td>
<td>?Mungkan-side wife.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(and child)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family ties to west.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olkola wife.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Brother (MA) identifies as ‘Munkanu’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>(Munkanu)</td>
<td>Mungkan-side wife.</td>
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<td>(and children)</td>
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<td>Brother (DA) identifies as ‘Munkanu’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LH</td>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>(Munkanu)</td>
<td>Mungkan-side wife.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Olkola ties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>(Kaanju)</td>
<td>Kaanju/Ayapathu ties through father.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaanju mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mungkan-side wife.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chase 1972.

Similarly, the clan-estate of DA and his brother MA neighbours the estate of a Wik-Iyeny speaking clan, and the contemporary family descended from these two brothers (and headed by MA’s sons) remains in a close ‘company’ relationship with a

83. Merlan 1998: 129–30 refers to them as ‘time bound aggregations’, the use of such designations being ‘as much evocative, or performatively and selectively constitutive of social identification with respect to a present context as it is referential’.
85. It is possible that this man’s father’s mother’s clan-estate similarly adjoined a Kaanju estate further to the east.
87. A term marking the sharing of land-owning interests, typically consisting of territorial overlap. It is related to, but distinct from, ‘box-up’ relationships, the latter term emphasising conjoint land-use.
Wik-Iyeny clan whose country is downstream along the major river running through both of their countries. The location of AG’s country is unknown, but his marital and family ties to the west, in particular Kowanyama, suggest it lay in that direction. LH’s country is to the south, neighbouring Olkola country, but his Mungkanhu wife and inland orientation may have been the basis for his placement with the Mungkan group. Finally, JC’s father and grandfather’s clan-language attribution remains ambiguous, but it appears likely that his father’s father’s country lay on the border of Ayapathu and Kaanju areas where close marital and ‘box-up’ ties existed between the clans across this linguistic juncture.

At the time of Chase’s report, there was a further set of Ayapathu descendants living in Coen, at a remove from the population of the Reserve surveyed by Chase. These were the Aboriginal families who had been de facto or de jure exempt from the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897), had lived away from the Reserve in the township itself, and had been discouraged or prohibited (depending on their administrative status) from associating with the Aboriginal people who remained ‘under the Act’. One of these families was of mixed Ayapathu/Lamalama/non-Aboriginal descent, but continued to identify with both their father’s coastal country and their mother’s Ayapathu country on the Great Dividing Range. Although prohibited from associating with those living on the Reserve, this family (and other families in similar situations) maintained knowledge of their interests in country and their forebears’ identity, and knowledge of their relationships (both actual and classificatory) with other Aboriginal people in the region. Where possible, in particular through station work, this family maintained relationships with other Aboriginal families, and their relative freedom allowed them greater opportunities to visit hinterland areas with their children in the 1950s and 1960s. Nonetheless, the Act created a degree of social distance and mutual distrust between those living on the Reserve and those living in the town that later efforts at reconciliation have not entirely removed.

Thus in the years following centralisation of Aboriginal life in Coen, despite contact with country through cattle work, a set of transformed tribal identities developed in response to the changed circumstances of township life. These allowed the coalescence of groups that provided a means of dealing with the new pressures and worries of centralisation within the Aboriginal domain. But it seems that they may have served another, external function. Life on the Reserve was subject to continual moral surveillance by whites, which extended to the surveying of tribal identity and the application of both an administrative and a white public gaze to Aboriginal life. Tribal identities, removed from the core Aboriginal concerns of estate, clan and Story, provided not only

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88. This relationship is discussed at greater length in Sutton et al. 1991: 7, 16.
89. The distinction here is between families who were officially exempt from the Act and those who remained ‘under the Act’ but were treated by local whites as trusted employees and allowed to live in the township in houses provided for them. Though not exempt, the latter group was generally treated as such by these whites, and discouraged from fraternising with the Reserve people.
90. The region’s system of kinship is such that all Aboriginal people will be determined to have a kin relationship to any other Aboriginal person they know or meet. Where the person is not closely (‘really’) related, a classificatory kin relationship will be determined through a mutually related person or persons.
a locus for town-based groups, but also a 'smokescreen' (or perhaps a 'mirror') preventing white surveillance from intruding into valued aspects of Aboriginal life. Sutton\textsuperscript{92} has referred to similar events, which he describes as 'undergrounding', amongst Aboriginal people in urban areas during the assimilation era. As with these groups, the post-classical period in the Coen region has eventuated the gradual ending of this undergrounding period and the renaissance of traditional forms of Aboriginal identity.

Nonetheless, this history of undergrounding and the conjoint emphasis on tribes in both Aboriginal and inter-ethnic domains of Coen life have led to a particular form of post-classical renaissance for the Aboriginal people of the township, including Ayapathu people.

The 'resurgence' of an Ayapathu identity

On arriving in Coen to commence fieldwork in January 1996, I spent the morning at the offices of the Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation (CRAC) with its project manager. She outlined the groups represented on the corporation's board of directors and their landed interests in the hinterland of the township, emphasising the (CRAC-administered) outstations in these areas. Among the directors was one representing the town's 'Ayapathu' group, associated with an area south of the township including Station Creek, the site of the Lalla Rookh homestead. This was the proposed site for the development of an Ayapathu outstation, at which the Ayapathu director and his family camped sporadically during the dry season\textsuperscript{93}.

This apparent resurgence of an Ayapathu tribal identity in the township appears to have been contemporaneous with two other developments. These were the belated regional shift towards Aboriginal land rights in far north Queensland and the establishment of a local Aboriginal Corporation in a township in which local whites had previously owned all businesses, freehold land, pastoral leases and local political or representative organisations.\textsuperscript{94} These factors led to a push to gain control, under 'mainstream' Australian legal processes, to areas of land in the region, and to the establishment of outstation camps in these and other areas from around 1990. The main focus of this push has been CRAC and the two corporations that preceded it\textsuperscript{95}. These corporations, alongside the Cape York Land Council (a regional organisation) and local repre-

\textsuperscript{91} Here I allude to the work of Foucault, e.g. 1979. A detailed application of Foucault's work in colonially-encapsulated Australian Aboriginal communities can be found in Morris 1989.

\textsuperscript{92} Sutton 1998: 124.

\textsuperscript{93} A period lasting from May to November every year. This outstation ('Punthimu') has subsequently been developed.

\textsuperscript{94} In particular the Coen Progress Association and the unfortunately named Coen Race Club, which organised the annual Coen Races. Membership of both groups and attendance of their meetings completely excluded Aboriginal people. Even after the formation of the Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation, only white employees of the Corporation would attend the Coen Progress Association's monthly meetings at which matters of local interest, particularly relating to local infrastructure development, Shire Council schemes etc. were discussed and the position of the Coen 'community' forwarded to relevant agencies. This 'racialised hegemony', which encompassed local economic activity and local representative bodies near-totally until the mid-1990s, is discussed further in Smith 2000a.

\textsuperscript{95} Moomba Aboriginal Corporation and Malpa Kincha Aboriginal Corporation. See also Jolly 1997: 246–56 and Smith 2000a.
sentatives of state and national government agencies, in particular Queensland’s native affairs department\(^96\), have provided channels for the pursuit of land rights and decentralisation during this period.

For much of the region’s Aboriginal population, this process has re-established a potential, for the first time in many years, for meaningful interests in country — that is, interests that involve some degree of actual or potential control over areas of land and places of importance in the Coen region. Similarly, it has provided the first opportunity for some twenty-odd years for many people to visit or live on this land in a substantial and meaningful way.\(^7\) This has resulted in a shift of the articulation of Aboriginal identity from the township-oriented tribal identities of the Reserve years to encompass a greater articulation of identity oriented to areas of land beyond the township.

Such articulation, like that in the township before it, has commonly been in the form of ‘tribes’. This is because the shift back towards country-articulated identities, like the tribal identities that preceded it, has proved inseparable from the inter-ethnic articulation of Aboriginal existence, both between differentiated Aboriginal groups and between Aboriginal people and whites.\(^8\) The inter-ethnic aspect is particularly discernible in the local administration of outstations by white-run inter-ethnic agencies (albeit organisations designated as ‘Aboriginal’) and through the contemporary inseparability of Aboriginal relations to land from both classical Aboriginal land tenure and the mainstream system of ownership and use that now encapsulates, and in part constitutes, the Aboriginal landscape. It is essential to realise that any meaningful contemporary control of land by Aboriginal people encompasses both ‘classical’ and interethnic aspects of Aboriginal existence. Such control is articulated between Aboriginal people and between Aborigines and whites, as both of these groups (and the associated domains reproduced through this articulation) are fundamentally part of the existence — social, economic and cultural — of Coen’s Aboriginal population.\(^9\)

Given this fundamentally inter-ethnic dimension to contemporary Aboriginal territoriality, it is unsurprising that tribes, long a feature of the Aboriginal articulation of their social organisation within the inter-ethnic domain, characterise the identities of land-owning and land-using groups in its contemporary manifestation. However, it is

\(^{96}\) Which has had a number of names over the years of its existence: see Kidd 1997. At the time of writing, it was called the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs.

\(^{97}\) Lack of access to vehicles, the enclosure of most of the country surrounding Coen within pastoral leases and the lack of Aboriginal employment opportunities on these stations, a reluctance to stress the importance of country to local whites and the anomie endemic amongst the Aboriginal population in the Coen township combined to inhibit such visits during this period. However, some families— notably those who had been de facto or de jure exempt from the Act and who possessed their own vehicles — continued to visit their country on a regular basis (cf. Smith 2000a for further discussion of these matters).

\(^{98}\) Smith 2000a presents a detailed discussion of these forms of ethnic articulation in the region.

\(^{99}\) The issues I have raised here have been dealt with in detail in Merlan 1998, in particular the no longer autonomous but ‘still unequal’ nature of ‘intercultural production’ of the inter-ethnic domain (Merlan 1998: 180-1 et al.). As one of the anonymous referees of this article noted, the ‘intercultural’ and ‘interethnic’ are not equivalent — indeed their interplay is at the heart of much contemporary interaction both between Aboriginal people and between indigenous and non-indigenous groups. These issues merit far more detailed discussion than is possible here and I intend to take up these issues at length in a forthcoming paper.
also apparent that the notion of tribes has similarly gained currency within the Aboriginal domain. As Rigsby notes:

In this current period when it's become possible for Aboriginal people to get some land back, I have had to recognise that tribal groups named after indigenous languages have emerged and operate as significant groups in land claims, purchases etc. ... These new groups are now important social groups in many parts of northern, remote Australia too. In the Princess Charlotte Bay and adjoining regions, they have developed during the transformation of the classical clan-based system of land tenure and use into the current system.100

Many younger people in particular identify themselves and their country in tribal terms, with knowledge of the previous clan names and territories increasingly absent.101 Yet I would argue that this is not simply a 'loss of tradition'. Rather, as Rigsby indicates, it marks a contemporary manifestation of an ongoing system of territoriality, ownership and identity developing through the articulation of interests and identities within the changing situations of Aboriginal existence. I would suggest that not only in the case of territoriality, but more generally within the town-based existence of the past thirty years, Aboriginal life has become increasingly inter-ethnic, both in terms of living within a large body of ethnically different Aboriginal peoples and through living alongside and within, a dominant white socio-culture. Initially such a process, at least as regards whites, was resisted; a smokescreen was established to protect valued aspects of Aboriginal existence from white surveillance and interference.102 At the same time however, tribal identities emerged both as an aspect of this smokescreen and as identities of countryman groups within the Reserve's Aboriginal life. In time, aspects of town-based identities, inter-ethnic existence and the dominant white culture became increasingly valued. As a result, the smokescreen of tribal identity can be seen to have gradually gained its own substance. As Aboriginal life grew to encompass both Aboriginal and inter-ethnic forms of substantive identity, both became important aspects of social personhood incorporated within Aboriginal existence.

101. Merlan 1998: 92 reports a similar generation difference in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory.
102. This 'smokescreen' included the masking of important aspects of Aboriginal existence, e.g. much cosmological knowledge or the practice of sorcery, as well as Aboriginal attitudes towards whites. The division of the Aboriginal world of the reserve and the appearance of Aboriginal life to whites is well illustrated by Aboriginal participation in the festivities around the annual Coen Races (the last of which was held in 2000). Aboriginal people would perform some dancing, at the behest of whites, in the town. Afterwards, at the relative privacy of the reserve, the 'real' dance performances and competition took place. As Chase 1972: 5–6 notes, these included taipu (or Torres Strait-style 'island dance') and different malkari (or 'corroboree') dances, many of which portrayed scenes of post-contact life and cattlework. They included a 'whitepeller' dance mocking a white man looking for his cattle, one example of attitudes to whites that would rarely, if ever, have been revealed in interactions with them. It seems clear from my fieldwork data and personal experience that an important aspect of the smokescreen was the masking of anger, bitterness and resentment towards local whites who were greeted with deference and muted accommodation when present, but towards whom most Aboriginal people harboured a deeply embedded enmity, both generalised and particularised.
The incorporation of a fundamentally inter-ethnic dimension of Aboriginal existence has had sociopolitical repercussions within the region's Aboriginal domain. Among the most notable of these has been the rise to political prominence of those Aboriginal people formerly living beyond the Reserve and de facto or de jure exempted from the provisions of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* (1897) and subsequent similar legislation. The separation of these families from those living on the Reserve decreased, both physically and socially, with the repeal of the Act and the integration of both factions of the local Aboriginal population within the town's new Aboriginal housing in the early 1970s. From this time it is apparent that the closer ties of the formerly exempt families to the white population, and their greater familiarity in dealing with white socio-culture, positioned them in roles of 'brokerage' between whites (both local and those from outside agencies) and the Aboriginal population. Their ties to local whites also allowed them to control and utilise important resources – in particular, motor vehicles – that formed the basis for increased political status and allowed them access to areas of land beyond the township with which they had ties. With the advent of the local Aboriginal corporations and the development of outstations, these ties to whites and to country and access to resources have put these families at the forefront of the territorial renaissance in the region.

Although many of the factors underlying this positioning are based within the historically recent circumstances of white colonialism and the resulting inter-ethnic dimension of contemporary Aboriginal existence, the contemporary existence of 'focal men' in the region's territorial system is a manifestation of long-running socio-cultural patterns. Von Sturmer, working with Kugu-Nganchara people in western Cape York Peninsula, has outlined the way in which certain men achieved political prominence as the focal men for camps in that region. For these men:

'gaining and maintaining [personal] control of an important [typically religious/ceremonial and/or resource-rich] site, typically one located near a naturally favoured camping area capable of sustaining large numbers of visitors' lay at the heart of ascendancy to political prominence. Such men 'made reputations as ceremonial leaders and, correlatively, as men of note in the public forum'.

A similar process marks the development of outstations within the Coen region. Such sites, as well as occupying places of importance within the region's Aboriginal landscape, allow the control of resources from the matrix of the encapsulating administrative 'environment'. The role of contemporary focal men similarly extends to 'ceremony'. This is no longer the performance of the classical traditions of grand ritual, but the performance of ties to country in land claims processes, which seek to recognise,

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103 See Howard 1978.
104 Such roles are, almost without exception, occupied by men. One woman who does hold such a role does so in a limited form, articulating her role against that of her similarly ‘focal’ brother. The reasons for this gendered bias in local politics are probably due to both ‘traditional’ factors and factors pertaining to expectations of white agencies dealing with the region’s Aboriginal population, but these cannot be discussed at length here.
105 von Sturmer 1978.
reproduce and regiment Aboriginal territoriality within mainstream European–Australian legal frameworks.

In the case of the region’s Ayapathu group, this has seen a descendant of the Ayapathu/Lamalama/non-Aboriginal family discussed above assert his Ayapathu identity and country-interest based in his ties, through his mother, to the Station Creek area. Through this identity he has also become the Ayapathu director in the local Aboriginal corporation and the focus for the landed interests of the wider group of Ayapathu people living on Cape York Peninsula. Such political prominence is unsustainable without the support of the wider tribal group. In this way, the role of the Ayapathu director, like that of other focal men, is maintained through the support or acquiescence of other members of such ‘tribes’. In order to gain and retain such support, focal men have to ensure the continuing access of their ‘tribe’ to their country through outstations and similarly ensure that this group are informed about, and have ‘their say’ in, ‘business’ pertaining to their ‘tribal land’. As a result, the role of a focal man is reproduced through the continual ferrying of information, people and resources between the inter-ethnic and Aboriginal domains, between the regional centre of Cairns and the township of Coen, and between Coen and his outstation in the township’s hinterland.

The contemporary Ayapathu tribe is more limited, both in number and constituency, than its name might suggest. As Rigsby notes, the name generally pertains to ‘a small group of people, the descendants of the inland Ayapathu who now live in Coen’. It is apparent that this group does not form a tribe because it encompasses the total group of people descended from Ayapathu clans known to its members, or because all of its members hold identical interests in an area of land associated with the Ayapathu language. Rather, their tribal identity is based in their amalgamation as a group or mob to pursue their interests in land as what Hafner has referred to as ‘one mob for country’. This amalgamation is based on ties of kinship and territorial closeness through their common cognatic descent from a number of inland Ayapathu-speaking clans that previously existed as members of a regional block or culture area, and through the members and descendants of these clans sharing a continuing history of living alongside each other ‘on country’, in the cattle industry and in Coen.

Within this tribal group there remain apparent, although not completely distinct, associations with particular areas within the wider ‘Ayapathu tribal area’. These ties clearly maintain distinctions drawn from the classical clan estates of the region, with the interests held by particular families mirroring those held by the Ayapathu clan or clans from which they are descended. For example, the Coen-based Ahlers family has a particular interest in an area within the Crystal Vale pastoral lease through their patrilocal association with a key ‘Story’ and associated country located there. Senior members of the Port family have a similar association with the Station Creek/Punthimu

109 The relationship between mobility and focal men is discussed at length in Smith 2000a.
110 Rigsby 1992: 357.
111 Hafner 1995.
112 There are two distinct families in the region, both being Ayapathu descendants, who bear this surname.
area of Silver Plains through their mother and their history of association with this country from their childhood. These more particular associations are demonstrated in the relative authority of different Ayapathu people in different areas of Ayapathu country, a senior member of the family with such an association being the person seen as properly having the right to 'speak for' that area. They are also apparent in close inter-family relationships based on long-running 'company' ties between neighbouring (classical) clans and their descendants. This is illustrated by the company relationship of the Ahlers(2) and Shortjoe families along the Pretender Creek/Holroyd (or 'South Kendall') River system. This relationship further underlines the flexible nature of contemporary tribal identification by territorial mobs. Whilst the clan language of the Shortjoe's antecedent patri-clan was Wik-Iyeny, their company interest overlapping Ayapathu country and their history of boxing-up within the Ayapathu-centric block has been the basis of their identification as 'Ayapathu as well' or 'Mungkanh(u)-Ayapathu mixed' when involved in business pertaining to this area.

However, beyond these more particular interests a conjoint Ayapathu tribal identity continues to be asserted in inter-ethnic 'business' by the region's Ayapathu mob. This is almost certainly a function of the limited numbers of Ayapathu-identifying people in the region. As with the groups that formerly coalesced on the Reserve, a certain volume of people appears to be necessary to furnish the required social momentum for effective group action.

Interestingly, there are a number of families in the region recognised by the Ayapathu group as being of Ayapathu descent, but who they have dismissed as having any 'say' in Ayapathu land. The reason offered for such dismissal is that these families have taken up interests in country other than the Ayapathu area, and have thus foregone their interests in the latter. Unvocalised, but apparently part of this dismissal, is the distance (both physical and social) effected not only between these families and the country of their Ayapathu forebears, but between themselves and the Ayapathu families who have maintained such association and reasserted such conjoint identity in the Coen region. Thus one family at a nearby former mission settlement was said to 'have no say in Ayapathu business' because they had 'followed their mother's side', and apparently did little to maintain close kin ties with their Coen-based relatives. Another family, far removed on Palm Island since the mid-1950s, was held to still possess the interests

113. Assert control of or speak in the case of the area either in formal 'business' like land claims, or informal discussions.
114. This is the river marked as the 'Holroyd' on most maps, but Aboriginal people from the region know it as the 'South Kendall', using the name 'Holroyd' for a different river entirely.
116. The 'Wik-Iyeny' language and clans are typically identified, from a Coen-Ayapathu perspective as 'Wik Mungkan', 'Mungkan-side', 'Mungkanhu' or 'Aurukun-side'. Such compression of more territorially distant identity-distinctions under regional identifiers is common in the region.
117. Similarly, members of this family have identified as 'Olkola' in representing their interests in more southerly country, acting in concord with the Olkola group who share interests in that area. Again, this demonstrates the role of language-names as processual identifiers for land-based groups, rather than primarily reflecting fundamental ties between language, country and people, despite the continuing existence of such ties.
of their Ayapathu forebears as they maintained contact with kin in Coen, occasionally returning to visit them.

However, as land claims have seen the re-recognition of Ayapathu identity by a wider group and the increased likelihood of available title or control over areas of Ayapathu country has emerged, some of these families have begun to declare their interest in these areas. This process has been further developed by the actions of anthropologists and Land Councils in developing Ayapathu genealogies and locating the descendants of Ayapathu clans on Cape York Peninsula and beyond it.\textsuperscript{119} Palm Island in particular is both home to and the diffusion point for a number of Ayapathu descendants, many of whom remain unaware of their potential Ayapathu identity and interests. The contacting of these people and the passing on of information about their Ayapathu ties, such processes being common in land claims, is likely to involve them as parties to such Ayapathu business regardless of the perceptions of the ‘local’ Coen-based Ayapathu tribal group of their right to involvement.\textsuperscript{120}

Increasing numbers of Ayapathu-identifying people active in the region’s business, particularly where such families have weaker ties to the Coen-based Ayapathu group, are likely to increase the level of ‘intra-tribal distinction’. Similarly, an increase in areas of Ayapathu land available for claim under land rights legislation, or via purchase, will tend to produce the same effect. Both are likely to lead towards a process of fragmentation similar to that described by Altman at Maningrida outstations, where band-sized outstation groups ... (began) splintering into nuclear/nuclear extended groups ... (resulting) in a very land extensive occupational mosaic.\textsuperscript{121} The incipient stage of such fragmentation is already apparent in the Coen region. Here however its current primary focus is in land-holding as well as land using groups.\textsuperscript{122}

Discussing the links of Ayapathu people to Ayapathu ‘tribal country’ and plans for future use of this country with CRAC’s Ayapathu director, he drew and described a number of potential outstation sites in the Coen region (Figure 3).

\textbf{Figure 3 Potential Ayapathu outstations in the Coen region}

\begin{tabular}{ccc}
\textbf{Nobby} & \textbf{Crystal Vale} & \textbf{Station Creek} \\
\textbf{Polappa} & & \textbf{Yarraden} \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] In the last year this family has become more involved in Ayapathu business, and with their Ayapathu kin, demonstrating the processual nature of inclusion and exclusion from contemporary ‘tribal’ mobs.
\item[\textsuperscript{119}] Bruce Rigsby (pers. comm.) has pointed out the need for careful professional and ethical consideration of the degree to which such ‘proto-descendants’ (the term is mine) should be informed of these ties and under what circumstances.
\item[\textsuperscript{120}] I discuss the articulation of landed interests between such ‘local’ and ‘Diaspora’ groups elsewhere (Smith 2000b).
\item[\textsuperscript{121}] Altman 1995: 1.
\item[\textsuperscript{122}] See Smith 2000a on the interplay of land-holding and land-using groups (in particular, outstation groups) in the contemporary Coen region.
\end{itemize}
These outstations would be occupied by families with particular interests in the areas in which they were sited, but would maintain a network of mutual support. Moreover, those living at the camps would move from outstation to outstation, living at the other camps from time to time to visit kin there and enjoy the surrounding country and its associated resources. The similarities to the classical social and territorial organisation in the region are clear – and noted by the Ayapathu director, who described the arrangement as being ‘like before’ – a number of main camps, each with an associated population, but between which strong ties, including mobility and sharing of resources, are maintained, constituting a regional block. The nascent differentiation or splitting of the Ayapathu tribe\textsuperscript{123} apparent within this conceptualisation of group-place relations makes it apparent that any judgements about the ‘loss’ of complex social organisation, and a one-way shift towards language-named tribes would be oversimplistic.

Rather, unlike models of a simple deterioration of knowledge leading to tribes replacing clans, there is an apparent spectrum – or perhaps a cluster – of potential organisational forms within the region’s ongoing Aboriginal socio-culture. Embedded more in factors of group numbers and territorial availability than ‘continuing traditionality’ and ‘acculturation’, changes in the social, economic and physical environment of the region’s Aboriginal population – including Ayapathu people – produce commensurate shifts between these forms.

