

Foreword

This 29th edition of the journal contains four papers that consider the politics of Aboriginal identity in new ways. John Maynard explores little known 'international black connections' between Aboriginal activists of the early 20th century and the African-American activists of the Universal Negro Improvement Society, led by Marcus Garvey. Mitchell Rolls confronts the implications of multiple potential locations for identity that arise with 'mixed descent', and draws comparisons between the US and Australia. Rani Kerin examines the relationship between a young Aboriginal boy and Charles and Phyllis Duguid in South Australia in the 1940s, showing the gap between theories of assimilation and the complexities of practicing it in person, and the sad outcome of these confusions. Sarah Holcombe looks at the establishment of an Aboriginal mining company in Western Australia in the 1940s, and how these early management and financial structures relate to contemporary Indigenous organisations' practices.

In the other papers, Darrell Lewis draws together previously unpublished sources which describe the lives of Aboriginal people of the Victoria River area of the Northern Territory in the mid-1800s, and their reactions to early exploring expeditions — 'a kind of "foundational document"' for the people of the area. Geoff Gray works at the other end of the ethnographic process, looking at those who looked at others so prodigiously — anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt — in terms of the social and academic context in which their careers were built and maintained.

Thanks are due to Peter Read who carried out the editorial work on the earlier stages of this edition of the journal.

2005 has been a fruitful year for *Aboriginal History*, with two important and handsomely-produced monographs published. The first of these was Mike Smith's *Peopling the Cleland Hills: Aboriginal history in western Central Australia 1850-1980*. Historian Tom Griffiths wrote in his introduction to the book:

This is an unusual and compelling history of an Australian frontier. In it, the archaeologist turns historian. Mike Smith sifts documents and memories in order to describe the last century and a half of culture contact in the region where older sediments have previously been his study. He uses Puritjarra rockshelter as a place from which to view the modern social exchange and disruption generated across Kukatja country by the European colonial invasion. This is not just a fine, original history, but also a challenging model of archaeological practice.

In *The Australian* newspaper's reviews of the best books of 2005 the book was recommended as 'original' and 'full of insight and redemptive force' by Nicolas Rothwell, novelist and senior writer for *The Australian*. He wrote:

Meticulous in its reconstruction of lost time and near-vanished memories, restrained and sober in its tone and voice, this book sets a benchmark for writing that seeks to capture the clash of civilisations in central Australia (3 December 2005).

The other Aboriginal History monograph published in 2005 was *Many exchanges: archaeology, history, community and the work of Isabel McBryde*. This is a celebration and exploration of the work of Professor Isabel McBryde. Her longterm contributions to the understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage in Australia (see Peter Read's discussion of these in 'Notes and Documents', this volume) are explored in the collection's inter-disciplinary studies by leaders in the fields of archaeology, history, heritage management, linguistics and anthropology. The collection will be welcomed by all who have an interest in the history and the future of these overlapping studies. The collection demonstrates the many connections — inter-disciplinary, inter-cultural and inter-generational — that flow into the creation of lively and informed Indigenous histories. Professor McBryde is one of the founding members of the journal *Aboriginal History*.

2006 will see the thirtieth edition of *Aboriginal History*, first published in 1977. A special themed edition of the journal is being prepared to mark these three decades of pioneering publication, the changes that have occurred, and current directions in a discipline that barely existed 30 years ago. There was some opposition at that time to the establishment of a journal that marked out 'Aboriginal history' as a distinct sub-discipline on the grounds of possible marginalisation, or because of a perceived lack of documentary sources, or the requirement for such histories to be the domain of Indigenous historians only (see Isabel McBryde's chapter in *Terrible hard biscuits: a reader in Aboriginal history*, Allen and Unwin, 1996). The resounding strength and depth of the work published in the journal since then makes it clear that the sub-discipline is not only valid and viable but a central location for challenging ways of thinking about practices of history, and its role in the constitution of personal and national identities in colonial and potentially de-colonised contexts. The journal has been an important agent in the construction of the multi-vocal, diversely-sourced and inter-disciplinary forms which have come to characterise the sub-discipline. Sales of *Aboriginal History* publications are flourishing, a testament to the expanding interest and involvement in the dynamism and challenge of understanding, writing, singing, painting or filming Aboriginal history.

Ingereth Macfarlane
Managing Editor