**Conclusion**

The history of the Ayapathu ‘tribe’ of inland Cape York Peninsula reveals a number of historical group-forms that have developed in response to the contexts in which Ayapathu people have found themselves. Limited by the need for socio-culturally manageable and sufficient group numbers, this history has seen the transformation of the classical clan system into one in which ‘tribes’ play a prominent role, a shift initially driven by the organisational necessities of township life and articulation with an encapsulating colonial society. This shift included the temporary suppression of an Ayapathu identity in the production of these tribes (in the form of countryman groups) in the Coen township. But over time the development of inter-ethnic ties and the substantiation of such tribal identities has made them a core part of Aboriginal existence in the region. As Merlan writes for Katherine in the Northern Territory,

Recognition that even highly salient-seeming clan organization is only a particular kind of expression of relationships with country and is underpinned by much more general conditions and social orientations allows us to reject any simple equation of such organizational forms with ‘culture’ and thus also to reject any view that Aboriginal culture ‘falls apart’ when clan-level organization dissipates ... However, the dissolution of clan-level organization is a symptom of a much more general process: changes in the form of life such that landscape recedes in importance.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{123} See Sutton and Rigsby 1982 for a general discussion of nascent differentiation and group schism – particularly that associated with growth of group size allowing the formation of substantial subgroups – with regard to material from western Cape York Peninsula and Princess Charlotte Bay.

The case of the Ayapathu tribe shows that such recession of the importance of landscape, and the dissipation of clan-level organisation are not necessarily monodirectional. The increasing numbers of Ayapathu people and the resurgence of potentially substantial interests in Ayapathu country have not only led to the resurgence of a local Ayapathu identity. With the continuing increase in numbers of Ayapathu descendants, the potential return of others with Ayapathu ties into the region's territorial business, and the increasing amount of land seen as potentially available for the assertion of such interests, the region has shifted towards the fragmentation of this 'tribal' group into smaller - although inter-linked - land-owning and land-using groups. This shift indicates that, rather than a degeneration of the system of local organisation through acculturation, or a one-way dissolution of clan-level organisation, the shift to forms of tribal organisation is potentially reversible as sufficient numbers of people and areas of country become available to the regional Aboriginal society and that society shifts its focus away from the town and back towards its hinterland.

The outcome of this shift currently remains in the balance. It depends, to a great degree, on whether conditions remain such that the Aboriginal people of the region are able to pursue their re-orientation towards 'bush' areas through outstations and regenerated title to land. If the current trend of supposed economic rationalism and political backlash against land rights continues, the underpinning of this process will be ripped away, once again collapsing the way of life and aspirations of the region's Aboriginal people.

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Kwementyaye Perrurle Perkins: a personal memoir

This memoir recounts my personal association with Kwementyaye (Kumantjay), better known to most outside his family as Charles Perkins, from the 1930s to 2000. Before he was made human through initiation ceremonies in the Arrernte way, Charles and I were both born in the Native Institution, the Bungalow Telegraph Station, in Alice Springs, where his ashes were scattered. In 1942 our paths diverted: he went to live in Alice Springs, where his mother Hettie Perkins (Senior) worked for the military and I was evacuated away from the expected Japanese invasion to a wartime refugee camp at Mulgoa, New South Wales.

While working in military kitchens, Hettie and her younger children lived in overcrowded accommodation; Charlie was left to the devices of his young peers who came under the notice of the townsfolk and the military and civil police. The Reverend Percy McDonald Smith took Charlie under his care first at St John’s and then the St Francis Anglican home for boys of mixed Aboriginal and other descent in Semaphore South, Adelaide.

Meanwhile, I stayed at Mulgoa while my mother Eileen went to work in Sydney under the wartime Aboriginal employment program. She worked as a cook and occasionally we spent time together. While in Sydney my mother had another child and with them I set off to return to Alice Springs. En route we were prevented from returning due to the martial law in force. The military authorities placed us in an aliens' camp at Balaclava in South Australia until the Pacific War ended. My mother was given the opportunity to place me under the care of Rev. Smith. They both knew that there were no proper schools in Alice Springs for half-castes and my mother took up the offer of schooling in Adelaide. Like Hettie Perkins, my mother consented to leave me at the St Francis boys' home. So Charlie Perkins, who was just two years older, and I together became inmates at the St Francis home.

Charlie was outstanding in singing and this is one of my earliest memories of him, although he never made much of an impression upon me until the numbers at St Francis grew in 1950. The Commonwealth government introduced endowment and extended this to parents of half-castes. We in St Francis drew Commonwealth support because of that and also because we were Northern Territory wards being educated outside the Northern Territory. These payments also enabled us to play sport and some of us began to attend high school, whereas before that the Australian Board of Missions had to pay. At St Francis the Anglican Church leased land to a local soccer team, Port Thistle. Charlie played for the senior colts and I played for the junior team. We became much closer. I always cleaned Charlie’s football boots after milking the cows on Saturday mornings. He gave me a small payment in kind and I tracked him to watch his games. He soon gravitated into the first team. He quickly became a soccer star and was
in demand among many of the ethnic teams such as International, a mixed ethnic team, and Budapest, the Hungarian team. I left for work in the country and Charlie went overseas to play for Bishop Auckland near Newcastle in England.

We teamed up again in 1967 when I came back to Adelaide to play Australian Rules and Charlie had returned from England. I switched to soccer and signed for the Croatia club, where Charlie was captain-coach. Together we played in the first team. Charlie was selected in the South Australia team with John Moriarty, another former St Francis boy who played with Juventus, and the three of us were inseparable. We shared our social gatherings and travels to the country, and I was with Charlie on the night he met his future wife, Eileen, at the Hendon pub.

Charlie worked for the South Australian Railways and enjoyed the power that came from trade union membership. He talked of his impression of learning how to deal with Railways bosses, arguing for employment conditions for his workmates. At the very same time we were involved with the Aboriginal Progress Association with other Aborigines and South Australians with Labor Party connections. There were Malcolm and Aileen Cooper, Vince Copley, John Moriarty, Maude and George Tongery, Geoff and Nancy Barnes, Charlie and myself. We sought emancipation from South Australia's race legislation. We held meetings with Don Dunstan (later the Premier) and Cameron (later Justice) Stewart. These meetings focused on, first, a repeal of exemptions under the Aboriginal legislation and, second, Aboriginal human rights. Then Charlie entered national politics too.

In 1958 he had drawn the criticism of Dr Charles Duguid, the Presbyterian missionary of Ernabella and an Adelaide ear, nose and throat specialist. Duguid had created the Aborigines Advancement League in South Australia and had helped establish the Colebrook Girls Home for girls of mixed Aboriginal descent from the northern area of South Australia. Duguid's criticism focused on Charlie's election in Brisbane to a national body called the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines. Duguid believed he was more qualified than Charlie, who found a sense of power in belonging to this body and wouldn't allow himself to be diverted by Duguid's views. Soon I left for England and soccer and he left for Sydney to get married, take up matriculation studies and emerge as the most profound Aboriginal social and civil rights thinker of his era.

When I returned from England Charlie was studying Arts at Sydney University and playing football for Bankstown. He went on to conduct the freedom ride and become the first Aboriginal university graduate. His achievements influenced me, encouraging me to follow in his academic footsteps. He, however, achieved much more. He played an important role in securing a 'Yes' vote at the 1967 referendum on the Commonwealth's powers in Aboriginal affairs; he created the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney; and then he joined the Commonwealth Public Service, but not before conducting a world tour to study race questions overseas. While away he met important British and American Black leaders and maintained his contacts with them.

Charlie led the fight to change white society. He conflicted notoriously with government ministers, and was so determined he was not afraid to defy them. It was that which caused his downfall. Under the Hawke government he humiliated the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Jerry Hand, by encouraging Aborigines to revolt in 1988. As
Prime Minister, Hawke was forced to side with Perkins. This began a conspiracy among Aboriginal bureaucrats. Charlie never forgave those involved and he retreated inwardly before returning to central Australia, where he went through traditional initiation ceremonies. He created the Arrernte Council and ran successfully for further public office, this time as a member of the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. He had earlier written an autobiography, *A bastard like me*, but in 1990 was also the biographical subject of serious scholarship in Dr Peter Read's *Charles Perkins: a biography*. Charlie received an honorary doctorate from the University of Western Sydney in 1999 and many of his publications were his public speeches on Aboriginal affairs. Thousands of Australians mourned his passing, but mostly Aborigines will mourn and remember him.

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Charles Perkins: ‘no longer around to provoke, irritate, and inspire us all’

I met Charlie Perkins on the Freedom Ride. We were both students at the University of Sydney in the mid-1960s; I was 19 and white, he was 29 and Aboriginal. With other students we had in common the desire to draw attention to racial discrimination in New South Wales, specifically in the country towns visited by the Freedom Ride — Wellington, Gulargambone, Walgett, Moree, Boggabilla, Lismore, Bowraville and Kempsey. Charlie and 28 white students travelled for two weeks in February 1965 on a bus tour subsequently dubbed the ‘Freedom Ride’, protesting against discrimination in various ways, such as holding up placards outside pools and RSL clubs. The high levels of hostility to us in some of the towns we visited — especially Walgett, Moree, and Bowraville — drew national and international media attention to our protests.

The Freedom Ride was the product of the ideas, actions, and commitments of many people, especially the students on the bus itself, and also their supporters in Sydney and in the towns visited. Its success in making connections with Aboriginal activists in those towns, and in drawing public attention to the high levels of racial discrimination and hostility still prevalent in New South Wales at that time, was, however, very largely due to Charlie’s own outspoken presence. Without him, the Freedom Ride would have been seen as, and would have been, a bunch of white students without much direct knowledge or understanding of the issues. With him, we could meet Aboriginal people in the towns, extend our own understanding, and above all capture the interest of the media. All of us, I think, recognised Charlie’s pivotal role, and despite some disagreements amongst us over tactics from time to time, we remained a remarkably cohesive group.

That political action in February 1965 affected many people’s lives — Charlie’s, ours, and those of many others, including young Aboriginal people in the ‘Freedom Ride’ towns. The students, black and white, went on with our lives in various ways, many going on to develop our interest in Aboriginal rights and issues as teachers, lawyers, academics, journalists, writers, administrators, and public servants. Most important of all, however, was the role of the Freedom Ride in making Charlie into a national leader of Aboriginal people for the following 35 years. From that time, he was rarely out of the public eye. After a period as manager of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney, he began his long career as a public servant when he became a research officer at the new federal Office of Aboriginal Affairs in 1969. He helped create the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee in 1972, and became chair of the newly created Aboriginal Development Commission in 1980 and Secretary to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1984. Although a public servant, he was never quiet and discreet, publicly criticising superior departmental officers and ministers when he thought criticism
was warranted. Even after he ceased his career as a public servant in 1989, he continued to speak publicly on Aboriginal issues, becoming chair of the Arrernte Council of Central Australia (1991–94) and deputy chair of ATSIC.

Charles Perkins had a full and active life fighting for Aboriginal rights, and with his passing we have lost one of the most courageous and forthright Aboriginal activists this country has so far seen. I am glad to have known him, and very sad that he is no longer around to provoke, irritate, and inspire us all.

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The imprimatur of Charles Perkins on *Aboriginal History*

Perhaps more than anyone else in 200 years, Charles Perkins changed the ways other Australians thought about Aboriginal people and the way Aboriginal people perceived themselves. Certainly when Peter Corris and I discussed founding a journal of Aboriginal history in the early to mid-1960s it was difficult to arouse interest. Historians were largely apathetic and anthropologists actually opposed the idea. One senior anthropologist told me that such a journal would raise expectations in the community at large and eventually backfire against Aborigines who were not able to live up to these expectations. Certainly those who had the best interests of the Aboriginal people at heart and who influenced official policy — such as Paul Hasluck, WH Stanner and HC Coombs — were committed to an assimilation policy, and much Aboriginal policy reflected the mistaken conclusions of the Porteus intelligence tests and the negative paternalism of the missions. Indeed the lack of a sense of self-direction in many Aboriginal communities was so frustrating that a Maori activist friend, afterwards the Hon. Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, a minister in the New Zealand government 1972-75, who had been trained as a social worker, told me that she gave up in despair any attempts to get the Aboriginal groups she met with to act for themselves in matters of social justice.

After Charles Perkins organised the freedom rides around western New South Wales towns in 1965 the climate gradually changed. Even before this, organisations such as Abschol were beginning to make a difference. In 1965 I was elected chairman of the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) of the ACT, an organisation supported by the churches and service clubs to promote the interests of the Aboriginal people. From 1965 to 1968 we had a very active committee providing speakers and promoting books, school essays and an annual bark painting exhibition on National Aborigines Day in July. In 1968 the climate had so changed that we felt that it was no longer appropriate that a committee such as NADOC should be run by European Australians and we made arrangements to hand over the running of National Aborigines Day in Canberra to the newly formed Aboriginal group, the Kanangra Society.

Peter Corris and I had never given up the idea of Aboriginal history and after Peter removed to Sydney I had further talks with Bob Reece who had joined the Department of Pacific History. Nevertheless, as I chaired a committee that was voting itself out of office in favour of Aboriginal leadership and direction, I did wonder about the appropriateness of founding a journal of Aboriginal history. The idea of the journal was therefore very much in the background when I went down to Sydney to see Charles Perkins. I told him that our NADOC committee was disbanding but that there was a lot of goodwill and that I would like to know what we could do to help the Aboriginal
cause. After some general discussion which provided no solution he suddenly said to my surprise 'You're a historian aren't you, do something about Aboriginal history'.

Here was the imprimatur enabling us to revive the idea of Aboriginal history. Charles Perkins had given the idea his blessing without any prompting or prior knowledge. We had a mandate to go ahead. The idea was to model the new journal on *The Journal of Pacific History* of which I was an editor. Funding was the major problem but Peter Grimshaw, then Business Manager of the Joint Schools, proved a valuable ally and convinced the Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies to make a grant available. Bob Reece and I appointed ourselves editors and wrote to all those we thought would support the venture. By then the climate had so changed, following the Perkins era, that there was almost complete support from the historians and anthropologists canvassed. Initially we planned to confine the journal to historians but with Peter Corris being in Sydney, Bob and I invited Diane Barwick to be an editor and we also agreed to make the journal interdisciplinary. Diane, who was to become principal editor, brought with her a notable band of female scholars affectionately known as the 'sisterhood' and provided a colophon of excellence to accompany Charles Perkins' imprimatur.

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Notes and Documents

The epistemological foundations of contemporary Aboriginal religion: some remarks on the Ngarrindjeri

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I begin with two glosses that were provided by Ngarrindjeri women of the Lower Murray River area, South Australia, concerning the claim of restricted women's religious knowledge during the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Affair. One was made by Doreen Kartinyeri, and has been often cited: 'This isn't a Dreaming, it's reality'. The other was made by way of the original submission by the proponent women to Cheryl Saunders, where the nature of the claim was described as 'not mythological but spiritual'. Little attention has been paid to how these utterances might represent an enormous transformation in the Ngarrindjeri understanding of 'the sacred' in comparison with the religious world of the Ngarrindjeri sketched by the Berndts' elderly informants in the 1940s. Indeed, since Stanner's pioneering efforts, in recent treatises on contemporary ritual observance among the Yolngu (e.g. Keen 1994; Morphy 1991) the question of the contrasting epistemological foundations of Western Christianity and Aboriginal religion is hardly acknowledged. I will briefly suggest what the nature of that transformation might be here.

The European Reformation as we all know heralded the advent of religious pluralism in Western society and — as a corollary to that — it secured the commitment to the separation of secular and religious power. It marked the beginning of the demise of the Eastern religious mystery upon which the original doctrine of divine intervention was first established, and introduced the modern notion that the presence of God and His effects on the human and natural worlds are mediated through the symbols we manipulate to betoken His presence and influence.

I wish to draw attention to several dimensions of this, here. An important shift in this process involved the position of Man in the divine scheme: Man moved from being a component within a total Creation of God to the entire point of the Creation (the idea of John Scotus Erigena, who propounded the first view of the transubstantiation as met-

1. See Lucas 1996.
aphor, also proposed the notion of Man as *copula mundi*, that is, the 'universal catalyst', the Being who, created in God's image, thus reflects all things).

Another important effect of the Reformation, as seen clearly for example in the theories of John Wycliffe, among others, was to remove God as an immanent presence on earth and in Man and his community, and to relegate Him to His ethereal throne in Heaven, where He would subsequently act through the media of symbols and Church authority. The nature of man's religious experience would henceforth be of the nature of an interior 'indwelling' of the spirit of God or Christ, rather than any substantial external effect of an immanent power (see Wagner 1986).

I propose to take a similar view of the transformation in Aboriginal religion, at least among those populations who have undergone a more or less thorough 'missionisation' effort during this century. Of course, the western epochal transformation from Man as effect of Creation to Man as in charge of it, took hundreds of years, and in this sense we can perhaps see the more rapid transformation of Aboriginal religion, insofar as its pre-contact form had much more in common with our medieval, pre-modern form of Western religion, as an ontogenetic recapitulation of a cultural-historical phylogenetic event that is deeply inscribed in the Western perception.

The first observation I should like to make about this 'Great Transformation' in the Aboriginal context is the severance of the *soi-disant* religious system from the productive system of subsistence activity envisaged as a purposeful movement over, transformation of, and appropriation of the land and its resources. Knowledge of the land was part and parcel of subsistence *tout court*. Knowledge of songs was linked to the territory through knowledge of the Aboriginal names of places. When this productive-motile nexus was broken, as for example by forced relocation to mission stations, a key juncture supporting the religious system was lost. When knowledge of places is lost, an important buttress of the landscape of spiritual life goes with it. Thus in the Hindmarsh Island case, Doreen Kartinyeri stated that she had retained the knowledge of the restriction and its cosmological dimensions, but had not known the actual place to which it was attached.

The second point I want to make is that here Ngarrindjeri beliefs did evince features that set them apart from other well-documented Aboriginal religious systems.² It is true that the geographical dimension of subsistence was important, and the Ngarrindjeri apparently had a myth-landscape nexus similar to the rest of Australia; however, their religious life was somewhat differently centered: they had a central and well-developed notion of personal power and the importance of personal attributes in its quest. Reading the Berndts' account (1993), one is reminded of the Yaqui Indian efforts to become a man of power (see Castaneda 1974). The Berndts draw attention to the notion of *miwi*, the physical seat of awareness and emotion, but also the source of physical strength and vitality. The *miwi* was an innate characteristic of the person, but it could be trained, enhanced and nurtured through proper techniques. Closely related to this was the role of the healers, the *putari*, who allegedly were the individuals in whom

² Draper maintains that the Ngarrindjeri were unique in that they occupied an especially fertile and well-stocked environment whose reproductive vitality needed far less human intervention than did other areas of the continent.
originally reposed the restricted knowledge at issue in Hindmarsh Island. But the role of the putari, among other things, involved the power to control the ngatji, the totem species, and to harness it in relation to the person's mivi. It appears then as if the putari in one respect mediated between the totemic/species world and an interior one of personal power. This intensification of the personal dimension of religious experience would already have positioned the traditional Ngarrindjeri closer to what Luckmann describes as the condition of contemporary religion (1996: 73).

The third point I wish to make is that we are in the midst of a post-modern blurring of religious and secular authority which is the opposite of the medieval subordination of the human to the divine. Because what we identify as the ‘religious’ in Aboriginal tradition cannot be separated from the epistemological, the political and the productive, any legislation that purports to protect Aboriginal tradition must therefore be prepared to pass judgement on the nature of Aboriginal religion. This represents an intrusion of the polity into religious affairs. Religion becomes an affair of state not because the polity has once more become divine, but precisely because of the opposite condition: that religion has become a subordinate adjunct of ethnic, national and racial identity, protected by those legislative Acts that buttress pluralist freedom. Because culture has become aestheticised, the role of religion within it has also, something that is perhaps inevitable under the conditions of pluralism in today’s democracies. We are less interested in it as a manifestation of a very different conception of the human and more as a component of identity assertion within such pluralist polities. We may wish to accept that in contemporary cases of indigenous cultural revival in Australia and elsewhere around the world, ‘traditional religious practices’ may be more important as items on a preservationist agenda for identity management and promotion, than they are as cosmological supports for a different world. The boundary between these acts and anti-racial vilification legislation becomes very ambiguous, something which can be said to have been acknowledged by Aboriginal people themselves for example, the Ngarrindjeri proponent women, and Marcia Langton.

My last point concerns the contemporary practices of recognising and defining culture and cultural difference. While pre-colonial Aboriginal communities were well aware of cultural differences between themselves and others, the conclusions that indigenous people drew from the perception of such linguistic, ceremonial and productive differences did not concern ‘culture’ as such, but more particularistic foci of differentiation, such as myth and place as sources of human distinctness.

The coming of the Europeans created a new and external perspective upon this regime of social differentiation for Aboriginal people. The terms of human interest and intention shifted from the representation of the signs of one’s specific local and ceremonial identity to the meta-representation of the contemporary contexts that served as their conditions of visibility. The phenomenon we call the ‘Invention of Tradition’ takes places within this meta-representational register, what we can gloss broadly in Sahlins’ terms (1981) as the culture of the conjuncture, a relational moment that has particular historical and temporal as well as semiotic properties. The Euro-Australian culture of legal

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3. ‘The new, basically de-institutionalized, privatized social form of religion seemed to be relying primarily on an open market of diffuse, syncretistic packages of meaning, typically connected to low levels of transcendence and produced in a partly or fully commercialized cultic milieu’.
and bureaucratic classification that forms the dominant element within this conjunctural nexus stipulates that for a legitimate pre-Western, pre-modern Aboriginal community, 'tradition' must be seen to remain uncontaminated by external and foreign elements. And yet under the Western legal framework in which they are forced to confront the terms of their own cultural distinctness, indigenous Australians find this impossible.

Those indigenous people are now working within a blatantly 'entified' regime, where culture and society are now items of human conscious fabrication. Like us, they have incorporated a new domain of unarticulated ground against which human action can be made to appear. They have now been recast as social beings in possession of 'a tradition and heritage', rather than men and women of power for whom the conventions of culture and social life were previously taken for granted. No longer do Aboriginal communities in settled Australia such as the Ngarrindjeri seek to objectify the ancestors through inspection of the present day traces of their primordial presence; they now have to objectify the tradition of ancestral authority itself for the benefit of anthropologists and lawyers who must characterise and make a case for a more westernised version of such tradition in the courts.

We need to not only recognise the quality and social placement of objectification involved in such a situation. We need to understand the moment of historical transformation that such new forms of objectification point to, and anticipate the future effects of such conjunctural forces on the development of contemporary forms of Aboriginal religion. Upon these characterisations rests whatever incommensurability we may still wish to recognise between Aboriginal and Western religious life.

Acknowledgment
My thanks to Peter Sutton for discussion of the topics dealt with in this paper.

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Book reviews


The thesis of this book is that the pioneer legend is not a depiction of the real conquest of Australia. Watson draws on pioneer accounts from the Channel Country of Queensland, comparing them against each other to show some of their silences, distortions, and inadequacies. She also draws on debates of that time concerning many of these issues in order to show a broader context of silence, distortion, and contestation. This brief study makes a significant contribution to Queensland history in two areas. The first is the study of the impacts of syphilis and gonorrhoea on Aboriginal people. Watson discusses with vigour, passion and medical authority the impacts of these diseases on people who had previously not encountered them. She further discusses the fact that some white men at the edge of settlement deliberately sought to inflict these diseases on Aboriginal people. She notes the occurrence of disease in young boys as well as girls, suggesting the probability of homosexual rape. Her work on coercive sexual relations is excellent, and while I would have liked to have seen it contextualised within the broader scholarly context of frontier sexuality, her analysis of epidemiology, intent to harm, and official tolerance of known practices is excellent.

The second contribution concerns the words, and in some instances the fate, of people at the edge of settlement who spoke out against the prevailing practices of the day. This work is a timely reminder that there have always been critics of prevailing practice and dissenters from official negligence. In an era when the call to honour Australian heroes often comes from a political perspective that would want to claim a singular view of history, Watson’s work goes straight to the complexities and dissensions of history.

While the work is admirable in its intent, I found it less than satisfying. The legend is a straw man, and this book, coming at the end of two decades of tumultuous re-writing of Australian history and law, and in a period of radically shifting power relationships, should have more to say. I wanted to see the broader contexts. For example, the concept of the frontier is not problematised to indicate the major rethinking of this concept that is taking place in Australia, Canada, and the United States. The issues of indigenous land and resource management, which have been under major revision since the early 1980s, are briefly discussed here, but not set within the broader context of work being done right around Australia.

More importantly, the absence of Aboriginal evidence is startling. There is a rich body of literature on which to draw in order to bring Aboriginal perspectives into the
story. Books and articles dealing with the Channel Country may be limited, but works concerning Queensland, Aboriginal 'protection', station work and droving contain a wealth of insights. If the effort of bringing Aboriginal perspectives goes beyond the author’s intent, then that intent is too narrow. While the study focuses on white pioneers, they are discussed most extensively for what they have to say about Aboriginal people. To exclude all Aboriginal people and perspectives thus seems unjustified.

I can sum up my reservations most clearly by reference to the question Watson poses concerning the extent to which her work can be generalised. She writes: ‘If the veracity of Pioneer Legend is questionable as it applies to the Channel Country, then is the legend any more reliable for other areas of Australia? Logic suggests not.’ I hold that we do not have to rely on logic; the evidence shows that the legend is questionable over most if not all of Australia. The literature of the past two decades shows a flourishing of histories, by academics (settler-descended and Aboriginal), life histories, and oral accounts of life in the problematic intercultural zone known as the frontier (by settler-descended and Aboriginal people). There are so many good studies that one wonders why this work is so shallowly contextualised.

A legend that accounts for national identity is not required to produce veracity; rather it attracts belief. Like myth, it is a vessel into which people pour their imaginations, longings, and desires and then find therein accounts of themselves as they would most choose to be. I endorse the effort to disentangle legend from solidly grounded accounts of actual events. At the same time, however, I wonder if anyone today really believes that the white pioneers of the Australian outback were brave, resourceful, had an immense capacity to endure (p 113), and that their struggle to conquer the land was without violence, bloodshed, or harm (p 7). The first part of the definition is undoubtedly true; the second part is so absurd that anyone who seriously believes it today is unlikely to be swayed by encountering more facts.

Having stated my reservations, I will return to my praise. Watson is at her best on the medical issues and the documentation of settlers who resisted the status quo. These people are forgotten heroes, and they deserve every bit of attention Watson gives to them. The re-imagining of the nation through the rethinking of its history absolutely demands that the heroes of dissent be given their place in public culture.

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_Obliged to be difficult: Nugget Coombs’ legacy in indigenous affairs_ by Tim Rowse, viii + 254 pp, Cambridge University Press 2000 $32.95

By November 1967, when Dr HC Coombs was appointed chairman of the new Council for Aboriginal Affairs, the 1966 strike and walk-off by stationhands and their families from Wave Hill station had already been transformed from an industrial action to a land-rights protest and claim. The Coalition Government had taken a position firmly opposed to any response that might be seen as according special rights in land to Aboriginal people. The equally firm refusal of the Wattie Creek mob to settle for anything less than title to a substantial part of the station, and the support they were getting from unions, students and others, ensured that the issue remained an embarrassment to the government.
For the first five years of the Council's existence Coombs's efforts to promote negotiation of the issues were an irritation to the Department and the Minister for the Interior, responsible for the administration of the Northern Territory. When in 1970 Interior proposed a committee to investigate the situation of Aboriginal people on cattle stations in the Northern Territory it was presumably in the hope that this would be seen as a sensible and positive move — proactive would be the word now — aimed at producing policies applicable broadly rather than dealing in an ad hoc way with one 'hard case'. The intention was to sideline the Council and to demonstrate that new policies and programs would be devised for the Northern Territory without the help of the Council.

A less energetic and determined person than Coombs might have allowed this ploy to go unchallenged, and waited to see what this committee might propose. Not Coombs. Exercising all his influence and his powers of persuasion, he soon succeeded in having himself added to the Gibb Committee team, no doubt to the chagrin of Interior officials. Coombs later expressed disappointment that, within the strict guidelines laid down for this inquiry, he had not been able to persuade his fellow committee members to recommend the buying of pastoral properties for the resident Aboriginal communities or to back the promotion of 'share farming' arrangements between the residents and pastoralists, but he did get agreement to propose the excision or sub-letting of areas of pastoral leases suitable not only for residential purposes, and for traditional ritual and other activities, but for small-scale economic enterprises.

Tim Rowse does not tell this story in this book in which he examines Coombs's impact on the administration of Aboriginal affairs, perhaps because Coombs himself in his account of these years gives the impression that the Council did no more than make a submission to the committee and does not mention that he was involved in its inquiries and deliberations. But the incident illustrates how ready Coombs was to call on his accumulated knowledge and experience of government and to use all the influence he was able to exercise in this new position in order to ensure that the Council could do what it was appointed to do, however unsympathetic the government had by then become.

Rowse has been engaged for some time on what he describes as a 'project to approach Australia's twentieth century history through a biography of Coombs' — actually 'an account of his public life' rather than a full biography. This separate volume has been published because of the 'length, complexity and topical interest' of Coombs's engagement in Aboriginal affairs in the last thirty years of his life. At 250 pages this is not a long book but it is easy to believe that the planned later volume on 'the entire length of his career' may not deal in comparable detail with the issues he faced in his working life as a banker and public servant and in his other 'retirement' interests, notably his seven year stint as 'arts supremo' at the Australian Council for the Arts and its successor Australia Council. In choosing material for this book the author has focused on Coombs's approach to 'problems of indigenous self-determination' and what he describes as the tensions between 'national and local levels of indigenous politics, and between organisational innovation and faithfulness to tradition'.

In an introduction Rowse provides a brief account of Coombs's career and offers a kind of 'executive summary' of the chapters that follow. The first five chapters — about half the book — deal with the five years when Coombs and his Council colleagues, WEH Stanner and Barrie Dexter, were formally in a strong position to influence Commonwealth policies and to shape programs. This is what the Council was established to
do and the size of the ‘Yes’ vote in the 1967 referendum meant that governments were under some pressure to be seen to be improving the situation. With the creation of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in December 1972 the Council was in a different situation, and just two chapters cover the four remaining years of the Council’s existence. Another five chapters deal with Coombs’s main preoccupations in the next twenty years when he held no office, and was sometimes an outspoken critic of the Commonwealth Government, but was twice engaged to undertake important official inquiries. A short concluding chapter discusses Coombs’s advocacy of regional, as opposed to State and local, government and the relevance of his ideas to the continuing tensions between the government and Aboriginal bodies over financial accountability.

Much of the early part of this story has been told before, notably in the book *Kulinma* that Coombs published in 1978. In this he gave a particularly full and frank account of the Council’s difficulties in persuading the Coalition Governments to give Aboriginal groups secure title to land in the Northern Territory, or otherwise depart from existing policies. Since then it has also been possible to read something of another side of the story in the published diaries of Peter Howson. But Rowse has had access to a wealth of additional evidence, primarily Barrie Dexter’s unpublished history of the period and his other papers stored in the Menzies Library at the Australian National University, and also Coombs’s own papers in the National Library. All this means that he can tell us a great deal more than we could normally expect to know about the workings of government in a period much of which remains covered by the thirty year embargo on access to official records.

Rowse sets the scene for his account of the establishment of the Council and Office of Aboriginal Affairs in his first chapter with a discussion of the official policy which envisaged ‘assimilation’ as the goal of government programs in Aboriginal affairs. He offers the kind of critique of the official policy statements that by 1967 had been advanced by academics, churchmen and others for half a decade, but does not provide any context to explain why policy had been expressed in those terms in the 1950s and 1960s. One finds here no reference to the Cold War politics of the period or to Australia’s strenuous efforts to assure the rest of the world that its policies for its indigenous population were the antithesis of South Africa’s policies of separate development and *apartheid*. Rowse is critical of government statements that ‘special measures’ applying to Aboriginal people were to be ‘regarded as temporary measures, not based on race’ but does not acknowledge that these phrases were taken directly from the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. Nor does he mention the parallel development of thinking about immigration and ethnic affairs in the 1960s which saw the ‘White Australia policy’ put to rest, and talk of the ‘assimilation’ of immigrants gradually abandoned in favour of a vision of a pluralist society.

Rowse gives an interesting account of the way the Council’s ideas developed and discusses what Coombs regarded as a critically important administrative principle: that governments should avoid creating an ‘omnibus’ Aboriginal welfare authority of the kind that had emerged in the states and the Northern Territory, but rather ensure that each Commonwealth and state authority provided appropriate services — in health, housing, education, training, employment and welfare — to Aboriginal as to other clients. Coombs’s views derived from his experience as Director of Post-War Reconstruc-
tion, but this had also been the main thesis of the study Colin Tatz had made in the early 1960s of Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory where the Welfare Branch was then providing health, education and other services to Aboriginal communities on reserves and elsewhere. Dexter later had one notable success in implementing Coombs's strategy when, in 1973 as head of the new Department of Aboriginal Affairs — the department that the Council had advised against — he swiftly handed over to the Departments of Education and Health all the education and health staff and responsibilities he had inherited with the NT Welfare Division — thus at a stroke halving the size of his department.

Here I should declare what might be described as an interest, having been a keen supporter of Coombs's views on this matter, as Rowse reveals in quoting from an indiscreet (private) letter I wrote in 1974. In the years since that first creation of the Department the notion of a Coombsian 'devolution' of responsibility to functional departments has had an airing from time to time (most recently in the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal health from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to the Department of Health), but it is a policy that has been breached much more than it has been observed. This may explain why Rowse seems equivocal about the merits of the policy and why he does not give much attention to the issue. A policy not implemented may not seem an important part of Coombs's 'legacy', but the failure to take his advice on this point might help to explain why the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the past thirty-odd years has not had more encouraging results. On the other hand, Bruce Juddery, commenting on this book in the Canberra Times (16 February 2000), has claimed that it has revealed how Coombs had 'probably retarded the advancement of Aboriginal equality in Australia by a decade, maybe 20 years', arguing that he should have been prepared to 'take direct responsibility' for the administration of Aboriginal affairs policies and programs. Since a Department of Aboriginal Affairs was created after only five years it is hard to see how Coombs's 'failure' could have set the cause back by ten or twenty years and Juddery provides no evidence for his curious conclusion, or indeed any suggestion about how it might have been achieved before 1972. One can understand that people may now ask why the Commonwealth Government has not fully succeeded in 'the advancement of Aboriginal equality' but it is hard to see how Coombs could be held responsible for this.

The next two chapters deal mainly with the 'land rights' issues that were presented to the Council in its early months. The first was a proposal by Interior to amend legislation to provide for leases of reserve lands to Aboriginal people — leases that could be sold after seven years; the second was the Gurindji petition for a grant of land at Wave Hill for residential, ritual and pastoral purposes; and the third was the situation at Yirrkala where bauxite mining was about to start on the community's doorstep. An account of the Council's responses to these challenges is blended with the story of the changing position of the Council after the death of Prime Minister Holt, as Coombs and his colleagues found themselves first distanced from his successor, John Gorton, who appointed as Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs (and as Minister for Social Security) WC Wentworth, a man with a great many ideas of his own about what should be done about these and other issues, and later, under McMahon, shifted from the Prime Minister's Department to a new Department of the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts. The establishment of a separate department by the Labor Government in 1972
concluded this process of moving Aboriginal affairs from a central position in the Prime Minister’s aegis to the outer margins of government.

Rowse deals very thoroughly with the McMahon government’s attempt to respond to the 1971 judgment in the Gove land-rights case and with Coombs’s determined work to extract from government as generous a policy as was possible, given that ministers would not contemplate grant of anything better than leasehold title. Coombs made good use of his access to McMahon and exercised his powers of persuasion in the interdepartmental committee that was appointed to advise a committee of ministers on Aboriginal policies in general and on land in particular. The outcome was the Prime Minister’s policy statement, issued inadvisedly on Australia Day 1972 only to be greeted by the establishment of an Aboriginal ‘tent embassy’ outside Parliament by a group of east coast activists who must have decided well before this that no policy pronouncement by the McMahon government would adequately address their concerns.

In the fourth chapter Rowse returns to the Council’s first years to introduce his two main themes: ‘the national and local levels of indigenous politics’. He first discusses how the Council looked for ways of consulting Aboriginal opinion, considering whether and how FCAATSI could represent Aboriginal views nationally, recruiting three Aboriginal liaison officers and Charles Perkins to the Office, and arranging a first ‘regional consultation’ in Alice Springs (October 1969). Then he outlines how Coombs in 1969 became involved in local matters at Yirrkala, devising proposals designed to help the people cope with the changes that the mine and township would bring and discussing these ideas with community leaders and others. Rowse notes that the Yirrkala people were reported in early 1970 to be planning to move out to develop outstations to the south rather than waiting to see how mining development might change their lives at the mission and this leads into a brisk summary of Coombs’s later interest in, and visits to, outstation groups in other parts of the country.

The 1972 Aboriginal Embassy protest and the government’s response to it provide the central theme of the last chapter dealing with the Council’s work with the Coalition Government. Rowse suggests that Coombs and the Council had a conventional view of ‘indigenous diversity’, a view that stressed the differences between those in ‘colonial’ and ‘settled’ Australia, between those in the remote reserves, on cattle stations, in country towns, and in the cities, rather than their shared history and common interests, and ‘emerging pan-Aboriginal sentiments’. He writes that they were not prepared ‘for the words and actions of the Tent Embassy activists’. But they were certainly not unaware of urban discontents and Rowse does not suggest how they might have acted differently if they had had a more modern view of ‘indigenous unity’. This is perhaps the most present-minded section of the book and Rowse argues at some length that ignorance of the history of ‘Koori dispossession’ in New South Wales, detailed in studies published in the past decade or so, was a significant handicap for the Council. He indicates that the protests changed Coombs’s thinking and raised his interest in the emerging ‘urban intelligentsia’, though his ‘characteristic field of interest’ remained with ‘the remote Aborigines’.

The two chapters that cover the period 1973–1976, when the Council was working with a Minister and Department of Aboriginal Affairs, focus first on efforts to establish a kind of ‘national indigenous assembly’. Gordon Bryant, the new minister, made it a
high priority to establish a ‘powerful group’ to represent Aboriginal opinion to him and
to his Department, just as the ‘Returned Services League (RSL)’ acted as a pressure
group for the clientele of the Repatriation Department. Bryant apparently did not think
it mattered that the RSL was a non-government organisation while his National Aborigi­
nal Consultative Committee (NACC) was to be a body directly elected by his Aborigi­
nal clientele and devised and paid for by the Commonwealth Government. Rowse is
tersely critical of Bryant’s ‘tangled political logic’ and ‘conceptually muddled’ approach
and gives a sympathetic account of Coombs’s criticisms of it and his warnings about the
likely consequences. Readers are left to draw their own conclusions about the useful­
ness of any government sponsored Aboriginal pressure group, which, as Coombs
pointed out, would probably be dominated by ‘urban Aborigines’ and ‘become a chan­
nel for the political energies of dissident and ambitious Aborigines’.

Rowse here also sketches the later history of the NACC and its replacement with
the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) after a review in 1976 headed by Les Hiatt.
He outlines the minority report that Lois O’Donoghue submitted as a member of that
review team in which she proposed a scheme based on local Aboriginal organisations
much along the lines that Coombs had advocated. In a later chapter he reports that, in
1983, Coombs was in turn invited to review the NAC and found it ‘a real disaster’ but,
since the Labor Government was committed to a ‘strengthened and restructured’ NAC,
he probably thought it would be unacceptable to argue then, as Council had done in
1972, that the formation of any nationally representative body should be ‘the preroga­
tive of Aboriginal people’. Coombs instead proposed a scheme similar to O’Donoghue’s
with local and service organisations sending delegates to regional assemblies and from
those to a national ‘congress’.

Rowse does not reveal how Coombs’s proposals were received by the Minister,
Clyde Holding, but later records that by 1989 legislation had been enacted establishing
the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In the intervening five
years the NAC had been allowed to expire in 1985, and O’Donoghue had been engaged
to review Coombs’s proposals. She had submitted recommendations for an arrange­
ment broadly similar to her own 1977 plan and Coombs’s 1984 one. After a lengthy ges­
tation ATSIC emerged, a hybrid of the NAC and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.
The years after the NAC disappeared might have been seen to demonstrate that gov­
ernment and indigenous people had both got by very well without it, but the opportu­
nity to break free of Bryant’s legacy was missed. Rowse twice cites John Barnes’s review
in this journal (Aboriginal History 11, 1987, pp.184-5) of a published version of Coombs’s
1984 report but does not take up his point that a policy of ‘providing separate political
... institutions’ for the Aboriginal minority is a very odd policy indeed, entirely at odds
with the approach governments adopt in relation to all other ethnic minorities in our
pluralist society.

A chapter on ‘Clans and councils’ examines how Coombs’s ideas about Aborigi­
nal involvement in the management of their own community affairs developed. As
Rowse points out, these ideas owed something to Charles Rowley’s advocacy of ‘Abo­
riginal bodies corporate’ as providing a basis for community development and political
advocacy. Rowse makes the point that attempts to protect and expand Aboriginal
autonomy in this way seem inevitably to entail pressure for change and innovation; a
policy of ‘self determination’ or ‘self management’ could force the pace of change by
thrusting new responsibilities on groups that might be neither ready nor willing to take them up. Having mentioned how the running of the Northern Territory reserve communities was handed over to the residents in 1973 and referred to early concerns about the consequences of this, Rowse sketches some of the ways Coombs encountered these issues in the early 1970s: at Yuendumu and Hooker Creek where Coombs and Stanner in 1974 examined and reported on community councils in operation; at Mimili, one of the first pastoral stations bought for the resident group, where Coombs himself became directly involved in the community’s dismissal of the man appointed to manage the cattle operation; and at Hermannsburg, where the mission staff abandoned attempts to have a council manage the township and autonomous descent groups scattered to outstation camps.

In the final chapters covering the years when Coombs worked from a base in the Australian National University, Rowse examines in particular his dealings with the Northern and Central Land Councils, his work in organising the Aboriginal Treaty Committee, and his review of the NAC. He deals sympathetically, indeed uncritically, with Coombs’s efforts to encourage the Northern Land Council at least to prolong its negotiations on the proposed Ranger uranium mine and with his criticism of the way the Northern Land Council had negotiated agreement to the Nabarlek mine. The traditional owners of the Nabarlek area had deferred to the wishes of the senior ‘traditional owner’ and Coombs, confronted with this evidence of a hierarchical tendency in Aboriginal decision-making, proposed that the process had been flawed and insufficiently consensual. Rowse tells us in an endnote that Ian Viner, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time of the Ranger negotiations, considers this chapter unfair in suggesting, with Coombs, that the government had pressured or bullied the Northern Land Council to get a quick result. Certainly a good case could be made that the relatively small group of ‘traditional owners’ and the other Aboriginal beneficiaries secured a much better deal than anyone could have predicted at the outset, thanks to the astute work of legal counsel for the Northern Land Council and of Mr Justice Fox and his colleagues, and to the Fraser government’s smart decision to adopt virtually the complete package of the Fox Report’s recommendations, contrary to the advice of the pro-development departments in Canberra.

Coombs brought to Aboriginal affairs a long and rich experience of ‘government affairs’, a powerful intelligence and an extraordinary energy, as well as a keen interest in learning more about Aboriginal people and their concerns. These personal qualities were fully exercised in the Council’s first five years, battling for small victories in a largely hostile political and bureaucratic environment, and also when a brief moment of opportunity occurred in the two weeks in December 1972 immediately after the election of the Whitlam government. Had his advice on ‘machinery of government’ matters been followed more often, Aboriginal affairs might well be in better shape today. His lack of enthusiasm for ‘top-down’ schemes for the national representation of Aboriginal opinion seems entirely justified now, after nearly thirty years of general disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the NACC and its successors. And his interest in exploring the practical problems of developing Aboriginal autonomy at a local level in ways compatible with accustomed ‘ways of living and thinking’ was surely justified.

Rowse’s decision to concentrate in this book on just some of the issues that occupied Coombs’s attention has meant that other matters important to him are treated
sketchily or only mentioned in passing. Rowse mentions that legislation to establish a Capital Fund for Aboriginal Enterprises was one of the Council’s ‘few political victories of 1968’ but tells us no more of this characteristic initiative. Here Coombs, the newly retired central banker, called on his colleagues in the banks to lend staff and expertise in order to set up a new institution to inject capital and promote Aboriginal enterprise, private and community. This early innovation would surely rate more than one sentence if biographical and historical interest and relevance were the criteria for selection — and Noel Pearson could make a case for giving it some attention on grounds of ‘topical interest’ too. Rowse mentions only incidentally that Whitlam in 1974 wanted to retain the advice of Coombs when the government had opened negotiations to settle the international border with Papua New Guinea, but Coombs was particularly interested in the Torres Strait Islanders and impressed with their politically astute leaders. This aspect of indigenous self-determination in action apparently awaits attention in the next volume. Rowse tells of Coombs’s early efforts to resolve the matter of the Gurindji at Wave Hill but does not continue the story beyond 1968, so that we read nothing here of his meetings with Lord Vestey in London, or of his suggestions that Whitlam should shorten his speech and make the symbolic gesture with a handful of dirt at the first ceremonial grant of title at Wattie Creek.

This volume may be intended primarily for readers with a special interest in the ‘central issue of self-determination’ and not so much for the general reader. Rowse at times seems to assume that readers will be familiar with much of the history of the period, and indeed with Coombs’s life — we are not told, for example, when he died. Though the many transitions from one topic or period to another are generally handled deftly enough, the uneven treatment of different periods and topics serves to remind the reader that this is an assemblage of parts extracted from a longer work. The book may perhaps have been cobbled together a little hastily (but someone should have spotted the missing reference to a communication from Pastor Albrecht, cited four times in chapter 7).

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*Eseli’s notebook* by Peter Eseli, translated from Kala Lagaw Ya into English, edited and annotated by Anna Shnukal and Rod Mitchell, with Yuriko Nagata. 208 pp, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit Research Report Series vol. 3, University of Queensland 1998 $30

Peter Eseli was a remarkable man who left for his family, Mabuiag countrymen, Torres Strait Islanders and anyone interested in the Torres Strait, the legacy of his notes on Mabuiag people and their world. It is a fascinating document written from an insider’s perspective in his own traditional language, Kala Lagaw Ya.

He was born in 1886 on Mabuiag, one of the western islands of the Torres Strait, and died in 1952 at the age of 72. He was a typical Mabuiag Islander, spending his youth working for the Torres Strait fisheries in the pearling, trochus and bêche-de-mer industries and acquiring his traditional knowledge from his father, a member of the Shovel-nose Ray clan. It was perhaps his father’s involvement with the Cambridge
Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait back in 1898 which aroused Eseli's interest in providing his own written record of his culture.

Topics covered are diverse and reflect the knowledge and issues central to a Mabuiag man. A large section is devoted to kinship and clan membership. Genealogies of Mabuiag families and their clan membership are listed as well as those from other islands with totemic and kinship affiliations to the island. Another section records the cycle of seasons. These are characterised by the appearance of stars and constellations, the presence or absence of winds, the storms, cloud formations, tides and rains and the behaviour of animals and fish. The seasons guide people's activities and signal times for planting and harvesting as well as the times for particular types of hunting and fishing.

The author's work is preceded with a detailed introduction by Shnukal and Mitchell. There is background information about the writer, the island and people as well as historical notes on Christianity, European and Pacific Islander contact. An overview of Mabuiag cosmology and the origin of stars and constellations in Islander mythology helps the reader to contextualise their reference in the text. The work also includes a standardised orthographic version with interlinear glosses and a free translation. Editors have expanded some of the word strings and reordered these into sentences for clarity whilst still maintaining the author's poetic style. Material has been added such as genealogical updates, official records, comments, references and comparisons with other relevant material as well as illustrations and photographs.

_Eseli's notebook_ offers readers an insight into a traditional Islander's world view, the relationship between clan and territory, their understanding and knowledge of the landscape, seascape and skyscape.

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Black angels — red blood by Steven McCarthy, 141 pp University of Queensland Press, St Lucia 1998 $21.90

Dreaming in urban areas by Lisa Bellear, xii+76pp University of Queensland Press, St Lucia 1996 $18.60

Australians are good at gestural, as distinct from actual, Reconciliation. As I write this review, an Aboriginal Virgil has just led a wide-eyed Alice in Wonderland called Nikki through the not-so-divine comedy of our history, or at any rate a selective, white-blindfold view of it. I refer of course to the opening ceremony of the Olympics, complete with aquarium specimens, then, on land, representations of winter burnoffs, monsoonal downpours, Bradshaws-on-stilts, giant Wandjina cut-out — plus a black cast of thousands. And then, not least, Cathy Freeman lighting the wobbly IOC flame. In between the initial nonsense and the genuinely moving sight of Cathy, not a Koori, Murri, Nyoongah in sight, just Captain Cook and the cast of _Oklahoma_ in overalls building a modern nation with sheets of corrugated iron— which also come in handy for a Riverdance sequence. After the extravaganza I wasn't at all surprised to hear someone say that Aborigines should be pretty satisfied now. What more could they possibly want? A successful land claim or two, less deaths in custody, an end to mandatory sentencing?
Come off it. Academic and publishing spheres operate analogously, lavish with merely symbolic bouquets. Fortunately what matters is not what the white establishment does but what black people are doing. Two texts written in the last few years, a novel by Steven McCarthy and a book of poems by Lisa Bellear, continue the massive Aboriginal cultural production of recent decades. It really is astonishing that the cultural flood shows no sign of abating. Of course it's not easy to upstage the remote communities, still leaders in the art field (most recently Balgo and Turkey Creek, the latter witnessing a renaissance I was lucky enough to see at close range earlier this year). But country/urban production, not least in the sphere of writing, seems to keep pace. The difficulty, as well as the perseverance, clearly signals itself in Bellear's title: dreaming in urban areas.

McCarthy is from Bourke, has written several plays and, by the time this review surfaces, will perhaps have finished his second novel. In spite of its Kerouac title his first, Black angels - red blood, stands squarely in the local tradition initiated by Narogin's Wild cat falling (1965) and carried on by Weller's Day of the dog (1981), both novels it closely resembles. Like these it opts for kitchen-sink realism, telling the story of a youth who travels from the Paroo to Sydney and back, observing the highs and lows of outback and Redfern life, the familial intimacies, the easy solidarity, occasional constructive contacts between black and white, the odd punch-up with a white bastard, trouble with the police, dead Kooris, corrupt land councils, drugs, booze and nice coloured girls. All in the overarching context of spiritual initiation. It's racy, lyrical, occasionally clichéd writing ('to hell and back'), suited to the lively subject matter and the bustle of the plot, with characters in and out of conversation and pubs, illustrative in its loose structure of the aimlessness of city life.

In the end, though, with a clear point to make. In Day of the dog Weller had his car-stealing, black kamikaze Nyoongahs experience a brief interlude working on the land which functions as a spiritual antidote. In Wild cat falling Narogin had his self-destructive, existentialist Jimmy Dean protagonist encounter a black elder in the country, this time most specifically with the aim of re-establishing Dreaming contact. McCarthy's comparable hero has his elder guru (presented with a mix of mystique and realism), is given a bone-pointing job to do, and emerges at the end as a new-generation Clever Man, returning to the land, source of power and renewal. On top of that, this shy, if not downright slow-on-the-draw, boy gets the girl, after several missed opportunities with a pizza-cooking signorina and a country lass who skinny-dips. The limitation of the fast-moving text is probably its self-consciousness about Aboriginality and Aboriginal politics. It's liable to make redundant observations, to comment on what the plot has already amply revealed, viz the racism of the police, the indifference of government etc. It also overdoes a little the evocation of black friendships, the spontaneous sharing of money, beer and pot, the warmth of family intimacies, the sense of belonging to the land — and ethnographic details (Paroo fish recipes, to be precise). But none of this to a point where the reader loses patience. On the contrary, warts and all, this is an attractive narrative and many people might learn a lot about New South Wales black life from it. The finale, if not the moral, leaves me sceptical. Having returned to the symbolic pelican presence with which the novel opened and passed through the test set by the old-generation Clever Man, the protagonist KOs several Bourke cops (which can't be too easy outside the pages of a novel), calls the bluff of the one who points a gun at him and
walks away with the manifest power of an initiate. Verisimilitude aside, that compares interestingly with the endings of Weller's and Narogin's novels. Weller's characters die in a Western Australia car-chase conflagration; Narogin's hero gives himself up to the police — he'll return to Freo jail but at any rate lives to fight another day: McCarthy's spooks the opposition, emerging with total victory. If that isn't read as fantasy, it may be taken as saying something about current Aboriginal gold-medal confidence. I wouldn't put *Black angel — red blood* in that category as yet, but it's a highly promising first novel and a serious one.

Something similar might be said about Bellear's first collection of poems, *Dreaming in urban areas*. The mini-bio won't tell us her age (she can't be too old), but it reveals her as a Melbourne Taurus who appears to have been active in a variety of contexts (committee politics, broadcasting, studying at Melbin Yewni and other places, including the university of life, writer-in-residence). The autobiographical or part-autobiographical poems, 'a Suitcase Full of Mould' in particular, add that she has been 'Adopted, fostered,/ Sexually abused/ Colonised, Christianised' or at any rate most of those things. The result is understandably a persona, doubtless defensive, of up-front aggressive sexual energy, verbal rush, swagger, unabashed bouncy egotism worthy of Miles Franklin's 'me, me, me'. I like these poems with attitude; 'warriors' (forget 'once were') abound in them ('warrior ancestor spirits', 'warrior woman', 'Awake Our Warriors'); in short, Xena hovers in the wings. Which works to advantage, provided the Taurus doesn't charge at every opportunity. That is liable to introduce a note of one-dimensional, stereotyping protest ('Bureaucrats' Battleground') or too-facile rage ('Baby Basher'). At its least focused, though never without some verbal fireworks, this rage comes uncomfortably close to a whinge ('splashed by a passing cab'). Or disingenuous histrionics ('Do I punch/Do I scream' at the apparently innocuous academic who asks 'are you Aboriginal?'). Or a sneer ('Eh Professor, big shot/ Big Cheese'). In these contexts it seems to me irony would work better than sarcasm. And in any case the sarcasm is frequently directed at odd targets like Mandela ('Ode to Nelson Mandela') or Keating ('Mr Prime Minister'), who single-handedly dragged his unwilling party and the even less willing country into Native Title Bill territory, or at 'millionaire Socialists' who visit Cuba, Nicaragua etc. I can't say I know too many of the last, by the way.

To do the poet justice or to criticise her from still another angle, it's true the tone of many of these poems is ambivalent. That either because the emotion, and consequently the political point, is complex — or because it's fuzzy. I suppose it's reasonable, if unfair, to attack Keating for his focus on issues not very relevant to oppressed minorities e.g. the republic; or to heap scorn on pc white tourists anxious to experience Aboriginality ('Souled Out'). Though this last poem equally reads like an attack on Aborigines who make dollars out of black-experience tours ('sold out'). Or to take a swipe at middle-class gubba feminists ('Women's Liberation') in a poem which twists and turns, leaving this reader uncertain of the final butt of the satire. Or to have a vigorous go at an admittedly contemptible Hugh Grant apologising for his lapse into orality. But then that piece ends up salivating at the thought of sexy black lips: Grant's mistake wasn't to do it but to say sorry when, really, it was all very nice. Maybe so. We are, however, left with a sentimental and rather unrealistic view of street walkers in LA.

Having said all of which, one has to add that plenty of Bellear's poems are neither ambivalent nor merely sarcastic. 'Pissing in Parks' puts up an amusing and convincing
defense of teenage Ninja gangs and pensioners who pinch flowers as morally superior users of public spaces. ‘The Rapist’ works as a piece of undiluted rage. ‘The Smoker’ ditto as distaste without apology. ‘Artist Unknown’ works as understated protest. Bellear’s strength is one she has in common with precursors such as the so-called Generation of ‘68 (which I wrote about at length in *Parnassus mad ward*), and their heirs, the Performance poets originally featured in Pi O’s *Off the record* anthology: namely a capacity to generate poetic pace, a sense of utmost immediacy. This comes through in many, to a degree in all of the poems, even the occasional ones where you feel the emotion has not been fully worked out. Examples readily come to mind: ‘Hanover Street Brunswick 3056’ (contact with a non-Aboriginal child), ‘Writer’s Block’ (how to get going with a hot mug of coffee), ‘Pursued’ (a phone call), ‘Travels on a Train’ (a slice of life), ‘Pushed’ (wondering how the hell ‘he’ never managed to suicide, for all his efforts; maybe his dreaming or his aunty or what?), ‘Break the Cycle’ (a plea for an end to black male violence, expressed with anguish and tact). Even more convincing, as a group, are the more personal poems. In fact it’s in these that the more vulnerable, less assertive poet makes an appearance. Bellear is attractive enough when she yells; she disarms rather more, however, when the child in her gets out, seeking comfort under a doona, ‘the electric blanket/ on high’ (*Spiritual Ruin*). This happens when chips on the shoulder about academics, middle-class Yuppies and celebrities from Grant to Keating are in abeyance. When, for example, she shows doubt (let’s face it, black dyke and all, ‘Your hair’s too curly/ Your nose doesn’t go splat/ Freckles, blue green eyes/ Urbanised’); when she’s ‘afraid to love’ or ‘a bit/ homesick’; when, ‘stricken by Catholicism’, she fails to make a love move; when ‘just for tonight’ (nicely ambiguous) she yearns for love; or counts the weeks and days in love, or makes an offer: ‘come dancin’ when there may be no one there. The love poems are often the best, spontaneous, seductive, probably most important of all for a strident poetic voice, questioning.

Even in this context, that of maximally aestheticised, individualised creativity, however, it’s as well to return to the political theme implied in comments on McCarthy’s novel above. Black writing in this country, no less in the case of Bellear’s poems, never quite abandons the note of collective responsibility. Its major implicit or explicit function is always to assert presence: ‘we’re here!’. Or, broadly speaking, identity: ‘us fellas’. Precisely at that point black writing surpasses white gestural politics (walks across the bridge, torch-lighting etc) and white gestural art (the notion of an aesthetic artefact). It has a real-political job to do and it does it.

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*Australian rainforests: islands of green in a land of fire* by David Bowman, 345 pp, Cambridge University Press 2000 $120 ISBN 0 521 46568 0

In recent decades, two research topics have excited interest, speculation and argument among ecologists in Australia. The first is this country’s unique rainforest vegetation, which ranges from cool-temperate *Nothofagus* forests of far southern Tasmania, through temperate and subtropical gallery forests of the east coast ranges, to more classical tropical rainforests of humid northeast Queensland and patches of monsoon forest scattered
across much of the wet–dry tropics, from Queensland to the Kimberley. The second is the contentious topic of fire and its role in shaping the vegetation of Australia, a subject of substantial interest to archaeologists and anthropologists as well as ecologists.

It is the latter aspect that will be of most interest to readers of *Aboriginal History*. Long-standing controversies surrounding ideas of Aboriginal use of fire have been continued, or even inflamed, by recent publications such as those of Flannery (1994) and Horton (2000). Flannery’s book depicts the first Aboriginal inhabitants’ slaughtering of the megafauna as causing subsequent generations to devise mosaic burning in order to avoid the threat of vast conflagrations sweeping their country. Opposed to this, and also to views that the general effect of Aboriginal landscape burning was deleterious, is Horton’s revival of the view that Aborigines lived in ‘the pure state of nature’, unerringly conserving the land, the plants and the animals.

The fossil record shows that rainforests were the dominant vegetation of Australia when it was part of the supercontinent Gondwana. With the final breakup of Gondwana about sixty million years ago and Australia’s subsequent isolation and drift northwards, the biota was subject to progressive and substantial environmental changes. Global cooling, aridification and increasing seasonality of temperature and rainfall fragmented the rainforest, while plant species evolved that could survive drought, frost and fire.

*Australian rainforests: islands of green in a land of fire* is an important attempt to draw together the evidence of decades of rainforest and fire research across a number of disciplines. It provides a synthesis that interprets the present distribution and behaviour of rainforest ecosystems in Australia as well as looking at some of the enigmas provided by the past. Bowman reviews the scientific literature in order to explain why Australian rainforests are fragmented ‘green habitat islands in a sea of flammable forests’. He begins with the obvious question: ‘What is Australian rainforest?’ The answer is as complex and diverse as the rainforests themselves. A variety of definitions and classification systems have been proposed over the years, none of which is entirely satisfactory. If rainforests are ‘islands of green’, then the surrounding vegetation is overwhelmingly sclerophyll. This is another hard-to-define term that literally means ‘hard leaves’, but is generally used to describe plants with tough and usually small leaves characteristic of drier places. The term applies to most of Australia’s non-rainforest woody vegetation, with *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* the dominant tree species over almost all of the continent.

Tying down all these definitions is difficult and, as Bowman emphasises, masks the reality of sclerophyll species being common in rainforest, while rainforest species or their near relatives are also widely dispersed, even in arid Australia. This is one of the problems with the book, or with the research reviewed in it, or with any attempt to lump together disparate vegetation types from such a wide latitudinal range. Much of the Australian flora is believed to have evolved from rainforest taxa, but Bowman points out that the opposite is also true as some sclerophyll species have adapted to rainforest environments. *Livistona* palms in central Australian gorges have probably evolved from a relict species stranded in a relatively moist and protected environment as the climate became arid.
It is with the boundaries between these broad vegetation types that the book is primarily concerned. These boundaries may be abrupt, with a wall of rainforest rising suddenly in an open forest, or diffuse, with a gradual transition over a kilometre or so. Explanations of the factors controlling rainforest boundaries fall into three main groups: soil (edaphic) factors, climate and fire, each of which is explored in depth. All three are important to varying degrees in different places, but there is no soil property, be it parent material, drainage, fertility or phosphorus availability, that can be correlated with rainforest boundaries. Nor do environmental factors, such as water, light or temperature, uniquely define these boundaries.

Bowman devotes at least half of his book to considering fire as the most important factor of all. He admits eventually (p 250) to the narrower purpose of seeking 'to establish that the boundaries between rainforest and non-rainforest vegetation are determined by the frequency of wildfire'. This bias is not idle speculation, but comes from his extensive experience as an ecologist studying rainforests throughout their range in Australia. He reviews the evidence from research investigating present-day rainforest boundaries, fire ecology, the evolution of drought- and fire-adapted plants in Australia and also the effects or likely effects of Aboriginal landscape burning in both the distant and recent past.

Bowman discusses the long-term vegetation and fire histories and finds that there is as yet no unequivocal evidence for the initial impact of Aboriginal land management practices. These long-term vegetation histories show a contraction of rainforest at the height of the last glacial (c16 000-12 000 years ago) as grasslands and shrublands covered vast areas of the country. As the climate subsequently became warmer and wetter, so rainforests spread rapidly from these refugia. Rather than being created by Aboriginal burning, the grasslands of Australia may well be relicts from glacial times. Bowman argues that, while climate change is of paramount importance in determining large-scale vegetation change, deliberate Aboriginal firing has modified vegetation locally or even regionally.

All this is drawn together with a focus on fire and rainforest boundaries. Bowman concludes that Aboriginal burning around rainforest patches to protect them from wildfires may well have saved them from destruction. The implications of this for the future he also spells out — fire management around remaining rainforest patches is essential for their conservation today. A problem with this, however, is that protecting rainforest by controlled burning around the boundaries may keep wildfires out, but it might also prevent the rainforest from spreading. It also downplays the evidence from observation and from charcoal in soils that fires do burn in rainforest and the rainforest recovers. Bowman himself points out that a rainforest can recover from one fire, but not from frequent fires.

This is a scientific book, but accessible to educated readers. It is written with simplicity and clarity, abundantly illustrated with diagrams, maps and photographs, and much of the technical language is confined to tables. The thread of the argument is clearly and succinctly stated in the introduction and conclusion to each chapter. While primarily of interest to ecologists, the book is also an invaluable resource for those concerned with interactions between people, fire and forests. It should be read by anyone
who might be seduced by unfounded speculation about the effects on vegetation of Indigenous firing in the distant or recent past.

References

Native title and the descent of rights by Peter Sutton, 142 pp, Commonwealth of Australia, National Native Title, Perth, 1998

For practitioners engaged in native title research this book is a ‘must read’! I say this for three reasons; first, the practical utility of the book to those researching native title. Secondly, the reader’s capacity to benefit from Sutton’s critical reflections of his own broad research experience in indigenous land tenure. Thirdly, the collation of relevant unpublished field research dealing with Aboriginal families in southern Australia.

Drawing on such sources, Sutton provides readers with sets of customary social principles and pathways through which Aboriginal people as individuals and communities connect themselves to specific country. Significantly, these principles and pathways are not confined to remote Australia, but address post-colonial contexts where cognatic descent groups or the surname-group system is a predominant form. Sutton focuses specifically on what he terms ‘families of polity’. He describes such families as people linked to one another through descent from ‘a particular ancestor or set of blood-related ancestors, and who trace their links to such ancestors through either parent’ (p 60).

The book is likely to be adopted as a ‘handbook’ by those involved in researching native title claims particularly. However, Sutton does not see the text as prescriptive, or exhaustive of the full range of options concerning indigenous land-holding groups in post-colonial contexts.

For readers, the value of the work derives from the author’s capacity to systematically identify key internal rules governing the different attachments and entitlements of groups to country. This is of critical importance to those grappling with the task of unravelling the layers and complexities of native title interests and rights in country in both remote and settled Australia.

Sutton distinguishes two forms of Aboriginal social organisation, the post-classical from the classical. He uses the term post-classical to refer to ‘cultural practices and social institutions that have arisen since colonisation, as distinguished from those that are in large measure in continuity with those prevailing at the time of colonisation. The latter, the classical practices and institutions, persist to a significant degree in the remoter parts of the continent, and there are important elements of them that also persist in rural and urban Australia as well’ (p 60).
Apart from his own extensive ethnographic knowledge, Sutton draws on ethnographic texts generated from postgraduate research in southeastern Australia between the 1940s and 1990s. Many of these studies have previously been ignored for their potential to provide insights into post-classical land-holding groups primarily because it was generally assumed that the traditional principles of land tenure were extant only in remote Australia.

It is Sutton’s contribution to consider these ethnographies afresh for their insights into the processes of continuity and transformation within post-classical land-holding groups. No doubt it will surprise many observers to know that customary law survived the impact of colonisation and continues to influence indigenous communal connections to country, Australia-wide.

Sutton seeks to explain key elements of group formation. Consequently, he presents ethnographic literature for Aboriginal people in parts of New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, the lower Murray and Adelaide regions, and specific areas of the Northern Territory and north Queensland. Across all these regions he documents common jural principles of indigenous land tenure. In light of such information Sutton argues for both continuity and change in customary law for land-holding groups in classical and post-classical situations.

This book is of wider interest than to anthropologists alone. Lawyers I have worked with have found it to be of immense value. This is a text that should be on the shelf of every professional researcher engaged in native title research. It is the kind of text that will be pulled down and referred to time and again.

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*Race, colour and identity* edited by John Docker and Gerhard Fischer

When John Docker approached me about launching this book at the Australian National University I was honoured, I guess mostly because I too had always identified with him as being ‘an outsider amongst outsiders’. He is as he’s been described ‘a popular outsider, a contradiction that he has made for himself’. Presenting multi-faceted viewpoints on Aboriginality, indigenousness, whiteness and immigration, *Race, colour and identity* reveals several inconspicuous and subtle views whereby ‘insiders’ feel like ‘outsiders’ even amongst their peers. This to me was the greatest appeal of the book cleverly edited by editors Gerhard Fischer and John Docker. The other attraction of the book for me I initially thought was in its format — that is, as a collection of essays written by ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’ about each other’s identity. Reading it from an Aboriginal perspective I guess I was intrigued by what I saw as very personal accounts by indigenous people conveying their notions of indigenousness and whiteness: versions evident in chapters by indigenous authors in particular and those who wrote ‘about’ whiteness.

In *Race, colour and identity*, John Docker and Gerhard Fischer’s preliminary chapter skilfully sets up the tone for the following essays. They argue that while issues
of identity are as old as modernity itself, an appreciation of personal identity based on one's race, colour and location fails to be recognised in colonial Australia and New Zealand even in today's society, yet 'ordinary' Australians and New Zealanders continue to struggle for a national identity in their 'Kwiness and Aussieness'. And during a time when Prime Minister John Howard should be talking about 'ordinary Australians' it is interesting that the rise of Hanson and Oldfield's One Nation Party occurred during a time between Australia's bicentennial of 1988, the Australian Republican referendum and the Australian centenary of federation. During the peak of Aboriginal Reconciliation. Howard non-apologetically desperately clinging to an imaginary 1950s values of a 'white-mother milk country', cravenly recoiled from issues of identity, race, colour and multiculturalism in his own country. If for no other reason anyone would want to read this book for the absolute pertinence and timely subject of the book Race, colour and identity, for these are interesting times indeed, especially for issues of identity. The idea for a book on the topic arrived after a series of emails between Docker and Fischer and a conference called 'Adventures of Identity: constructing the multicultural subject'. Curious about the conjuncture between campaigns for indigenous rights and anti-migrant sentiment, this book clearly brings together 'outsiders' to speak of themselves and about those 'ordinary' Australians that Howard so affectionately refers to. Refreshing in its ability to discuss identity from an insider's point of view and to examine the rise of the recent right-wing political media, more importantly Race, colour and identity assembles and reveals a different view of exclusion and the frustration of Hanson supporters.

The book has five parts. Part one includes two chapters, 'Adventures of Identity' by John Docker and Gerhard Fischer, and Ann Curthoys' 'An Uneasy Conversation: the Multicultural and the Indigenous'. Part two addresses Aboriginal identity, part three focuses on Asians in Australia and Australians in Asia. Part four deals with biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand, and part five is entitled 'Whiteness'. The cover for the book emerged from German artist Frank Aumuller's exhibition (of the nearly 300 photo puzzles) at the Goethe Institut in Sydney: four of these identity puzzles were taken on visitors to the 1992 Cite Internationale in Paris alerting us to the various identities in the book. Albeit conflicting and contradictory, the cover serves as a theatrical prologue to the variety of perspective, research interests and theoretical premises that we are to experience by reading the book. Contributors to the book are Ien Ang, professor of Cultural Studies and director of the Research Centre in Intercommunal Studies at the University of Western Sydney; Wendy Brady, associate professor and director of the Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre at the University of New South Wales; Michelle Carey, who holds a Bachelor of Arts from Swinburne University and a Master of Letters in Gender Studies from Sydney University; Li-Ju Chen, currently writing her PhD thesis on Taiwanese immigrants in Melbourne at La Trobe University; Ann Curthoys, Manning Clark professor of History at the Australian National University; John Docker, well-known writer and public intellectual, currently an adjunct senior fellow at the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University; Sarah Dugdale, PhD candidate at the University of Auckland; Gerhard Fischer, associate professor of German Studies at the University of New South Wales; Dr Peter Gale, lecturer in Australian Studies at Uaipon School in the University of South Australia; Jane Haggis, senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Flinders
In part one Docker and Fischer argue that while the West enjoys telling us about itself and its achievements, autonomy and identity, there are stories that the West does not like to hear of itself. This is what Docker and Fischer beautifully describe as a ‘psychopathology of whiteness’: this is, a belief in the centrality of whiteness that they should think themselves a vital component of humanity, possessing the ability to know what is best for humankind. However, in Curthoys’ chapter she writes about a paper she gave at a conference on the Future of Australian Multiculturalism where no Aboriginal speakers attended, mostly because they had felt that as a multicultural or ethnic conference it didn’t include them. She therefore tackles what she terms an uneasy conversation between migrant and indigenous issues. One such conversation is over the significance of descent, belonging and culture. The other theme concerns multiculturalism and its challenge to Australian society at large. Curthoys takes this point further and argues that while the two cannot be conceptualised together nor maintained as fully distinct from each other as long as multiculturalism fails to acknowledge the distinctiveness of indigenous issues, then this uneasy conversation will continue to perplex us.

The four chapters in part two are ‘Reconciling Our Mothers’ Lives’ by Jackie Huggins, Kay Saunders and Isabel Tarrago; ‘Tropical Hundreds: Monoculturalism And Colonisation’ by Deborah Bird Rose; ‘Walpiri Graffiti’ by Christine Nicholls and ‘Mistaken Identity: Mudrooroo And Gordon Matthews’ by Gerhard Fischer. In ‘Reconciling Our Mothers’ Lives’, we read all three women’s stories which tell of their respective histories which bring together what Huggins describes as ‘shared histories’; shared memories and the journey that their mothers’ lives had taken. Deborah Bird Rose’s chapter on ‘Monoculturalism And Colonisation’ discusses how the Marranngggu people’s native title case raises questions about how identity and historical claims to their creation land from time immemorial challenge what James Scott contends is the state’s inclination for standardisation. Nicholls’ chapter concerns whether or not the Walpiri people could maintain their identity in the face of a continuing predatory incursion form a dominant society. Delighted to discover that a most powerful autonomous identity was apparent in something so peculiar as the graffiti written by the Lajarmanu youth, Nicholls realises just how slight her self-adventure of identity in the Tanami Desert had been. Gerhard Fischer’s chapter sensitively argues that the case for Mudrooroo and Gordon Matthews’ authenticity as Aboriginal writers deserves recognition.
Part three is entitled Asians in Australia/Australians in Asia. Ien Ang’s ‘Asians in Australia, a Contradiction in Terms’ argues that unless Australians deconstruct the very desire for ‘one nation’ then viable ways of living together are not possible. She suggests that one must learn how to forego attachment to notions of sameness in culture, which is almost always underpinned by a desire for racial sameness. Chen’s chapter about Taiwanese immigrant identity in Australia takes an interesting look at the trends of immigration of Taiwanese people in Melbourne in 1996–97, and how their immigration to Australia has resulted in their becoming more Chinese than their Taiwanese counterparts in Taiwan. Pettman’s chapter brings forward a critical international feminist perspective on Australia’s relations with Asia, whereas Robinson’s essay takes a questioning viewpoint of Keating’s rhetoric about Australia’s place in the Asian Pacific region. Randles by the way in which the Australian media reported a Malaysian father’s alleged kidnapping of his son, Robinson convincingly demonstrates the Australian media’s double-standard on Australia’s conjectural relationship in Asia.

In part four the book addresses the relationship between biculturalism and multiculturalisms in New Zealand. Marotta’s chapter notes the highly complex depiction of social and cultural boundaries in a post-modern age to suggest how hybrid experiences allow individuals to reconstruct their identities. Those who theorise hybrid experiences must allow for their contradictions. Dugdale’s chapter about New Zealand writer Maurice Gee investigates how white/settler or Pakeha anxiety about their identity remains submerged or even obscured by cultural assumptions and attitudes, whereas Turner’s chapter pleads for the possibility of a self-recognised New Zealand art and culture which is not going to be corrupted by a dominant American export consciousness.

In part five, four chapters on Whiteness begin with Schech and Haggis on Migrancy, whiteness and settler self in contemporary Australia, an essay based on the history narratives they have collected. Struck by Australians’ willingness to be seen as a multicultural society, Schech and Haggis were equally perplexed by their subjects’ inability to articulate and distinguish themselves from the repetition and sentimentality for a one land, one nation. Moreton-Robinson’s chapter came about after she had conducted a number of interviews with white feminist academics who she felt continued to deny their white race privileges; she argued that their positioning as white feminist academics demonstrated their inability to self-interrogate their own power and whiteness. Peter Gale’s chapter offers a media analysis of whiteness in particular response to Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party. While discussing ordinary and extreme whiteness, Gale concludes that the ongoing media reportage on race in Australia almost always represent a privilege of whiteness as a natural dominance and normality. Carey and Brady’s chapter on whiteness and ‘blakness’ questions the multiplicity of layered identities that both indigenous and non-indigenous people must critique and self-analyse.

In summary, this collection of essays is significant in part for its timing but more importantly for giving further attention to the heart of identity discourse in Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore it addresses these matters crucially just at a time in our history when many pretend (believe) to have heard it all before. It gives rise to a discussion and debate between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ about themselves and where they place themselves, and it is vital to have as many indigenous scholars collectively in the book with each other and other migrant and white authors. Race, colour and identity gives a long-awaited response to the onslaught of new right-wing writing and media. It provides
readers an opportunity to answer them with conviction and comprehensibility. It gives readers a moment to grasp a personal and academic awareness of indigenous and migrant views by indigenous and migrant authors in conversation with non-indigenous authors and each other. But also the book demonstrates little of what an uneasy conversation may begin to sound like if given opportunity and new format. I look forward to a new collection of essays about race, colour and identity involving authors from Australia and New Zealand to discuss the next decade and 'adventures of their identities' — particularly in the aftermath of Australian's failure to vote in favour of a republic, an eventual demise of the One Nation Party, and most particularly after the decline of the weakest and most astigmatic Prime Minister for Australian identities for decades, and Howard's regressive views about who 'ordinary' Australians really are.

Frances Peters-Little

An historical atlas of the Aborigines of eastern Victoria and far south-eastern New South Wales by Sue Wesson, viii + 199 pp, indexes, Monash Publications in Geography and Environmental Science no. 53, School of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, Clayton 2000

This atlas is the product of Sue Wesson's doctoral research into nineteenth century Aboriginal spatial organisation in eastern Victoria and southeastern New South Wales, and as such it complements my earlier research in western and central Victoria and the late Diane Barwick's research in central Victoria. This atlas represents considerable and extensive research and Sue Wesson is to be commended for the extent to which she has uncovered sources that are available for this region.

Acknowledgement of prior research as a point of departure

There is no doubt, as Tindale, Barwick and Clark have indicated, that the spatial organisation of northeast Victoria is a problematic region, and Sue Wesson's research goes some way towards a clearer understanding of this region. However, a major shortcoming of the work is that the writer does not engage in any discourse with existing research and existing delineations of the study area. It is important, not only for Aboriginal communities but for the wider scholastic community, for Sue Wesson to place her work in the context of these existing paradigms. Some discussion and engagement with the research efforts of these other scholars is necessary. This earlier corpus of work must not be avoided.

Primarily, the delineations are as follows: Tindale's 1940, 1974 tribal/linguistic delineations; Barwick's 1984 delineation for part of the northeastern region of Victoria; Fesl's 1985 doctorate on Ganai; and Clark's (1993, 1996, 1998a) delineations at both the language/tribal and clan levels for eastern Victoria.

Collectively, this body of research should be a point of departure for Sue Wesson's research. It exists as an influential corpus of scholarly opinion and its strengths and weaknesses need to be articulated. These earlier efforts, with the exception of Fesl's study, were not conducted at the meticulous level expected of doctoral research. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sue Wesson has uncovered, in some instances, clan (or local group) names that were not discerned by these earlier efforts. Indeed, it would be dis-
appointing if doctoral research failed to uncover new detail. I feel the absence of discussion at this level, and therefore the researcher’s recognition that her work exists in the context of this prior research, is a major shortcoming of this publication.

A comment on the regional delineations: Gippsland, Northeast, South Coast etc.

Sue Wesson’s attempt to denote identity and spatial/social relations from an Aboriginal perspective (local groups, language names, place names, etc) is a major strength of her work. However, it is surprising that she has chosen a somewhat arbitrary and non-indigenous way of organising her atlas. Added to this is the way in which (local groups, language) names are arranged alphabetically within each region. A friendlier and perhaps more satisfying method would be to operate from the perspective of levels of identity within each region. Let me explain: an individual, depending on the question, would be able to provide several levels of identity: local group (or clan, or horde, or whatever label one chooses to use); language name (which may co-exist with a name that we may call, for want of a better word, their ‘tribal’ name: for example, the Bangarang clanspeople spoke Yorta Yorta). It may also be possible that within a language area, there may be clusters of local groups speaking a dialect of that language, so it may be possible to find dialect names within the study area. It will/may also be possible to allocate these languages to a larger chain or continuum (i.e. Boonwurrung is one of the related tongues), often with a name assigned by linguists (i.e. Boonwurrung is a ‘Kulin’ dialect).

My knowledge of central and western Victoria, and of the study area and the sources, particularly Robinson, would suggest to me that the most prominent levels of identity were personal names, local groups names, and language names (and sometimes non-language names, or tribal names like ‘Bangarang’) and insider and outsider terms (mainmait/meymet and not ‘messmate’ as transcribed by Wesson) and directional names amongst the Ganai/Kurnai. Given this, it would make more sense, and the atlas would be easier to use, if local groups were arranged according to the language areas within which they belonged. If named local groups speak a common tongue/language, then why not delineate them as local groups belonging to that language? The absence of language delineation on the various maps of named local groups is a shortcoming. In many cases, the primary sources assign a language identity to these named local groups. Therefore I can’t see why the delineation is not placed on the local group map, nor can I see why the named groups within a region are arranged alphabetically between themselves, rather than being arranged alphabetically within their language areas (whether named or not).

Layout of local group names

With regard to the layout of the named local groups, the atlas in its present format is unclear and is visually confusing. On the basis of the names that are mapped on the local group maps, it would be easier to use the atlas if these names were numbered, as on the maps, and emboldened or underlined. For example: ‘2. Bellum Bellum’. Underneath these headings, should follow variants et al.

Where the source indicates a language or tribal/directional/outsider-insider name, these should be included. Sources need to be more detailed. It is important for
communities, native title researchers, and other scholars, to be able to walk in Wesson’s steps, so to speak, so it is important that references are detailed, and page numbers indicated etc.

One of the major shortcomings of the atlas is the absence of a discussion section for each named group, where any issues peculiar to the historical record can be discussed. Why, for example, does Wesson favour the use of the oldest recorded name? Her rationale for this policy needs to be articulated. We know that Robinson did not hear Aboriginal words very well, he often failed to hear initial ‘ng’ for example, and given this knowledge a policy favouring the use of the oldest name may be inadequate. One of the benefits of a discussion section as a mandatory part of each entry, is that it is an opportunity for the researcher to comment on the strength of the information sources. A name that is recorded by Robinson, and later sources such as Bulmer, and Howitt, may have more integrity than a name that is only ever recorded once in the 1840s and never verified by later nineteenth century sources.

When listing named local groups, I think it is important in the discussion for the writer to comment on other reconstructions. Her analysis of this earlier work will be important for communities, for native title research, and for other scholars. Where Sue Wesson differs from this existing corpus of research, she needs to engage it and explain why. For example, Clark (1996, 1998a) considered Bellum Bellum to be a variant name of Bunjil Kraura, and Wesson’s reasons for separating them into two distinct groups need to be explained. Rather than comment on southeastern New South Wales, this reviewer will confine comments to eastern Victoria, an area he is more able to comment on with authority.

Transcriptions of primary sources

In some places there is a difference in Wesson’s transcription of Robinson’s journals and Clark’s (2000a) transcriptions. In some cases, the differences are minor, in others significant. For example, ‘messmate’ is transcribed by Clark as ‘ermate’, a variant of *meymet* or *mainmait*, a common Kulin term meaning foreign (a people with whom there is little intermarriage *et al.* [for more information see Clark 1998a: 91]).

On page 32, Wesson’s transcription of Robinson’s journal entry for 27 Apr 1844 is different to Clark (2000a: 49). Clark, for example, has ‘The chief or mormun of the Yowengerre was Pur.rine, native place Warmun, is dead’. Wesson has ‘The chief of Wor-nnm of the Yowenjerre was Pumine, native place Wormum, is dead’.

p 70: ‘so says Mr Broadrib ‘queen’.‘ Wesson has mis-transcribed Robinson, he wrote ‘so says Mr Broadrib queri!’ Robinson often wrote ‘query!’ (and often misspelt it) when he was unsure of the information he was given, or before he had had an opportunity to verify it by speaking with other informants.

These are examples of differences, far too numerous to list in this review, but it is recommended that Wesson reconsider her transcriptions in the light of Clark’s reading of Robinson.

Gippsland primary sources

Wesson has failed to utilise the literature generated in the 1840s search for the supposed captive white woman of Gippsland. Some of this contains information on Aboriginal
spatial organisation (see Carr 2001). Specifically letters from Christian De Villiers and James Warman, and Warman's journal of the first expedition, published in the Port Phillip Herald between November 1846 and March 1847, and Donald McLeod's journal of the second expedition in 1847, now in the State Library of Victoria.

Gippsland named groups

p 23: Binnajerra may well be a sub-group (patriline?) of the Boul Boul (this is certainly hinted at by Howitt). The existence of sub-group names needs to be considered and discussed, as it may well be an explanation for two variant names seemingly referring to the same people in the same location.

p 26: Bundah Wark is considered by Clark (1996, 1998a) to be a variant name of Wurungung-gatti.

p 32: Nanjet is more likely to be a Ganai name for the Boonwurrung Yowengerra peoples of Wilson's Promontory.

p 35: Wonangertoo (Robinson journal 28 July 1844), Wernangertoo (Robinson jnl 24 July 1844) refers to a river 30 miles from Tumbum Creek.

p 36: Yowengerra: is a Boonwurrung group, and not a Ganai group, therefore should they be included in this atlas?

At some stage in this discussion, the convergence or divergence between the primary sources, primarily Bulmer, Hagenauer, and Howitt, needs to be discussed. It does not follow that just because Bulmer and Hagenauer record divergent group names for peoples that appear to be in the same location, they are two distinct groups. Clark found this difficulty in western Victoria, where it was common to find two or three names in the sources for the same people. Sometimes these were names of their own choosing and names conferred by others, and possibly sub-group names. For example, the Wathawurrung group at Trawalla were known as both the Moner balug and the Kalkerknerkneet balug. Clark's analysis of this was that given that both these named groups shared the same location and the same personnel, that the name Moner people was more than likely a conferred name implying that their country had a rich supply of moner (Microseris scapigera), and that Kalkerknerkneet referred to the name of their locality and was probably their self-defining name (for more discussion of this see Clark's 1992 doctorate, published in 1998b). The possibility that similar dynamics are in operation in eastern Victoria must be considered. Where these names are clearly divergent because they refer to distinct personnel and there is no articulation of divergent names with these personnel, then the case for delineation is very strong, these reasons need to be explained.

Northeast Victoria

p 58: Re confusion surrounding Tarrer mittung, another possibility is that they are distinct groups, sharing the same name. This situation is known to occur elsewhere in Victoria, i.e. Pellerwin balug (see Clark 1990). If the name is a descriptive name, then duplication across different language groups is quite a possibility.

pp 61, 70: Ballung-karar cf Pal.len.go.ill.um cf Pal ler an mitter, both Barwick and Clark have considered these names to be variants of the same name, and not three distinct groups as Wesson suggests. Divergence from this position needs to be justified.
Pallengoillum may simply be a variant name Ballung-willam, assigned by other Kulin peoples. Somewhere there needs to be a discussion of the meaning of clan affixes such as mittung and willum and munji and some discussion of the many variant forms they are represented by. The designation Ballung(w)illum (surely the same as Pallengoillum) for the Ballung-kara-mittung may be explained by the origin of the assigner of the name. Perhaps their neighbours called them the Ballungillum, and their own language group called them by the other name.

p 69: Mogullumbidj

This is a curious name, and evidence obtained by Robinson when travelling through southwest Victoria in 1841 suggests it is a pejorative name or a descriptive word. Robinson travelled through the Western District with a Tasmanian Aboriginal companion, and local Aboriginal people upon meeting him called him 'mogullumbidj'.

The Aborigines were greatly astonished at the VDL native when they first saw him. His woollyhead was a curiosity. ... They call him moke.al.lum.be. (Robinson Journal 21 April 1841 in Clark 2000a).

Bin.he.yall: a name the natives have invented for the Van Diemen’s Land black. They say they shall not call him Moke.allum.beet any more, but Bin.ne.yall (Robinson Vocabulary Papers in Clark 2000b: 94)’. Putting aside the status of the name ‘Mogullumbidj’, Robinson considers it refers to an entity that has constituent or sub-groups, so it may refer to a dialect group of a larger language, or is a referent name of this cluster. Tindale considers Mogullumbidj to be a variant name of Minjambuta. Barwick and Clark consider Mogullumbidj to be a part of Waywurru. Greater discussion is merited.

p 76: Waywurru

This is one of the most problematic names in northeast Victoria. It was considered in detail in the recent Yorta Yorta native title claim. From a careful reading of Robinson, there is no doubt that this refers to a cluster or constellation of named groups, and is not the name of a local group or clan. It is likely to be a language name. -wurru is a language name affix, and is found elsewhere: Tjapwurru; Lewurru; Woiwurru et al. The reconstruction of the first element is more difficult. Clark (1993; republished in 1998a) lists nine variants that have three first elements: Wee, Way, Wa. Perhaps the name is better represented as Waywurru, Weewurru, or Wawurru! Robinson in his 1844 journal considered the Waywurru a ‘nation’, and assigned the Kwart Kwart (and their nine clans) to be a part of the Waywurru. Barwick assigned the Mogullumbidj (and presumably their six+ clans) to the Waywurru. All these issues needed to be considered and some attempt made at a resolution.

Where in Wesson’s atlas is the Kwart Kwart (Quart Quart)? Robinson was adamant that they spoke a language that was different to the Yorta Yorta. The other indicator that the Kwart Kwart was not Yorta Yorta is that their clan names (with one exception) do not have the distinctive Yorta Yorta affix -pan or -ban. Clark (1996, 1998a) identified 19 Waywurru clans (including nine Kwart Kwart and six Mogullumbidj clans). Thus, there are a large number of local group names not considered by Wesson in this atlas.
The claim that Gundungerre is a language name is not convincing. I believe it is a named group (a clan). Does it conform to known naming principles of language names in the region? What are the language naming conventions in this region? In the nineteenth century sources, ‘tribe’ was used loosely, and local groups/clans were often called tribes. One lesson I learned from my western Victorian research is that language names do not exist in the literature without some assignation of clans to those language names. Are any clans identified as speaking the Gundungerre language? If clans have not been assigned to this language name, then the probability that it is a language name is limited (in my opinion). The affix -mittung, is more indicative of a clan name. Where clan affixes exist in language names elsewhere in Victoria, they are followed by the affix meaning tongue, lip, speech, or language (i.e. the Ngurai-illam balug clan spoke Ngurai-illam wurrung). My considered opinion is that all the indicators are that this is a clan, not a language, name.

The informant for this name was Mullerminer, alias Joe. Robinson first met Joe in January 1841 when he and his brother, another Waywurru man, and a Wiradjuri man from Bilybong, were brought to Melbourne on murder charges. In February 1841, Robinson returned these men to Docker’s station.

Robinson’s journal entry for 2 Jan 1841:

Robinson journal 7 Jan 1841:
Saw the fresh natives brought to the gaol from the Hume, he is they say brother to Merriman, his name is Mole.line.yin.nite, tribe: Waveroo, section: Pal.len.go.mit.ty, locality: Pan.der.ram.bo.go, is ta.de.dic to Mr John, named conferred Joseph, or Joe.

Robinson journal 3 Feb 1841:
Mul.lo.nin.ner, alias Joe, Pal.len.gan.mit.ty, country Panderambo.

Robinson journal 10 Feb 1841:
Mole.ler.nin.ner, alias Joe, ... Pallengoillum gentlemen.

Robinson journal 23 Feb 1841:
Nackandanda, above Dr Mackay’s at Buckland’s station.

Robinson in his vocabulary papers (see Clark 2000b: 186-7) recorded the following:
'Pal.len.an.mitter language of Mul.ler.nin.ner, alias Joe, 31 Sept. ’44, Bane Bane Police Station'
'Pal.loo.ang.mitter, Nac.in.don.dy or Nac.er.dan.dy, speak language Min.u.bud.dong, 30th Sept. ’44, Joe. W. side of Hume'.

Sue Wesson may well be right in her inference that Minubuddong may be a variant of Minyambuta. The major obstacle to get around here, however, is that Robinson is
clear that Joe, and others who were Palleranmitter (or whatever variant is used), spoke the Waywurru (Waveroo) language. Lexicostatic analysis of this vocabulary and comparisons with neighbouring word lists from other languages (especially the Kulin Daungwurrung, Woiwurrung etc.) should be revealing. My analysis of the few Waywurru words found in Robinson’s journal suggests that the Waywurru (with Mogullumbidj and Kwartkwart) was a Kulin tongue. Certainly, the ethnohistoric evidence (Thomas and Howitt) suggests that the Mogullumbidj were Kulin, Howitt wasn’t sure about the peoples to their north. The social interactions of the Mogullumbidj attending the gaggip (friendly ceremony) at Merri Creek in the early 1840s would confirm this linguistic connection. Thomas, before the 1858–59 Select Committee, stated that ‘the blacks of all the tribes idolised’ one of the Moogolumbeek tribe, ‘who must have been 80 or 90 years of age. He was the fattest man I ever saw, black or white, his face was regularly wrinkled, like a pleated shirt, from his bald head to his eyebrows, and his cheeks furrowed in like manner’. Such adulation is hardly likely to have been afforded to someone whose language was mainmait or foreign, thus strengthening the Kulin linguistic connection.

Us and them

Insider and outsider terms are spread across Victoria. It may have been a useful device to list insider terms first and then outsider terms, or at least demarcate the two rather than having them jumbled together. Possibly, the dichotomy insider/outsider may be preferable to ‘us/them’.

Re relations in the northeast, I would recommend that Sue Wesson reconsider the information provided to Robinson in 1841–44 re Waywurru and Wiradjuri. There are several terms that Robinson was given, that do not appear to be discussed: ie. Urun-gung/Unungung, a name conferred on the Bangarang by the Wiradjuri.

Wiradjuri

I am not convinced that the Wiradjuri were south of the Murray River in terms of ‘owning’ country. Obviously, they were south of the river when Robinson visited that region in 1841, but their residence and working there do not necessarily mean that they were ‘traditionally’ from that region, that it was their ‘traditional country’. This needs more analysis. Patterns of residence after the disruption of white settlement may be indicative of succession; equally, they may be symptomatic of extensive labour movement. There was something of a Wiradjuri diaspora throughout Victoria in the 1840s as Wiradjuri accompanied overlanders into Victoria.

The maps would have been of greater value if language delineations had been imposed on them.

The many photographs are a wonderful and rich inclusion and Sue Wesson’s ability to locate so many is admirable, and can only add to the appeal and value of this atlas.

The lists of place names are a valuable resource, but to reiterate, it would be more valuable if references were more detailed, and especially if they were alphabeticised.

Referencing is not as detailed as it should have been. It is important that whenever possible, full details be given — page numbers, dates, microfilm frame numbers, unit
numbers, series numbers etc. It helps other researchers and communities to go to the original sources, should they need to.

In summary, Sue Wesson’s work has gone a long way towards uncovering the primary sources relevant to delineating nineteenth century spatial organisation in eastern Victoria and far southeastern New South Wales. Nevertheless, this reviewer in an examination of eastern Victoria, alone, has found many points of divergence with the writer. Wesson appears to write in a vacuum, not considering or at least using other reconstructions as a point of departure. She fails to show the depth of understanding expected from someone conducting research at a doctoral level — this is particularly evident in the linguistic naivety she displays.

In its existing format, the publication has many shortcomings. Northeast Victoria, in particular, has always been a problematic region in regards to Aboriginal spatial delineation, and it was hoped that Wesson’s research would have gone a long way to resolving the confusion in this region. It is hoped that Sue Wesson’s doctoral dissertation has overcome some of the problems identified in this review.

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Since Unbranded was first published in 1992, Herb Wharton has become one of Australia’s better known indigenous authors. He has written three more books, regularly contributes to publications such as RM Williams Magazine, appears in television and radio interviews, and in 1998 won an Australia Council residency in Paris. It is therefore timely that the University of Queensland Press would choose to reprint Wharton’s first novel.

In her 1993 review of Unbranded, Pearl Duncan wrote that ‘very little has been written about the great contribution Aborigines have given to the early days of the cattle industry in Australia’ (1993: 167). Since that time, a number of histories, autobiographies and oral histories have been published which explore the role of Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry. Dawn May’s (1994) historical account of Aboriginal labour in the cattle industry and Bill Dodd’s (1992) Broken dreams are two examples. There have, however, been relatively few works of fiction by Aboriginal authors that illustrate the droving way of life.

Unbranded is a simple tale which follows the lives of three mates in the Australian bush. Sandy is a white stockman who dreams of owning a pastoral empire, Bindi is a traditional owner in search of land ownership, and the nomadic Mulga is an Aboriginal far removed from his traditional lifestyle. Through his subsequent work, in particular his autobiographical Yumba days, we now know more about the life of Herb Wharton himself. It is clear that Wharton drew heavily on his own life experience as a drover and stockman in Western Queensland when developing his characters and crafting the yarns for his books. Indeed, Mulga’s story strongly resembles Herb Wharton’s own journey towards becoming a Murri writer.

Through the eyes of these realistic characters and Wharton’s talent for storytelling, Unbranded illuminates many of the tensions and bonds between those who inhabit outback Australia. For this reason, and because of the unconventional genre Wharton has chosen to describe Australian bush life, Unbranded may well become a classic Australian bush novel.

References
Listen to the people, listen to the land by Jim Sinatra and Phin Murphy, 201 pp, b&w photos, reference list. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne $29.95

These are stories from people who are connected to their place. In these times, when most of us move at will between suburbs, cities, states and countries, the stories remind us that hearing the messages from our local landscapes requires us to stop long enough to listen.

Indigenous people are far more grounded in place than most other Australians and Jim Sinatra and Phin Murphy include several explorations of Aboriginal people’s identity in place in their collection, drawing on their landscape design work with remote communities. However, the book is much more than this. Its chapters equally explore the identity that Australians from many other cultural backgrounds have with their locality and how it determines their identity, lifestyle and outlook. Sinatra and Murphy have been trying to ‘understand the land from different points of view, to observe the world differently from how we have been trained in our particular cultural environment’. Refreshingly, they show that this quest does not need a specialised vocabulary unintelligible outside specialised fields of academia. The ways that place and culture shape people’s world views are illuminated here through the reflections of ‘ordinary Australians from a diversity of backgrounds’.

Each chapter focuses on one person, or a family. What these people have in common, beyond living somewhere in rural or remote Australia, is that they are ‘landscapers’ — they are all ‘interacting (with), developing or improving’ the places where they live. This landscaping is land caring — approaches to land management which promote the land’s capability to care for people in the long term. The ingenuity of these approaches reflects limited resources and outside assistance. This self reliance in turn has engendered innovations which are attuned to place. It is a trial and error approach, building local knowledge for meeting local challenges, and as such is rarely presented to a broader audience.

At Kintore we meet landcare worker Nigel Carrick, who moved to his job from Melbourne and, rather than following a bulldozer and rake approach to cleaning up and landscaping the town, began to see the community’s rubbish as a major resource. He noticed the mounds of windblown rubbish and sand which accumulated along fence lines becoming green belts as windblown seeds germinated. The rubbish content aids soil stability and water retention. This led him to mulch planted trees with rubbish collected from around the community, as a cheaper, termite-proof alternative to organic mulch.
In Coober Pedy we meet Karl Hammermeiste who came there from Germany 22 years ago and, in this most arid of places, has never bought water. He harvests the run-off from the irregular, erratic, but often heavy, rainfall and stores it in the huge tanks he has excavated.

We meet such people in their own words, mostly transcribed from interviews and also through letters. The 11 chapters span Australia from the Kimberley to Lake Condah and were documented over several years. Sinatra and Murphy weave in introductions to the historical and environmental context of each place, many photographs and maps, and endnotes explaining terms whose meaning would not be obvious to the general reader. The book is beautifully designed and produced.

The inspiration to prepare this collection came from Sinatra’s work in RMIT’s Outreach Australia Program, which for nearly 20 years has offered landscape architecture students the option of internship in a ‘design studio’ in a rural or remote community. While the students have worked on community planning and settlement design, such as at Ladjardarr Bay north of Broome — whose family presents one chapter — the program’s leaders have also built long-term relationships with people from such places.

There is much in this volume pertinent to reconciliation, for the relationships of white and black Australians with place do need to be reconciled if commitment to sustainable human use of the land is to be fostered. Near Broome Paddy Roe and his long time Dutch pupil and helper Frans Hoogland’s cross-cultural dialogue about looking after country is expressed for tourists through the Lurujarri cultural trail. Paddy Roe’s motivation is to care for his ‘living country’ and he says he has learnt that he needs to do this ‘with the European people too, because on our own we won’t be able to look after the country.’

The trail, following a Dreaming, sets out to help people see the land differently — to create space for the land to pull people out of their conditioned perception. Frans says people who journey on the trail ‘at least ... have woken up to something in themselves that might be beneficial to them and to the land everywhere else they go to’. Of course if you see things this way, you are a ‘misfit’ in mainstream society (to use Gerritsen’s disparaging term), since why would most Australians need to care about the link between the land and their own sustenance, whether spiritual or material? Where food, water and fuel come from, and at what cost, are not questions worthy of most people’s reflection.

The roots of the crisis in Australian agricultural landscapes lie also in such lack of reflection. Liz Fenton of western Victoria, who is addressing this crisis locally by propagating indigenous trees, observes that it is the older farmers who are most supportive of her work, even though ‘they know they put a hell of a lot of effort into clearing and any criticism they make (about what was considered best practice land management in the past) is about themselves’. Or it may be criticism of their own fathers, as Bob Purvis of central Australia observes: ‘Of all the things (my father) understood and was good at, he didn’t really understand this country. No better or worse than others of his generation.’

Now we have a more widespread appreciation of indigenous people’s caring for country and we have had the landcare ethic for more than a decade. Yet recent government reports are warning that truly radical changes in land use are going to be necessary in some regions to arrest such problems as salinisation. Most Australians, understanding little about such things and probably caring less, have limited apprecia-
tion of what they might do to make their relationship with land more sustainable. *Listen to the people, listen to the land* is not another wake-up call. One reason it deserves a wide readership is because, through its portraits of 'people who have a long-held attachment to place as an identity', readers may well reflect on the nature of their own relationship to their local patch.

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*Palaeopathology of Australian Aboriginals* by Stephen Webb, 324 pp, Cambridge University Press 1995 $75

Stephen Webb has produced a landmark volume in palaeoepidemiology in presenting evidence from a whole continent, and also in his conceptual framework which is to thoroughly consider and assess the field and project de novo theoretically. His thoroughness and meticulous consideration of detailed theoretical issues of epidemiology is, at times, more rigorous than that given to studies of the living. As he says, it is the distant and inanimate nature of his raw material that prompts the care. At the same time, however, the view of prehistoric human bones as inanimate objects detracts considerably from this volume, in the sense that it ignores the highly political nature of working with the remains of indigenous people. To be fair, Webb does address the issue of Aboriginal concerns for the dead when he acknowledges some form of Aboriginal cooperation in his study. But most contemporary researchers in this field would recognise the need for a more comprehensive discussion of this topic which has, after all, dominated the field of physical anthropology in Australia for the last decade.

From a medical point of view, what is missing is a detailed discussion of the epidemiological factors which could lead to errors in interpretation. The most commonsensical summary of these is that by Adolf Grunbaum (1986) who identified four main factors to be considered in a study such as Webb’s.

1. base rate fluctuation
2. observer bias
3. acquiescent (or oppositional) subject
4. incidental effect of placebo.

While the first two seem obvious, they are not given full treatment. The last two may seem irrelevant. However, Webb has referred to 3 in citing his rigorous approach to selection of specimens and their sources, and his awareness of underlying prejudices (especially the historical accounts or his astute noting of the supervision of exogenous diseases in an area before the settlement of Europeans). While he gives a first class account of these factors he may have overlooked the link between 3 and 4. For example, in measuring dental enamel hypoplasia one could possibly be measuring other vectors’ effects (i.e. in a modern population alcohol leading to alcohol foetal syndrome). Certainly a fuller discussion of these epidemiological factors would have strengthened Webb’s already elegant presentation of data.

The great strength of Webb’s work is best assessed when one considers that his book is one of only a handful of such studies, and none of these other studies is compa-
vable in its breadth (Webb examined 6371 post-cranial bones compared to 325 bones in
the other most recent study). Moreover, Webb has accessed bones which can be re-examined by other researchers to test his results and conclusions.

Webb has certainly done a wonderful job of putting ‘flesh on the bones’ and making them come alive in this well presented book. He gives us a chance to see a population’s patterns of health and disease from a unique perspective. Even with living subjects there is massive inaccuracy in the reporting of illness and disability. Ironically the bones may be more accurate in indicating a society’s health profile, when rigorously assessed.

Reference

Robert Paton
Attila Gyory MD

Words and silences: Aboriginal women, politics and land edited by Peggy Brock. ix + 210 pp, index and notes. Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (Sydney) 2001

In this very readable book, various contributors highlight past practices in consultation and interaction with Aboriginal people that ignored women or rendered them invisible. Quite apart from the issue of equity, these practices are very unfortunate, given that women on average live longer than men, and the older people in any group are the repositories of knowledge and experience, both of genealogies and life styles. Authors in this book all highlight the wealth of knowledge of land and genealogies possessed by older Aboriginal women, and also the power such women have in their communities, even noted in early ethnographic material which suggested powerlessness and exploitation of younger women in southwest Western Australia.

The contributors also highlight the dilemma faced by Aboriginal people in presenting to outsiders the type of evidence required in asserting title to land or connection to place. In the traditional hunter-gatherer society, if you did not belong to the clan which had claims to a particular tract of land, you were often not entitled to be privy to the secret-sacred knowledge of that group; for example, women with ties to a neighbouring group, as well as younger women in the specific group, would not be given access to such women’s knowledge. Similar restrictions to access of course applied to secret-sacred men’s ‘business’. ‘Knowledge is power’, and those with the knowledge and power face loss of power and status if their esoteric knowledge is shared too widely. Power plays among both women and men sometimes account for secrecy regarding a song or ceremony in one group, when the same item may be relatively freely shared in another group.

There are seven chapters in this book, five by female non-Aboriginal Australian researchers with extensive experience in different Aboriginal communities, one by a female Aboriginal researcher, and one by a team of three non-Aboriginal people one of whom is male. As the jacket notes state:
In struggles over access to land, Aboriginal women’s concerns have often remained unacknowledged. Their words — and silences — have been frequently misheard, misunderstood, misrepresented, misused.

The controversy of the ‘secret women’s business’ in the Hindmarsh Island Bridge conflict brought this issue to the attention of the general public. How can Aboriginal women assert their claims while protecting, by remaining silent, their culturally sensitive knowledge? How can they prevent their words and silences being misrepresented?

*Words and silences* explores the barriers confronting Aboriginal women trying to defend their land rights. The contributors to this volume provide insights into the intricacies of Aboriginal social and cultural knowledge, and introduce the reader to different understandings of how the gendered nature of Aboriginal land ownership adds complexity to the cross-cultural encounter. In lively and engaging prose they document the ongoing struggles of Aboriginal women across Australia, who are fighting to ensure they receive due recognition of their rights in land.

Peggy Brock, whose chapter ‘Aboriginal women, politics and land’ introduces the subject, teaches at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. Other contributors from Western Australia are Hannah McGlade, a Nyungar lawyer who contributed ‘Aboriginal women and the Commonwealth Government’s response to Mabo — an international human rights perspective’, Pat Barnes who contributed ‘Seeking justice: traditions of social action among Indigenous women in the southwest of Western Australia’, and Sandy Toussaint, Myrna Tonkinson and David Trigger who contributed the final chapter on ‘Gendered landscapes: the politics and processes of inquiry and negotiating interests in land’. Heather Goodall from Public History at the University of Technology in Sydney contributed the second chapter “Speaking what our mothers want us to say’: Aboriginal women, land and the Western Women’s Council in New South Wales, 1984–85’. Deborah Bird Rose, based in Canberra, but who has worked extensively in the Northern Territory, discussed ‘The silence and power of women’, and Diane Bell, based at George Washington University, Washington DC, USA, contributed ‘The word of a woman: Ngarrindjeri stories and a bridge to Hindmarsh Island’.

Brock begins chapter 1 with the statement (p 1) that the book:

discusses, from a variety of perspectives, the gendered nature of Aboriginal knowledge and relationships to the land within the context of the Australian political and legal system. The contributors consider who can speak and be heard in this cross-cultural environment; who is silenced; and why some Aboriginal women must remain silent even when their land is threatened.

Her chapter gives a brief account of land rights, native title and site protection laws introduced and implemented since the 1960s, and considers how Aboriginal women’s interests have been accommodated, or overlooked, in these laws and procedures, giving the legal and administrative framework to the chapters which follow. Land-rights legislation came late in Australian history, and the debates and conflicts over native title in Australia ‘follow, and to some extent have been informed by previous land-rights legislation and the international experience’ (p 5). Feminist anthropological research was only beginning to make an impact at this time in Australia, but the research, consultation, drafting and passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was done by men, and the ‘persona’ of Aboriginal groups was a male persona. Feminist
anthropologists did question the early implementation of the Act as not taking fully into account women's rights in land or matrilineal descent and inheritance.

In her summary history, Brock states that Aboriginal groups have:

- gained access to and some control of land, but their land claims have also resulted in confrontation with powerful mainstream economic and political interests.
- Aboriginal landowners have been forced into compromises which have been destructive of community cohesion and mores in their attempts to conform to requirements under various land rights acts (pp 1-2).

Brock notes that Aboriginal women from very different communities face similar problems, and those who have had long-term contact with colonial regimes can have special problems. She also notes that the book does not attempt to deal with issues of relative strengths of the rights and rites of men and women in Aboriginal society, but focuses on the issues raised when women's voices are heard or attempts are made to hear their viewpoints. In the main body of the book, the chapters by Goodall, Baines, Rose and Bell discuss in some depth the position of women in Aboriginal communities in the far west and southwest of New South Wales, the southwest of Western Australia, the southeast of South Australia and the Victoria River region of the Northern Territory. The chapters by McGlade, and Toussaint, Tonkinson and Trigger take a more general perspective.

Heather Goodall reminds us that dispossession takes many forms. Not only do guns and fences block access, but without the possibilities of visiting land, people cannot have the knowledge of it passed on, and confidence in living on it is undermined. Young people, particularly girls, were apprenticed away from their parents and grandparents, or whole families were moved from their country to large 'missions'. Like relationships between mothers and daughters, relationships with country need to be revitalised and refreshed by frequent contact and experience in order to continue strongly. Women in the far west and northwest of New South Wales have been exploring ways to restore relationships between generations and relationships between women and country. Their ways included organising bush camps. Goodall names many of these women and we gain a thumbnail sketch of their personalities.

Pat Baines has sought out old records, going back to the earliest European contact in Western Australia, which speak of the position of younger women as slaves and expendable commodities, but also attest the prestige and authority of older women. While she allows the early accounts of the lives of young women may be coloured by observer bias, she also points out that the impact of white settlement was different on males and females, women and young girls being employed as house help or used as sexual partners by shepherds and labourers and then discarded. She includes some colourful reminiscences from old records, but in summarising presents a strong case for older women having a continuing tradition of influence and high status, and this despite their relative invisibility in many accounts. It is a pity there is no map of the area she refers to, bounded by a number of places which are not commonly heard of outside Western Australia, but the area she writes about extends some 150 km north of Perth and 300 km west, and down to the south coast. (There is a helpful map of the northwest of New South Wales included in the previous chapter; given the overall population distribution in Australia today, more would need a map of the relevant Western Australia
area than of the northwest of NSW.) She writes of tensions when younger women take the initiative in land-rights issues without consulting older people, and how some such situations have been defused when the younger women then consult with the older. She writes of the tenacity required of women (and men) in pursuing land rights, and their persistence for the sake of their descendants, even when it brings little satisfaction to themselves. She explores stories of Nyungar women from the recent past, older and newer dreaming stories, both of which show women who were fine characters as well as some who flouted rules, to ask ‘whether the contemporary position of Nyungar women making native title claims draws on both traditions of strong senior women: able to intervene in disputes; but also a tradition of feminine assertiveness, even wilfulness in the face of situations which were novel’ (p 71).

In her chapter ‘The silence and power of women’, Deborah Bird Rose first points out that silence can be an evidence of power, or a symptom of powerlessness. Active silence, she claims, is ‘characteristic of an Indigenous system of knowledge, as well as of religious and political life’, whereas passive silence occurs when power stifles or destroys people and their knowledge and is a tool of colonisation (p 92). Within traditional Aboriginal society power and knowledge are gendered. But while both experts and untrained observers have long been aware of the domain of knowledge and action restricted to men, and this has been readily accepted, the existence of a parallel domain of women has had to be argued afresh in each instance. This has placed an extra burden on Aboriginal women who choose to take public stances on this restricted knowledge, restricted sites and actions.

Diane Bell, in her chapter ‘The word of a woman: Ngarrindjeri stories and a bridge to Hindmarsh Island’ frames her argument around a series of biting questions, and concludes:

Here we have ‘ethnographic fact’ at odds with ‘legal facts’ and that ‘fact’ has been made much of in the media commentary on feminists and fabrications. Will women’s words ever be enough? (p 138, italics in original)

Bell had worked in more remote areas, but became involved in this issue, and carried out fieldwork over a couple of years. She was also one of the early feminist scholars in the field, and indicates the battle to have this viewpoint recognised as ‘serious’. Because of the bias in early ethnographies by men, who did in many cases become privy to ‘men’s business’ but were excluded from ‘women’s business’, women have very meagre written sources to draw on to substantiate their claims. Questions that had to be faced included

Could assimilated people have traditions worthy of protection? Who decides what constitutes tradition? What is worthy of recognition? (p 120)

Hannah McGlade claims that Aboriginal women come from ‘nations which value and respect the woman’s role, rights and responsibilities’, and suggests the referring to the land as ‘mother’ endorses this. She states that Aboriginal women are an important part of the land-rights movement, and she names some of the well-known ‘fighters’, including Bonita Mabo. She discusses the Commonwealth Government’s responses to the High Court Mabo decision, which include the 1993 Native Title Act of the Commonwealth, the Native Title Tribunal set up under this act, Native Title Representative Bodies, the Indigenous Land Corporation, social justice measures, and the Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Commission, and notes the severe under-representation of women in these bodies. In a section entitled 'An international human rights perspective' (pp 145ff), she claims her previous section showed that the Commonwealth Government's response to Mabo was not sensitive to Aboriginal women, and consequently systemic discrimination against Indigenous women can be claimed. She therefore considers whether Aboriginal women have rights under international law to native title and self-determination.

She goes on to state that 'the position of Indigenous women is not specifically addressed by international human rights law' (p 146), although there is growing recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights. She discusses a number of international bodies which are relevant to Aboriginal women's right to self-determination and land. They include the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, International Labour Organisation Convention 169, the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples. She concludes with a brief note on the Office of the Status of Women, which in 1984 reported on Aboriginal women and the need for Government to consult equally with women as well as men. She claims however that Indigenous women continue to be marginalised.

Toussaint, Tonkinson and Trigger begin with an account of Bennelong's wife Barangaroo, who wanted to give birth to her child in Government House, thus maintaining the association with the land. Governor Arthur Phillip, not understanding this cultural point, felt it was better the baby be born in the nearby hospital. The baby was born safely, but there is no record of where the birth took place. Their chapter 'Gendered landscapes' focuses on the significance of gender in negotiations for Indigenous rights in land in the 1980s and 1990s. They include a brief discussion of relevant anthropological literature on the politics of representation, and then focus on three issues central to an understanding of gendered identities in land claims and native title cases: how might women's participation and status in negotiations over country be characterised; how are the Indigenous rights of men and women to land represented in land-related inquiries and native title claims; have women been advantaged or disempowered through such negotiations and claims argued before tribunals and courts? (p 158)

They consider these questions in the context of case studies from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland. Their examinations suggest that women's knowledge about and interests in land eventually found public expression via the operation of the ALRA (Aboriginal Land Rights Act) in the Northern Territory, that women as well as men took leading roles in processes of the ALI (Aboriginal Land Inquiry) in Western Australia, and that women in conjunction with men played significant negotiating roles in land claims and resource development projects in Queensland (p 174).

They note that matrifiliation is emerging as an important principle in some regions, and that the state is a major determinant of outcomes of Aboriginal efforts to deal with the legacy of their colonial history. In the Western Australian case cited, sectors or government and industry were opposed to recognition of Indigenous rights. Not only politics of negotiation between men and women is involved, but politics of negotiation between Indigenous people and the State.
In sum, therefore, the various chapters show the difficulties Aboriginal women have faced in order to be heard, and indicate there is still much to be desired in how women's rights in Aboriginal Australia are recognised and accommodated in Australia.

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_Talkin' up to the white woman: Indigenous women and white feminism_ by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 234 pp, notes, references, index, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia 2000 $22 ISBN: 0 7022 3134 7

My comments start with gratitude: thank you, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, for writing this challenging book. Australian feminism will never be the same, and dialogical feminism is now well and truly on the agenda.

_Talkin' up to the white woman_ is work of excellent scholarship, and is equally a work grounded in historical consciousness and passion for justice. This powerful situated analysis finds Australian feminism to be wanting. In Moreton-Robinson's words: 'In the Australian literature whiteness is not interrogated and named as a "difference", even though it is the standard by which certain "differences" are measured, centred and normalised' (p xviii). Moreton-Robinson speaks to white women's lack of consciousness of whiteness as a race, our lack of perception of the racial qualities of our struggles, and our condescension in acting and writing as if we imagine that other women around the world all would want to be like us. In contrast, Moreton-Robinson describes Indigenous women's resistance to an assimilated whiteness through a study of Indigenous women's self-presentations; she finds 'resilience, creativity and strength ... [in the face of] the continuity of colonisation in discursive and cultural practices' (p 31). The resilience of resistance is one basis of sovereignty and informs the bottom line of Indigenous women's challenge to white feminism: 'We do not want to be white' (p 184).

Moreton-Robinson moves back and forth between several domains: Indigenous women's self-presentation within Indigenous women's life writings, feminist theory overseas and in Australia, and anthropologists' representations of Indigenous women. One chapter is devoted to analysis of interviews with white feminist academics, and one is devoted to Indigenous women's self-presentation in relation to white Australian feminism. Moreton-Robinson hinges some of the analysis of the well known case of whether or not speaking about rape (in Indigenous communities) is everybody's business. This event, more than many others, demonstrates the limits of white feminism by transgressing those limits. On the other hand, the fact that there was no singular Indigenous women's view on the matter, as in the Hindmarsh controversies (also mentioned briefly), indicate some of the problematics of a dialogue that would be constructed around a singular 'us' and a singular 'them'. No such singularities exist, and we desperately need better concepts and practices of dialogue if we are to engage with our multiplicities of subjectivities and goals.

White feminism is shown to be implicated in two projects of which feminists themselves have been deeply critical: those of universalising and essentialising knowledges. More often than not, feminist debates concerning others are not carried on in dia-
logue with others. Or, the debates leave whiteness unexamined and thus implicitly universalise it. Or, the debates assert the existence and positive value of multiple subjectivities without examining the historical and contemporary power relationships within which they are situated. Moreton-Robinson's analysis is hard hitting; she tells it as she sees and experiences it, and she really knows how to talk up.

Moreton-Robinson calls for 'a sustained analysis of the epistemological assumptions that inform and privilege Western thought and its cultural representations' (p 93). This call is well founded, but it is also fair to point out that some of the most powerful critiques available today come out of feminist scholarship. Donna Haraway's (1988) 'Situated knowledges' and Val Plumwood's (1993) *Feminism and the mastery of nature* are just two examples of feminist analyses that have intervened at profound points in the self-referential absorption of western thought. In my reading of critiques of western epistemology, it appears that although feminists cannot mount this critique without referencing men, it is possible for men to mount their own critiques without referencing feminists. This suggests an ongoing power imbalance within the academy. I hope that a more dialogical feminism will enlist Indigenous women's support for and critical participation in the interrogation and deconstruction of white non-feminist universalising essentialising knowledges.

But that is for the future. Dialogical feminism will only be possible if white feminists respond positively to the challenges Moreton-Robinson offers us. These include: the challenge to interrogate our own histories through critical analysis of our implicatedness in colonialism's culture of race and power; to interrogate our own white privilege; to turn our critical gaze toward whiteness; to gain awareness and acceptance of the 'complexity of, and limits to, relations between white feminists and Indigenous women' (p 184). Much of the moral force of these challenges can be summed up in the challenge for feminist scholars to ask Indigenous women what their agendas are and how we can lend ourselves to the task (p 66).

This is a tough book to read, or so I found it, and that is the reason for my gratitude. In my work with scientists I am often asked how people in the social sciences and humanities can ever be certain of their knowledge. We don't set up experiments, we often do not construct our research around falsifiable hypotheses, and many (perhaps most) of our methods are qualitative. Part of my answer to this complex question concerns dialogue: it is of the first importance that our work be undertaken in a dialogical field in which our interlocutors speak on their own terms. Moreton-Robinson has given us the gift of an Indigenous critical analysis. It is now up to us to sustain a positive dialogue, and decentre our own self-absorbed concerns.

**References**


Deborah Rose
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*Where ya' been mate?* by Herb Wharton, 130 pp, University of Queensland Press $16.95

Herb Wharton provides a valuable series of short entertaining yarns, reflecting largely on a way of life that is no more in Queensland. While the stories reflect both bush and city life, we are hearing them being told by a worldly Murri who has experienced a life many younger Australians would not envy. To have the yarns, stories and reflections of older Indigenous Australians recorded is of great importance, so all can gain insights into the 'other' side of Australian history and views of the world.

Herb Wharton, the yarn teller in *Where ya' been mate?* provides us with humour as well as serious reflections on Australian history and the state of the world today. Stories and experiences stretching from childhood days to the present, told in Herb's own warm and passionate style, provide an entertaining and lighthearted read. While some chapters are more entertaining than others, it is a book that one will want to read to the end. *Where ya' been mate?* will warm you to the author and lead one to reflect on the lives he and so many of his mob grew up experiencing. He not only is, as Jacky Huggins says, 'an inspiration to all Indigenous writers who have stories to tell', but also an inspiration to the process of Australian reconciliation.

Dave Johnston
Canberra

*Cooloola Coast. Noosa to Fraser Island: the Aboriginal and settler histories of a unique environment* by Elaine Brown, 212 pp, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia 2000 $40 ISBN 0 7022 3129 0

*Cooloola Coast* is a well-written book representing a worthwhile contribution to historical knowledge of human occupation in this area of southeast Queensland during the nineteenth century. The book is organised into two parts. The first, entitled 'The Cooloola Aborigines', draws together archaeological, written and pictorial information to give insight into the Cooloola people's lifestyles and belief systems before these were irrevocably changed by the arrival of Europeans. In chapter 1 of this part, Brown presents the vestiges we have of this 'lost society' from journalists, explorers, missionaries and early settlers. In chapter 2, 'Uncovering the Past', Brown talks about what the recent work of archaeologist Dr Ian McNivan reveals about traditional Aboriginal activities and population in the region. The author goes on to explain what is known, through Aboriginal elder Gaiarbau (Willie Mackenzie), of the movements of these Dulingbara people and of their tribal boundaries and neighbours. Chapter 3 examines and illustrates the food and other resources available to the Dulingbara, and chapter 4 deals with what has been recorded about their attitudes to the world. Brown points out that much of what has been written on this topic was heavily infused with European ethnographers personal religious beliefs.

The second part of the book, 'The Europeans Arrive', consists of six chapters each with a dominant theme. Chapter 1 'First Impressions' describes early exploration and surveying of Cooloola. In chapter 2 Brown explains the contact between castaways and runaways and the Aborigines of Cooloola. Chapter 3 of Part 2 is the longest chapter in the book and is devoted to the infamous Eliza Fraser story. It is an attempt by the author
to unravel the ‘mounting pile of diverse and contradictory material’ written about the experiences of Eliza Fraser who was shipwrecked off the Queensland coast on 21 May 1836. Brown says that previous interpretations of the story have been racially biased and that only by examining the primary sources can we gain a realistic version of events. She concludes that the black-white conflict in the Wide Bay Area over the following years has its source in the contact between the Aborigines and Europeans after this shipwreck. The next three chapters follow the history of the settling of the area. Because of the Cooloola Coast’s isolation and infertile, sandy soils, European occupation was staggered and fluctuated considerably over time. For the most part attempts by speculators, timber-getters, fishermen and farmers to establish industries in the area were met with limited and inevitably short-lived success. Fishing and bee keeping are the only human activities to have survived on the Cooloola Coast since European arrival.

After Parts 1 and 2, Brown finishes with a postscript briefly discussing Cooloola in the twentieth century. In her notes she provides a list of abbreviations and acronyms used, as well as the sources of quotes given in the text. A select bibliography is then given, followed by an alphabetical index including subjects and people’s names.

This is an attractive book, in its cover design, layout and, most importantly, its content. Brown has carefully sifted through all of the available historical information and has written a book that clearly distinguishes information based upon local legends, hearsay, sensationalised newspaper articles and fictitious illustrations, from that founded in straightforward descriptions, photographs and archaeological evidence. The author gives due consideration to conflicting accounts of events, particularly in her analysis of the Eliza Fraser story, and where necessary, she has looked to the environment for geographical clues as to the most plausible explanation. Brown further enriches her analysis with inset boxes throughout the book (half to a full page in length and highlighted by a different typeface), which provide information on the natural environment of the Cooloola Coast. Each of these helps to create a physical picture of the Coast, and, amongst other things, explains the disappearance of mammals (e.g. the koala and the dugong), birds (the curlew), and trees (the kauri pine) through European overexploitation in the early days. Eleven well-positioned maps are given in the book, including present day maps and historical sketches, to assist the reader in their understanding of the sites and areas referred to. In most places Brown keeps authorial comment to a minimum, instead allowing the facts presented to speak for themselves. Brown’s account of the historical and cultural heritage of Cooloola is accessible to the general reader and can be recommended for anyone with an interest in the local history of this area.

Suzanne Kite
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This is a very challenging book to review, for while it is our first major analysis of Assistant Protector Charles Wightman Sievwright, and for that fact alone its contribution is welcomed, it is handicapped by some very serious omissions of data sources and limited discussion of some aspects of this controversial Protectorate official.

Sievwright was one of four Assistant Protectors appointed by the British Government in December 1837 to work alongside the Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson. Sievwright was an army officer, a lieutenant in the 7th Fusiliers and had been stationed in Malta; his three fellow Assistant Protectors were Wesleyan teachers. The assistants arrived in Melbourne in early January 1839 with their families and were directed to report to Police Magistrate William Lonsdale, and take instructions from him until Robinson arrived from Flinders Island in late February.

I first heard of Lindsey Arkley’s research into Charles Wightman Sievwright several years ago. Sievwright was the Assistant Protector responsible for the Western District of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate from 1839 until his dismissal in 1842. For reasons that I will detail below, I have always had an interest in Sievwright, and when I heard of Arkley’s work, I had high expectations. I had several years before come across another researcher with an interest in Sievwright, who I recall had made some progress on a manuscript, and I encouraged him to pursue his subject, and publish his work. Because I was doing some research for an organisation that employed this latter researcher, I took every opportunity to discuss Sievwright with him, and explore the myriad of issues that surround this controversial public figure.

I had myself spent many years transcribing the journals of George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector, and Sievwright’s superior, so I was unable to avoid Sievwright. I hoped that Arkley would make use of my publications of Robinson’s journal, especially the four volumes I published in 1998, covering the years 1839 until late 1845, for they contained many references to Sievwright. In 2000, I published the remaining years of Robinson’s journal, late 1845 until late 1852, and these two volumes contain numerous references as well.

No one researches in a vacuum: there exists a received dogma concerning most public historical subjects, and biographical research is no exception. The challenge of any biographer is to represent, as best they are able, the details of the received dogma that surround their subject when they commence to research their subject. This dogma should serve as a point of departure, especially if the subject is contested and controversial, as Sievwright is. In this regard, Arkley’s work is disappointing, for he does not inform us how Sievwright was regarded when he commenced his research, and he writes as if his is the first study of Sievwright and of the Western District of the Aboriginal Protectorate. A literature review on Sievwright and the Western District would have been instructive, and it is to be regretted that one is absent in this biography.

Arkley’s study is not the only word on Sievwright, yet his failure to refer to earlier studies let alone critique them is a significant weakness. At least an appraisal of the standing of Sievwright in these studies and more generally how he is regarded in
received dogma, was called for. It is a common practice of scholarship to situate your research into its context, or its pedigree if you wish, to show where it sits in relation to other studies on the same or related subjects. This is a disappointing weakness of Arkley’s study and the absence of a point of departure is to be regretted.

Sievwright has been the subject of two articles by Barry Bridges (1972); and general aspects of the operation of the Western District of the Protectorate have been studied by numerous researchers including Foxcroft (1940–41, 1941); Corris (1968); Bridges (1973, on Dr John Watton, Sievwright’s successor); Christie (1979); Clark (1990a); Critchett (1992); and Cannon (1993). Primary documents concerning Sievwright have been published by Cannon (1983) and Lakic and Wrench (1994), and the Robinson journals and his 1841 report into the Western District have been published by Clark (1990b, 2000abcdef).

From his arrival in Melbourne in January 1839 until his suspension in June 1842, Sievwright was based at five locations: Melbourne (January 1839 – June 1839); Fyansford (June 1839 – February 1841); Lake Keilambete (February 1841 – April 1841); Lake Terang (April 1841 – February 1842); and Mount Rouse (February 1842 – June 1842). Arkley’s study does not devote enough discussion to the Melbourne and Geelong periods, which together represent 24 of his 42 months’ service.

**Sievwright in Melbourne: January – June 1839**

In Melbourne, the four Assistant Protectors and their families (31 children all told) were directed by Police Magistrate William Lonsdale to pitch their government-issued tents on the south bank of the Yarra River, beside the large Aboriginal encampment, one mile from Melbourne. Each protector settled his family into two tents. Sievwright and his wife, Christina, had seven children whose ages ranged between four and 16 years. Living conditions were uncomfortable and their ‘cheek-by-jowl’ existence inevitably led to friction.

When Robinson arrived in Melbourne in late February 1839, he noted in his private journal his first impression of Sievwright as having ‘the appearance of a gentleman’ (Clark 2000a: 12). Within three months, however, he had reached the conclusion that he was a ‘litigious man’ who would be ‘better out of the service’ (Clark 2000a: 45).

Tensions between Sievwright and his family, and Sievwright and his fellow Assistant Protectors, in particular Edward Stone Parker, were emerging during their encampment in Melbourne. Arkley does not adequately deal with these tensions. Within a fortnight of his arrival in Melbourne, Robinson was visited by Christina Sievwright who complained of continued ill-usage from her husband, and entreated the Chief Protector not to send her into the bush with her husband (Clark 2000a: 14). Robinson noted that he ‘reconciled her and she left apparently better pleased’.

On 14 March 1839, Robinson directed both Parker and Sievwright to investigate alleged Aboriginal attacks on sheep near Mt Piper. Robinson noted in his diary that ‘Mr Sievwright and Parker at enmity, hence Mr Sievwright went first to Mt Piper, Mr Parker the day following.’ Sievwright is alleged to have displayed ‘improper conduct’ towards Mrs Mary Parker during the voyage of the Assistant Protectors and their families from Sydney to Melbourne. Edward Parker later explained to Superintendent La Trobe that the charge was not without foundation and that it was the cause of his refusal to have
anything to do with Sievwright beyond what was necessary in the course of official business (Bridges 1972: 57).

Arkley’s discussion of the alleged ‘improper intercourse’ between Sievwright and Mrs Parker is not convincing. To claim, as he does on p 331, that the crowded conditions on board the ship would have prevented any private moments of intimacy, ignores the comments made by the fundamentalist Wesleyan Assistant Protector James Dredge. Dredge visited Robinson on 2 September 1842 and told him ‘he would make an affidavit that he saw Sievwright kiss Mrs Parker and went into her cabin at all hours of the night. He could not prove anything criminal, but he said it looked very much like it: if any man was to act towards his wife, he should think so. Said Sievwright called on Mrs Tuckfield and said he was resented’ (Clark 2000c: 83). In March 1845, Assistant Protector, William Thomas explained in Robinson’s office, that ‘he did not like Mr Parker because he avenged Sievwright’s liberties with his wife, own wife’ (Clark 2000d: 238). In Portland on 25 May 1841, Robinson talked with squatter Stephen Henty, and based on Henty’s comments, Robinson suspected Sievwright had been ‘tampering’ with Mrs Henty. These alleged interactions with Mrs Tuckfield and Mrs Henty are not discussed by Arkley.

The second and more serious moral slur against Sievwright is the allegation of incest with his eldest daughter, Frances. This is a serious allegation in any context, and one that deserves very careful analysis. When considered along with his difficult relationships with his wife, Christina Sievwright, and his purported neglect of his family, the moral character of Sievwright is indeed controversial. This is one of the reasons why I have been interested in the story of this Assistant Protector, there are so many intriguing dimensions to a man who was perceived by many of his peers and contemporaries to be flawed. There is so much drama, controversy and colour surrounding this man.

Robinson’s journals are replete with squatters criticising Sievwright. Andrew Scott at ‘Boninyong’ ‘gave Sievwright a very bad character’ (Clark 2000a: 155); Kenneth Kirkland from ‘Trawalla’ also gave Sievwright a bad character and complained of his uselessness (Clark 2000a: 156). Charles Ayrey at ‘Lal Lal’ (Clark 2000a: 190) and Clam-march complained about him (Clark 2000a: 349). Stephen Henty at ‘Cape Bridgewater’ told Robinson Sievwright would have a cold reception if he returned to Portland, ‘he knew enough of him to get him dismissed from his situation; he was a bad one. He seemed incensed against him’ (Clark 2000b: 221); and the Presbyterian Reverend James Forbes considered he was ‘a bad boy, so every person says’ (Clark 2000c: 163).

On 29 September 1842, Edward Parker informed Robinson that ‘the native women told Mrs Parker that they saw Sievwright, fastened the tent, and have connection with his daughter, that the latter struggled but he effected his purpose and plenty blood and by and by plenty picernniny tumble down, they looked through a hole in the tent’ (Clark 2000a: 86). This statement was the subject of correspondence between Robinson and La Trobe (see Arkley 2000: 331). Robinson’s letter is not as explicit as the entry in his private journal.

Arkley’s approach to the allegation of incest is to be dismissive because Frances Sievwright later denied the abuse occurred. Charles Sievwright believed the rumour originated from his wife Christina, and he believed the charge was proved false by the fact that both Christina and Frances made written statements disavowing the allega-
tions (Arkley 2000: 345). The official reaction to these letters was that they had been written under Sievwright's dictation (Arkley 2000: 394). However, what are we to make of the account from Aboriginal women given to Mary Parker? I do not profess to know much about the psychology of abuse, in all its dimensions, but I am unconvinced by Arkley's willingness to accept, apparently blindly, the denials by Sievwright's wife and daughter. The victims of abuse commonly deny the occurrence of the abuse, and Frances' denial does not mean in itself that the abuse did not take place. Furthermore, it was in both Christina's and Frances' personal and financial interests for Charles Sievwright to be cleared of all charges against him, both moral and administrative. Arkley does not deal with the issue of incest very convincingly — it is as if he is too eager to exonerate his subject.

Sievwright and the other Assistant Protectors were assigned their districts on 26 March 1839, and on 1 April were directed to proceed to their districts. More information about this Melbourne period is warranted. From Robinson's journal, we know that he proposed that Sievwright be the first assistant to leave for his district (Clark 2000a: 37). However, owing to Sievwright's indifference, the four assistants drew lots, and James Dredge was the first to leave.

From Robinson's journal, it is possible to construct some idea of Sievwright's activities in this Melbourne period. In March 1839, Robinson directed him to make a census of the Aboriginal peoples in and about Melbourne; he was sent to Mt. Piper to investigate alleged Aboriginal sheep-thieving; and he was ordered to investigate the drowning in the Yarra River of Stewart, the Sydney Aborigine who had come to Melbourne with John Batman; he tried two cases of two protectorate men charged with several crimes; and he attended the feast Robinson organised in Melbourne in late March. In April, Sievwright visited Bowerman's station to investigate conflict in the district. In April, Christina Sievwright applied to Police Magistrate Lonsdale for a musket to protect her tent. Sievwright finally left for the Western District on 31 May 1839.

Sievwright at Fyansford: June 1839 – February 1841

Sievwright based himself above the junction of the Barwon and Moorabool rivers, at what later became known as Fyansford, in the eastern portion of his area of responsibility. To the local Wathawurrung people this site was known as Burnie-wallock. Bridges (1972: 24) considered he 'lingered' near Geelong and the Port Phillip Patriot took the view he 'preferred sitting at his ease on the police bench to migrating through the wilds of the bush' (Bridges 1972: 24).

Sievwright made use of a two-roomed cottage, the vacated former home of magistrate Foster Fyans (Brown 1986: 235). Fyans had built the slab-hut upon his arrival in the Geelong district in 1837. Fyans wrote of the hut and the site: 'For about two years and a half I resided in this beautiful valley. The hut afforded good accommodation; had two rooms, not very large, only ten feet square each, but sufficiently so for the times. The chimney was prodigious; on the old Sydney plan, made of wood, and how happy and comfortable people by prudence can make themselves, by attending to timely wants' (Brown 1986: 208). Robinson described it in these words:

Descended the hill to the river, Fyans' Ford. Observed some old native huts. Rode up to them and then observed an old slab hut without chimney and covered with grass. But as everything was silent about it, and I saw no smoke, I concluded it
was deserted. It occurred to me it was Sievwright's old camp as I had been informed he lived opposite to Fyans. Whilst looking at the natives' old screen, of which there were six or seven miserable screens formed of boughs which were now quite dry, I saw two females come from a rough shed and I concluded it was Mrs Sievwright and daughter. I rode up, they had gone into the hut. I called and Mrs Sievwright came out. There were a few sticks burning in front of the door, a substitute for a fireplace and which as the day was cold and wet only added to the miserable place. (Clark 2000b: 374-5)

From correspondence sent from this locality by Sievwright, we know that this place was called 'Bumie-wallock', or similar variants (see Lakic and Wrench 1994: passim). A sketch exists of this hut. It was made by George A Gilbert, a Melbourne-based artist, in 1847. This sketch, or a copy of it, is accessible in Geelong. Both the place name and the sketch are omitted from Arkley's biography.

Arkley has researched Foster Fyans and learned that he was called 'flogger' Fyans when he was captain of the guard and acting commandant at the Norfolk Island and Moreton Bay penal colonies. This is an interesting piece of information, but tangential to the story of Sievwright, yet Arkley persists in using 'Flogger Fyans' throughout his narrative. The oft-repeated use of the epithet 'flogger' is tiresome and detracts; it should have been edited out

One of the intriguing aspects of Sievwright's tenure as Assistant Protector was his disagreement with Robinson on the principles of Aboriginal spatial organisation and the best way for the protectorate to achieve its goals of 'protection'. The Aboriginal protectorate was established on the principle that Assistant Protectors would centralise the Aboriginal peoples in each Protectorate District on to stations or 'asylums' where Aboriginal groups would be brought together to learn European life ways and be Christianised. Sievwright proposed to Robinson a model whereby 'portions of their land should be reserved for their behalf, in the districts occupied by the different tribes' (see Sievwright 1 Sept 1839 in Lakic and Wrench 1994:120).

This 'tribe by tribe' approach clashed with Robinson's and the Protectorate's centralist paradigm. Robinson was dismissive of Sievwright (see Clark 2000b: 35), believing he had not spent enough time itinerating in the Western District to draw such conclusions. He was critical of the fact that Sievwright had not spent enough time away from the environs of Geelong, and regretted that he had not supplied the Department with more information on languages, clans, census lists, and place names. He explained the absence of this information from Sievwright was a primary reason why he journeyed through the Western District from March to August 1841 collecting census information, spatial organisation, and linguistic data. Robinson may well be right that Sievwright did not have sufficient experience of Aboriginal spatial organisation to make such arguments, but as Clark (1998:148) has shown in an analysis of the failure of the centralising Wesleyan Buntingdale Mission station, his spatial model had merit, even if his knowledge was suspect.

For a brief period of time the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate had its own police force, and Assistant Protectors selected men from their districts to serve as Protectorate Police. Arkley makes no mention of the Western District protectorate police force selected by Sievwright.
Robinson was often critical of Sievwright, and especially of what he perceived to be his tardiness in acquiring a knowledge of the Aboriginal languages spoken in the Western District. On 11 January 1841, the two had words.

Sievwright sent me an impertinent letter obtuding his sentiments and opinions as to what I ought to have done and stating I ought to have taken him to the tribes and there taught him how to have acted. I wondered at the man's impertinence. I told him if he expected I was to do his work he would be disappointed nor was I to be dictated to by him. What the governor ordered I should obey, not his orders. He then said he had not the means. I said he did not require much means to learn the language and this was of primary consequence. He said he could not get to them. I said then how was I, a total stranger, to get to them. He might have gone to French's establishment at the Grampians. (Clark 2000b: 52)

As revealed by Arkley (p 333), John Sievwright, Charles' brother, took a squatting licence for the Burnie Wallock site in 1842.

**Sievwright at Lake Keilambete: February - April 1841**

Sievwright's second location was at Lake Keilambete, where he settled in late February or early March 1841, in Girai wurrung country. In the previous year, he had recommended this locality as a suitable site for the central station of the Western District (p 65). Sievwright, it seems, occupied this site without Robinson's approval (see Clark 2000b: 101), and without the sanction of the government. Robinson told Sievwright he believed the site would never be sanctioned because it was too close to the Wesleyan Mission Station near present day Birregurra. Sievwright's defence was that he was in the centre of his district and had nothing to do with the Wesleyans, and he warned his superior that if the government removed him, he would protest (Clark 2000b: 123-4). Robinson's personal opinion was that Sievwright had been wrong to settle at Keilambete until the question of a suitable site for a reserve in the Western District had been resolved.

Robinson's interactions with Sievwright during his 1841 visit to the Western District were rarely positive. Robinson wrote of him on 11 April 1841: 'With such a man it is not possible to effect any good. He is evasive and orders are, by him, kept in abeyance and he has not the ability to execute them' (Clark 2000b: 127). Two days later Robinson had become convinced he had to get away from Sievwright: 'It is time I was away from this man, for it is now impossible that I can regard him as a faithful assistant, after he has told me I was a dangerous man and that as such he would look out for me, and that if I wanted him I might send for him' (Clark 2000b: 129). For his part, Sievwright told Robinson that he 'was to resign and he [Sievwright] was to be Chief Protector' (Clark 2000b: 130). Later Robinson considered Sievwright was 'not worth his meat' (Clark 2000b: 157).

Given Thomson's protestations about the presence of Sievwright and Aboriginal people on his station, Robinson on 17 April 1841 ordered Sievwright to remove the Aboriginal encampment to Lake Terang.

The status of Lake Keilambete as an Aboriginal Reserve is curious. It was one of five reserves in the Western District that were gazetted and sanctioned in 1841, but other than the Mount Rouse Reserve, the other four were never taken up. The four reserves were Burrumbeep (present-day Ararat), Barwon (Sievwright's former station site at Fyansford), the junction of the Wannon and Glenelg rivers, and Lake Keilambete. Robinson recommended the sanctioning of Lake Keilambete as it was halfway between
Mount Rouse and Buntingdale, and presumably because it was an important place where the Girai wurrung met to settle disputes and transact business (Clark 1990a: 1995). According to Bridges (1972: 24), Thomson was unnerved when he was informed that his station would probably be required in the near future. More research is required into these four reserves.

Sievwright at Lake Terang: April 1841 - February 1842

Sievwright agreed to relocate to Lake Terang, under protest. The move was a compromise Robinson hoped would settle the problem of disturbing squatters without disadvantaging anyone. However, on 19 April 1841, Neil Black visited Robinson and wanted Sievwright removed from Lake Terang at the end of three months (Clark 2000b: 135). Robinson said that was out of the question, to which Black offered to lay a bet that Sievwright would still be there in six months time. Robinson replied that he never laid bets, but he was willing to assure Black that the use of Lake Terang was temporary. Black told Robinson he deemed it hard to be removed from the lake and thought he should make a stand against it, and was prepared to write to England. Black’s cattle watered at Lake Terang. Robinson noted that Black ‘affected to be greatly inconvenienced’ by the presence of Sievwright (Clark 2000b: 135).

Sievwright remained at Lake Terang for 12 months despite settler protest, and only moved when Robinson ordered him to relocate to the base of Kolorer (Mount Rouse), in Djabwurrung country, in February 1842.

Sievwright at Mount Rouse: February - June 1842

Sievwright arrived at the Mount Rouse station on 12 February 1842, accompanied by over 200 Aboriginal people. The Mount Rouse Reserve had its greatest attendance in 1842-1843, and there is a correlation between attendance and availability of rations and the extent of Aboriginal-European violence (Clark 1990a: 98). In 1842, when attendance figures were very high, some Aboriginal people were using the reserve as a sort of base from which they would operate ‘guerrilla attacks’ and then return to the safety of the reserve. When Sievwright learned of this practice in April 1842, he was most angry with the Aborigines and told them to stop. This was one reason why squatter opposition to the protectorate was so strong; another was that Sievwright was very active in his capacity as a magistrate in investigating squatter-Aboriginal conflict.

Robinson visited the Mount Reserve in March 1842, and Sievwright accompanied him on a visit to the Port Fairy district where Aboriginal attacks had been escalating. During this journey, Sievwright had charge of the gig and on at least two occasions, his myopia caused the gig to have accidents. On the first occasion, Sievwright drove over logs and the shaft horse stumbled; the shaft broke and Sievwright was thrown from the gig. Unharmed, Robinson fancied that from that point on ‘he would ride’ (Clark 2000c: 42). It was Robinson’s turn to be thrown from the gig two days later, when the shortsighted Sievwright ‘locked the wheel against a tree’ (Clark 2000c: 45). I mention this because Arkley (p 283), when he discusses this journey, fails to make any mention of Sievwright’s myopia. In fact nowhere does Arkley make the point that Sievwright suffered from myopia, a disability that must have disadvantaged him considerably. Sievwright’s blindness towards the end of his life in 1849 (p 449) may not be surprising, given his inability in 1842 to see logs across a path or to avoid scraping a tree when he
was in charge of a gig. His myopia must have constrained his ability to function in the field as an Assistant Protector but Arkley is silent on such issues.

In the foreword to this work, Arkley outlines his approach to Aboriginal spatial organisation, and elects to use the model articulated by Norman Tindale in 1974, despite the fact that Clark’s (1990a) reconstruction has discredited much of Tindale’s work in western Victoria, especially his nomenclature and his misrepresentation of some clan groups as dialect or tribal groups. Tindale’s Kurung, for example, in Clark’s reconstruction becomes the Kurungjang balug, a Woiwurrung clan. Mainmait, a pejorative word, was mistaken by early commentators such as Sievwright and Robinson as a tribal name (see Clark 1990a: 418).

On a genealogical note, it is disappointing that we do not learn more about the family of Christina Sievwright in Arkley’s biography. In February 1841, Robinson called into Andrew Beveridge’s Tryste Inn, at Mercers Vale, now Beveridge, and there learned that Beveridge knew Christina’s family. Her father, whose surname was Watt, had once been a tobacco merchant in Edinburgh. Her brother was a Presbyterian minister in the parish adjoining Leith (Clark 2000b: 83). Christina Sievwright also had an uncle in Port Phillip, Sam Mittons, an innkeeper at Kilmore (see Clark 2000e: 119).

If earlier treatments of Sievwright had the effect of demonising him, Arkley may be accused of the opposite effect, angelising. I agree with Arkley that Sievwright did not make himself popular with squatters in his pursuit of those involved in killings of Aboriginal peoples. See Clark (1995), for example, in which some of the most detailed information we have on some massacres is due to Sievwright’s diligence. Moreover, the charge of maladministration that he was overdrawn on his allocation was obviously a convenient reason to have him dismissed. Unlike Arkley, however, I remain unconvinced that the serious concerns that many of his contemporaries held about his personal morality were groundless.

Arkley has presented us with a voluminous account of Sievwright, and despite the shortcomings of this work, as outlined above, he has uncovered much interesting and vital information about this controversial figure. However, this is by no means the final word on Charles Wightman Sievwright, and other interpretations of this controversial public figure are encouraged.

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The riches of ancient Australia: an indispensable guide for exploring prehistoric Australia by Josephine Flood, third edition 1999 University of Queensland Press $43.75

Josephine Flood’s book The riches of ancient Australia: an indispensable guide for exploring prehistoric Australia is in its third edition. This is a good indication that it is filling a market niche for general books that present an accessible continent-wide narrative about the archaeology of Australia. It also reflects the continuing growth of a market for products supporting the adventure/ecotourism industry. Previous editions of the book have been well received — in 1991 the author was awarded the CJ Dennis prize for science writing by the Victorian Fellowship of Australian Writers, and the Australian Heritage Commission has supported the book’s production. The book is clearly written, packed with information and has black and white illustrative materials such as maps photographs and diagrams placed throughout the text. It is also a close companion to Josephine Flood’s other two general surveys of Australian archaeology, The archaeology of the Dreamtime and Rock art of the Dreamtime and as such contains much of the same sort of material, albeit presented in a different structure. So, if you are familiar with either of these books this volume does not offer anything new, except greater clarity as to where some sites are actually located!

As a professional archaeologist I must admit to being somewhat uncomfortable about the content and aims of this book. While I think it is a good idea to present informed material about archaeological sites in accessible and managed environments such as national parks, I am far less comfortable about encouraging unsupervised visitation to archaeological sites on other types of land tenure. Even though there are in-text warnings not to disturb sites and a brief introductory section on site protection in chapter 1, people do like to keep mementos of their travels and fragile sites without a regular management presence could be exposed to disturbance by casual collecting. The descriptions of sites located outside the state reserve systems contain prompts to contact the relevant government agency and/or the Aboriginal custodians. Whether most travellers would be bothered to do this is open to question. In some cases (one example picked at random was Spear Hill in Western Australia) the location description would enable an experienced 4WD tourist with good maps to duck off the road and visit sites without seeking permission. However, to be fair most of the sites listed for visitation are in national parks and other managed areas.

I also wonder who is the book aimed at? In the original preface it is stated that the book is aimed at Aboriginal communities, academics, educators, public servants, members of the conservation movement, politicians, members of the tourist industry, developers, members of the mining and agriculture industries, and students (Galvin 1991: xv)! Apart from this sounding somewhat like the stakeholder groups of Australian Heritage Commission I am not sure who amongst these groups would really have a need for this book. Flood (1991: xvii) herself states that the book is for ‘Aboriginal people and others who wish to know more about Australia’s prehistoric heritage and to visit important sites’. It would form a handy reference book for tour guides who lead the multitude of 4WD safari tours which crisscross central and northern Australia each dry season, but would not necessarily appeal to the average backpacker with limited luggage space and a travel schedule taking in the iconographic tourist destinations of Australia. Archaeology students find it too general for their assignments and are more
likely to be directed to Flood’s major work *The archaeology of the Dreamtime* for reference. I am not convinced either by Flood’s assertion that it is written for Aboriginal people — indigenous people will know where sites are in their own country and probably don’t need a guide book to assist them. The book can always be found in shops in national parks and museums and it really seems to be aimed at the relatively well-educated, self-propelled ecotourist who wants to get away from the main tourism locales and experience the bush whilst learning about Australia’s indigenous past as interpreted by archaeologists.

The introductory chapter provides an overview of Australian archaeology from a chronological perspective. Flood places the human settlement of the continent into its geological context with a seamless narrative transition from the deep geological past into the late Pleistocene. A diagram of an evolutionary tree on p 3 emphasises the relatively short expanse of human history compared to the evolutionary record of the flora and fauna. This seems to me to send two unfortunate messages to the reader, first that Aboriginal settlement of the continent is part of a continuum inseparable from that of the development of the flora and fauna and is not seen as part of the world-wide diaspora of *Homo sapiens*. This has echoes back to nineteenth and early twentieth century views in which Aboriginal people were classified as part of the biota and as something less than human. Secondly, the focus in this chapter seems to me to compound the common public confusion between the use of the term prehistory to denote deep geological time and the archaeological use of the term to mark the human scale of time before the introduction of writing to document the events and ephemera of everyday life. At any public display of archaeological materials (a good example being the annual National Science Festival held in Canberra) there are always questions from members of the public about people and dinosaurs, clearly illustrating such temporal confusion. This is reinforced to a certain extent in the text by having segments on places such as Riversleigh in north Queensland which focus on the palaeontological record. There is also a picture on the back cover of a geological fossil from Queensland that is out of place in a book ostensibly about the indigenous past. Most university archaeology departments have excised the term prehistory from departmental titles and course titles primarily because of objections from indigenous students sensitive to the negative connotations associated with its use.

Despite these reservations the book is well produced and contains a lot of good information about archaeological sites across Australia. It is a handy source of reference material and is the sort of book that rangers and tour guides could use to provide background materials for visitors. It is also the kind of book that you could recommend to the educated traveller who wants to explore the Australian bush beyond the conventional outback destinations.

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Wherever I go: Myles Lalor's 'oral history' edited with an introduction and afterword by Jeremy Beckett, 179 pp Melbourne University Press $32.95

This is certainly the liveliest, but at the same time the most insightful autobiography I have yet read. There is nothing contrived about it: Myles Lalor was so angry at what he had read about himself in an old report from the superintendent of the notorious Kinchela Boys Home that he wanted to clear his name. As Jeremy Beckett recalls, Myles arrived at Jeremy's home — they had been friends for nearly thirty years — and said 'I think you'd better do my oral history'.

Myles Lalor made a series of recordings, some in the presence of Jeremy Beckett, some on his own, and some with his daughter Prunie. They have been transcribed and edited in an ideal manner. There are very fine and unobtrusive explanatory notes from Jeremy Beckett — these are essential for any reader who is not familiar with Aboriginal New South Wales and Queensland. Myles’s narrative has been reproduced faithfully. Swear words in this style of narrative are often just used as 'filler words' — Prof. Beckett has found the solution. He says:

What I have done therefore is first to remove what seem to be merely filler words, while retaining enough ornamental expletives to convey the style of his speech, and particularly those that are used to pack a rhetorical punch (p 5).

Myles was part-Aboriginal but he says 'I'm classified as black wherever I go' — hence the title of the book. He was born at Uralla in New England, New South Wales. He was an independent and outgoing character even in his early youth, and always being beaten at school: 'I was always in trouble, but we used to enjoy our bloody selves' (p 35). He was sent to Kinchela in 1941, after his father had been killed in the war. Myles obviously did not like talking about this place, full of cruelty not only to the inmates: he gives a chilling account of having to witness one of the people in charge killing an old horse in a most brutal manner. He managed to get away from there twice, escaping to Sydney and to Queensland, and surviving on his own with great skill and enterprise.

Even then, in his early teens, Myles Lalor showed a keen perception of how mistaken Aboriginal policies of the time were, even those policies that did not directly involve him at all. He shows a deep understanding of how people felt. A very old Aboriginal man who had become crippled had been taken away from his home in Quilpie all the way to Cherbourg, and Myles was so concerned that he made inquiries at Cherbourg. When the man arrived in Brisbane at the railway station:

All the Press was there writing up a great story of him and what the Department of Native Affairs was doing to that poor man ... I went about a month later and asked about him and they said 'Oh yes, I think he died'. Nothing wrong with him. 'No, but he fretted'. He came from Quilpie. He was that old, like he'd survived, he was well over a hundred. Why in the frigging hell didn't they leave him in the place (p 50).

Myles was then sent to Menindie mission on the Darling — about as far away from New England as is possible within New South Wales— and yet some people from Menindie had been sent to the New South Wales north coast, and he was both puzzled and angry about that. Later Myles did all sorts of station and bush work and travelled far afield even to South Australia and along the Birdsville track. It was there he kept hearing about old George Dutton, a very traditional senior Aboriginal man living in
Wilcannia, who had, many years earlier, spent a long time in northeastern South Australia and could speak several of the languages there, notably Arabana and Yandruwantha, and he could understand others. Later on Myles actually met George Dutton in Wilcannia and they became firm friends. He discovered through George the world of old time station life, of travel with packhorses, a world of great mateship and communality among people in the furthest northwest of New South Wales and in the far outback of South Australia. This included just a few white people who had married into the Aboriginal community, such as Dollar Mick and Francis Warren of Finniss Springs.

Through George Dutton, Myles discovered yet another, deeper world, that of Aboriginal myths and their links to the landscape. He became aware of this world, though he realised he was too young to form part of it. No-one could put this more poignantly than Myles himself:

Like as far as George was concerned, Wilcannia and Darling River, they just didn’t exist, but if you go the opposite way (back to the north-west) every hill existed. And when you get talking to him, you get beat then, because he is talking about something that was bloody vital when he was a young fellow, but you can’t see it the way he is seeing it (p 93).

Myles Lalor married and settled in Wilcannia, but his life remained varied and mobile. He drove trucks and mail-coaches, and he was in charge of a pipe-laying gang; he worked as a mechanic. In the end Myles realised that he could do most good by doing community work in Sydney. He was a very clever, versatile man, who cared very much about other people. His autobiography as presented by Jeremy Beckett opens a window onto life in outback New South Wales. It is a brilliant book

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This book is an anthology. The author was born in 1972, the same year that Gough Whitlam came to power with a policy on Aboriginal affairs that included land rights. The book makes a distinct break from earlier poets. The author divides the work into the three parts named in the title, which adds to the immediacy of the images he produces.

Sam Watson was born at a time when the national identity of Aborigines across Australia was about to change irremediably. Over the next thirty years it moved from an orientation towards family and state-based social organisation to a national and modern identity. This work shifts away from the earlier verse of Kath Walker and Jack Davis, who are the poets of most significance of Aboriginal Australia. Politically, these two poets were appealing to the national psyche to include Aborigines as a part of a national identity rather than as uncivilised bush people for whom 'soothing the dying pillow' and forms of voluntary separatism were attitudes and policies still applied across northern Australia.

In the next two decades of Watson’s life there was a shift to urban radicalism in which the bigger Aboriginal populations moved from their rural historical base corralled on mission settlements, isolated cattle properties and reserves close to major
white urban centres. Queensland’s Gold Coast formed a destination to which Bundjalung people migrated because of its potential as a place where families were close to employment, schools and housing. Brisbane is to the north, and to the west are Casino, Armadale, Lismore, Tweed River, Cabbage Tree Island, Coffs Harbour and Tamworth, which formed the hinterland of the new urban centre of the burgeoning Gold Coast metropolis.

This anthology of poetry is by a male urban Aborigine. It is a book of the present that differs from the work of the earlier Aboriginal poets. Once, in the post-World War II era, the mostly middle-class urban-dwelling White Australians saw poets like Oodgeroo Noonuccal (also known as Kath Walker) as the real face of the civilising of the Aborigines. Walker was held up as the growing political consciousness of Aborigines in Queensland and in the late 1950s she was regarded as the Aborigine who spoke for all others. Even in the mid-1970s writers such as Jack Davis, Lionel Fogarty and Kevin Gilbert were heralded as the vanguard of the ‘Aboriginal voice’, a ‘vanguard’ representing both the growing groundswell and future hope of ‘the Aboriginal race’.

Watson’s work has been divided into three parts: first, ‘of muse’, in which the writer most certainly meant to convey a paradoxical position of deep contemplation and feelings of alienation; second, ‘meandering’, a representation of a growing consciousness of urban living, racial and social differences and; third, ‘midnight, the growing sense of urban despair, the darknesses, the deaths, migration from urban swamp to bush idealism and, finally, the disappointment of a chosen pedagogy which encumbers the failure of ‘assimilation’.

Let me deal with each of these aspects of Watson’s poetry. The section entitled ‘of muse’ tries to convey a feeling of the writer’s consciousness of his own skills of writing in a genre from which he hopes his thinking will say something to his present world. There is the use of concrete images to foreshadow his journey when he tells of us of the sharp syllogisms of a ‘dropping knife on one’s foot is nothing like dropping tequila on one’s tongue’. Straight away the writer shows how his use of language can convey the images he wants the reader to accept and build confidence in him as a poet — his confidence in showing us that here is a poet used to telling his listeners that he has something to say which they can understand. There is the feeling of being stung by a falling knife in comparison to the burning sensation of alcohol on tongue and throat together with the sensuousness of a sexual embrace which made him forget the world outside. Then the author uses terms such as magnesium which is the urban language of drug use, a chemical to stifle insomnia. Further, the whole section conjures up the images of pain, desire and disappointment. These are the anomalies of the lure of sex and the phobia of alienation, the despair of being controlled by drunkenness and the disappointment of a failure to establish sound human relationships that are suddenly shut out as in the fear of loneliness of darkness. This is a different pedagogy of a total return to an atavism of the reserve or tribal origins of the previous generation of writers.

Moreover, the writer confronts his audience as if to grab and shake them in declaring his presence, largely because of the absence of punctuation. It’s strange because on the one hand the writer conveys a sense of rebellion and then on the other, conformity, a form of delegation to the reader. This style is new and heralds the genre of the talking poet, familiar to those who live in and around the inner suburbs of Brisbane and Sydney — the locations of the cosmopolitan urban intelligentsia. The alienation, alcoholism
and sexual freedoms are well known to his audiences and these are his real tools of trade. Although his atavistic images emerge when he tells his reader that he is not a white person, he reveals nothing early of his Aboriginal heritage. This comes out later. It is difficult to know why the writer does this, but one can speculate that it is related to the writer’s connection between author, text and reader. If that’s the case then there is an absence of the writer wanting to impose too soon on his reader the idea that he is Aboriginal.

In section two, ‘meandering’, in the very first poem, ‘white stucco dreaming’, Watson highlights his differences from other talking poets when he writes that ‘sprinkled in the happy dark of my mind is early childhood and black humour white stucco dreaming ... and black panel-van called ‘black banana’ with twenty blackfellas hanging out the back blasting through the white stucco umbilical of a working class tribe front yard studded with old black tyres that became mutant swans overnight attacked with a cane knife and a bad white paint job’.

In these ideas we begin to see his special and mundane differences from remote Aborigines of the western desert, his distinct differences from the white working classes and his hatred of being forced to live in ‘White’ urban society. This is not so much an atavistic position but one of idealising the freedom of bush people as opposed to his own constraints. In addition, there are the differences from white society which emerge from the idea of him being identified as a ‘blackfella’ whereupon we must take it on trust that there is a separate ‘black humour’. Moreover, a universal syllogism is the idea of cars being overloaded and carrying too many people. This assumption is somewhat misplaced because the universal image is not so common among urban Aborigines. Its relevance for bush communities is palpable.

For Watson, language is a tool that tends to reinforce his racial authenticity. The use of words such as ‘dreaming’ which have become so hackneyed now that if white people use the word they are automatically assumed to be talking about Aboriginal culture. Furthermore, there is the notion that marking walls with hand prints is only used by Aborigines and so ‘chocolate hand prints like dreamtime fraud’ is a quip at ‘Whites’ not accepting them as ‘authentic Aborigines’ because they can be seen as ‘frauds’. Finally, in this poem we see the use of ‘mud cakes on camp stove’ as a mundane image of Aboriginal country town life. Of course it is only mundane in the eyes of the writer because this is his technique of establishing his authenticity of race, culture and resistance.

Later on, however, there is the mixture of the mundane and different urban cultures. The mundane is highlighted when the writer signifies that his subjects proclaim they are ‘hardly stopping to think that adults can hurt you’. From this image to one with the notion of an atavistic past which lingers on hunters walking through the estuarine mudflats. These mythical hunters are separated from urban life by isolation in the mangroves, where they could lead a ‘wild native’ existence free of the attachments to urban Aboriginal, or ‘White’, society. In the swamp they could use fishing tackle they made for themselves and live an ideal life free from either the brutality of adults or urban living ‘away from [their] parents’. Then here is the romanticism of loneliness and feelings of self sufficiency where they could have pigs and wallabies as food and where they could stay for eternity.
Difference is paraded in stark contrast to the mundane when Watson writes ‘don’t judge me by my skin at 4.30 am’, which is taken as a demand because in the darkness his differences cannot be noticed or appreciated. Watson uses the image of nationalism as personified by different flowers when he exclaims that Europeans always hold up their Greek philosophers as immortal but Greek civilisation, paradoxically, didn’t last long ‘until the tulips and the roses and snapdragons and poppies began slaughtering each other’. Here we see colonial and imperial warring nations depicted as flowers. Watson shows his differences and his indifferences in the last poem of the ‘meanderings’. Here he exposes his own ambivalences toward modern life and war when he says, ‘I sit in my room’, which signifies to the reader a feeling of boredom and this descends into lamentations about international wars where people kill each other. True to his urban mundanity Watson looks to pop lyrics for an answer to why and how it all happens. Ambivalences well up in him while listening to the radio in his room signifying his inaction and boredom as he desperately tries to think of other writers like Hemingway, but inaction and meanderings prevails.

In the last section, which opens with the mythologising poem of midnight’s boxer, Watson talks about a boxer too old to continue, who reminisces about the pain and the good days when recognition and popularity counted for much but are now gone. Watson uses words to convey the feelings he needs to show how this old Aboriginal man once toiled and now his gas tank is empty. Once he appeared as a leader of his people but even that myth has faded and ‘his time is over’. Cleverly Watson weaves a picture of this one-time boxer in the old circus tents who displayed much promise but whose hope comes to nothing. This feeling of failure is thrown off in his poem on ‘a bent neck black and flustered father mallee’. Watson begins by using metaphors of birds. It is clear that the crow lies dead on the side of the road not like the ‘gracious magpie’. There on the roadside this dead ‘bent neck black’ crow lies, claimed by the mad road traffic and swallowed up by the bitumen. This bitumen signifies the writer too in an almost sexual metaphor where he ‘falls ... into the blackened tar and earth’. Here we see the picture of the writer’s sexual ambivalences between black women who consume him, depicted by colour black and blood as female. This aphorism helps the reader to see the reality of his frustration. Similarly, feelings of falling into the blackness of the tar reinforce his racial identity, in the same way that other poets use touch and taste.

I think his work should be read in schools and universities as soon as possible. In particular, I think it should be studied by Aborigines and other indigenous peoples. In part, it signposts a watershed in Australian poetry. In part, also, it underlines that the poet writes about what he knows about rather than writing about abstraction with no basis in his own experience. This work heralds a return to basic poetry showing the strength of urban indigenous populations in adapting to their modern surroundings. At 54 pages long, the work is accessible to all, and in particular students. I recommend it and congratulate the poet.

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Woman from nowhere** by Hazel McKellar, as told to Kerry McCallum, 173 pp Magabala Books, 2000 $17.95

This is the autobiography of a very distinguished woman from western Queensland, written with the help of a fine writer who has a real understanding of the background.

Though the author tells her own life-history it is by no means egocentric: she sees her life as centred among the Aboriginal people of Cunnamulla, and by her own story she gives clear insight into the lives that went on around her. We can see the lack of understanding of the bulk of local people, even of the local teachers:

Another time I got into trouble with the domestic science teacher. We had to do an assignment about our home. She asked me to write about the colour scheme. I couldn’t do it, so she kept me back after school. I tried to tell her we were living in a one-room shack built from petrol tins with a bough shed and a goat pen out the back. The teacher kept me in till five o’clock but I wouldn’t do it. Of course I couldn’t do it and I wasn’t telling a lie. I couldn’t write about a cream bathroom ... She kept making it clear she wanted to know what colour the bathroom was and that some kids had cream and green kitchens (p.16).

Hazel comes from a highly talented family: the author Herbie Wharton is her brother. She was a girl who loved reading and writing. But in those days — and few people are now aware of this sad fact — education for Aboriginal people in Queensland stopped at the age of eleven. The same applied to some white children, such as wards of the state. We are not talking about the distant past, we are talking about the year 1941. Like the other Aboriginal girls of her age, Hazel was sent into service. This was at a distant property:

Even though I had a bedroom in the main house, I used to cry myself to sleep every night wanting to go home. I missed my mother, my brothers, my sisters and everyone in the camp (p 28).

Service was virtual slavery with work from 5.30 in the morning till nightfall, doing all the rough hard work both indoors and outdoors, seven days a week, except for one weekend off per month. There was however one redeeming feature. The people had books, and in what little spare time there was Hazel would find the best she could to read, preferring non-fiction. In retrospect Hazel remembers the situation not just personally, but as part of a general social evil, one that she was to fight against later on:

There was so much class and racial distinction in those days and it was just accepted that Aboriginal children could be used for cheap labour. The girls were at the mercy of the family they were working for and I suppose I was lucky to be treated so well.

After nearly four years Hazel managed to get back to the vicinity of Cunnamulla and at the age of sixteen she married Herbert McKellar, a young drover of Kunya ancestry from Tinnenburra. She spent the next fifteen years on the roads with sheep and cattle and at the same time raising a large family, occasionally sole in charge of large herds in the face of drought and deluge, and at the same time trying to make sure that her children got a good education. She then went back to Cunnamulla where her youngest child was born in 1967. In between she was working as shearers’ cook on various properties.

It was the so-called Cunnamulla riots of 1970 that set Hazel of her path of political activism: a few young Aboriginal people had been charged with serious offences when
all they had done — under provocation — was to upset a few rubbish tins and break the lower branches of a few street trees. The present book shows her indignation about the general condition and treatment of Aborigines in western Queensland; it does not dwell on her great achievements, in the first instance setting up a housing cooperative. She was gradually appointed to a number of important committees including ATSIC (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission). She never rested on her laurels, always wishing she could have done more for Aboriginal rights and education. Though she did so much for the present, her autobiography also shows her passion for the history of Aboriginal people. The present work does not dwell on it, but it was a major achievement to get Tinnenburra registered on the National Estate. Hazel’s earlier book, *Matya Mundu* (McKellar 1984) edited by Thom Blake, remains the most informative book on the Aboriginal people of far southwestern Queensland.

*Woman from nowhere* is an inspiring book — it tells in a quiet and unassuming way how an individual, however disadvantaged, but provided that he or she can survive, can still make a big difference for good in this world.

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Information for authors

Typescripts must be double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Submit two hard copies and keep one. Footnotes should be as brief as possible and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. Do not use Harvard-style references, e.g. (Berndt & Berndt 1977) in parenthesis. We prefer footnotes with a short form of citation, e.g. Saunders 1976, p. 27. The references, on a separate page should be arranged in alphabetical order by author's last name and include full publication details as given on the title page of the work. Arrange works by the same author in chronological order. Tables and maps should be submitted in final form (except for size), on separate sheets, numbered on the back, and accompanied by a list of captions and credits (if applicable). It is the author’s responsibility to obtain permission to reprint any illustrations subject to copyright protection. Once manuscripts are accepted, authors should submit final versions on computer disks. Microsoft Word or RTF format is preferred. Do not send scans or photocopies taken from books or other publications; only original photographs, maps or other illustrations will be accepted. If you provide scans, these must be 'high resolution' and suitable for printing. Do not paste them into your text document. All scans must be in separate tif or jpg files. Please label disks clearly and include your name, short title of the work, whether PC or Mac, software and version. Authors should follow the usage of the Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers, 5th edition, AusInfo, Department of Finance and Administration, Canberra, 1994.

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, AOTCS 7/23/127.

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