

Aboriginal History

Volume 26 2002

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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 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 Issues include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, resumés of current events, archival and bibliographic articles, and book reviews. This volume of the journal is formally dated 2002, but is published in 2003.

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

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Introduction

With this volume, number 26, the journal enters its second quarter century of publishing in the rich cross-cultural, inter-disciplinary, interactive field of 'Aboriginal history'. We have also entered the 21st century, with the establishment of our web page at www.aboriginalhistory.org

The papers which have been submitted to the journal over the past year share several broad features. In a number of them there is a concern with forms of representation of Indigenous people by self and by others. This is a theme which is to be explored further in volume 27 of the journal.

Jane Lydon provides a valuable contribution to the literature of representation in her detailed study of the social construction and reception of the photographic works of Charles Walter at Coranderrk, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. She writes an ethnography of the local dynamics and looks at its interplay with a global 'visual economy'.

Melinda Hinkson considers the presentation of the Aboriginal past in public places of contemporary Sydney. She finds evidence for an emerging shift away from previously common interpretative narratives that saw these places as 'pure products'¹ to more complex inter-cultural presentations of the past.

Peter Read, a key participant in the Stolen Generations debates, sets out examples from his experiences as an expert historical witness in courts of law which make clear the frustrations and complexities which arise when attempting to represent past social contexts in a legal framework.

Geoff Gray looks at the policies and politics of anthropological practice, focussed through the lens of Phyllis Kaberry's experiences in the 1930s. This involves trying to understand what was allowable or desirable for anthropologists to record at that time, and why, with 'traditional custom' constructed in opposition to the contemporary dynamics of 'actual life-conditions'.

Laurent Dousset considers a case study of Indigenous people's responses to the installation of the Giles meteorological station in the western desert in the 1950s, and considers their choices within the incoherencies of assimilation era government policy and practice. Corrine Manning's study of governance and policy in mid 20th century Victoria also reviews vacillations in government policy between segregation and assimilation.

Kevin Blackburn takes the changing usage of the term 'nation' by nineteenth century anthropologists such as RH Mathews and Howitt as a way into the history of understandings, or mis-understandings, of Indigenous social structure and sovereignty, especially in southeastern Australia.

Continuing the studies of nineteenth century Victoria, Barry Blake and Julie Reid's paper makes accessible the word lists collected by RH Mathews and others from the language spoken by the people of northwestern Victoria, and their analysis of the lan-

¹ Byrne, Denis 1996-7, 'The Archaeology of disaster', *Public History Review*, Vol 5/6.

guage. Niel Gunson provides an informed review of Ian Clark's massive six volume undertaking of publishing the journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector in Victoria.

We are also pleased to present the text of a speech given by Sir William Deane, former Governor General, recently described as 'a natural champion of values and causes he saw as essentially decent and essentially Australian' who 'in addition to holding up a mirror to the nation, challenged the nation to live up to its self image'² He displayed all of these qualities in launching Volume I of *Weereewaa*, a local community history of Aboriginal families in the ACT region by Ann Jackson-Nakano. He suggests the recognition of this history in the reassertion of *Weereewaa*, the prior name of the locale that is now referred to as Lake George. In addition, we provide the expanded texts of the speeches made by Ann Jackson-Nakano and Grant Austin to launch volume II of *Weereewaa* in September 2002.

The third monograph published this year by Aboriginal History Inc was *The Aboriginal population revisited*, edited by Gordon Briscoe, a Board member, and Len Smith, and containing amongst others a paper by Elsbeth Young.

This year we were deeply saddened by the loss of a long-standing member of the Board, Elspeth Young. Her informed, good humoured and energetic contribution to the journal was part of that same flavour that she brought to all aspects of her life. An obituary for Elsbeth will be included in the next volume of the journal, and a future volume is being planned that will commission papers celebrating and developing the research themes which she fostered.

This journal is made possible by the work of Tikka Wilson, Trish Boekel, Jenny Jefferies and Dick Barwick, as well as the members of the Board of Management.

This volume of the journal is dedicated to the life and work of Caroll Kendall, a woman who contributed so much to our capacity to understand the traumatic aspects of Australian history associated with policies of child removal, and ways for us all to begin to remedy those traumas.

Ingereth Macfarlane
Managing Editor
Canberra, December 2002

² Stevens, Tony 2002, *Sir William Deane: the things that matter* Hodder, Sydney.

Dedication to Carol Kendall

This volume of *Aboriginal History* is dedicated to Carol Kendall, who died in January 2002.

Carol was an adopted child who was reunited with her Aboriginal mother Mary and her extended family when she was an adult. She was one of the minority who enjoyed a loving relationship with both her adopting and her Aboriginal families.

She learned of her Aboriginality only in her teens, when her parents, realising that she was bringing home a Koori boy to meet them, decided to tell her. Carol's life changed at that point. She later wrote:

When I was told I was Koori it confirmed some of my feelings that I had before and couldn't quite understand. Really I felt wonderful because this was the first information I had about who I was, me the real person, and I was Koori.

I met Carol first in the home that she shared with her husband Bruce and her children Belinda and Vanessa. It was about 1982, and she had asked Coral Edwards and me, representing Link-Up (NSW), to call on her to help her find her Aboriginal family and to reunite her with them. At that time she knew nothing of their identity.

Some unlucky people take ten years to find their families. Perhaps it was a sign of how much Carol was wanted in the cause that we were able to find her family in a day. Almost miraculously, we discovered that her mother Mary had been living in the same house in the Blue Mountains of NSW for many years, and was still there. Only three months later a joyful reunion took place.

Soon after meeting her mother, Carol joined the Link-Up management committee and, a few years later, became our president. As she represented the organisation in conferences all over the country she came to understand the breadth of the tragedy of separation in its many different histories and consequences. A decade later she was to put that understanding to a profound and different use.

Two years later Carol resigned the presidency in order to become a Link-Up case worker. This gave her the experience of working hand-in-hand with real clients in their long journey home. She brought to her fellow-sufferers her own fine and special qualities: the variety of historical experiences emanating from the life of her own family; her ability to listen and to empathise; her belief that it was possible for adoptive families, however wrongly they might have been put together, to form loving relationships with each other. Carol was a true reconciliator. Within year or two, on the retirement of Coral Edwards from Link-Up, Carol became the Co-ordinator of Link-Up.

It was in those middle years that Carol met her sister Jackie. Only Jackie and Carol knew the ecstasy of that meeting and what that late and unexpected association meant to each other.

With her new responsibilities came the third and most momentous phase of Carol's life as an Aboriginal person. Soon after the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families began work, Carol became one of the Commission's representatives on its Indigenous Advisory Council. She and Lola Edwards toured New South Wales for months, listening and responding to those who had endured the experience. Those close to Lola and Carol at the time well

Koories Come in All Colours

*I know I'm a Koorie
I've learned from my kin
But sometimes I'm questioned
On the colour of my skin*

*I'm questioned on this by both
Black and White
My culture and identity are my
legal right*

*My Aboriginality
I've searched for so long
But the doubts of others
Make it hard to belong*

*If you wouldn't make judgments
On just what you see
Then, maybe by chance
You'll see the real me.*

Carol Kendall

remember the fiery passion, compassion and stupendous energies they brought to those thousands of kilometres on the road; the exhausting, painful and tearful hearings; the strength of their reports. Part of the energy of the final report, *Bringing Them Home*, derived from Carol and Lola's commitment to its principles and the importance of its revelations.

Soon after the report was tabled the Sorry Day committee was formed, mostly in answer to the government's progressive distancing of itself from the report. Carol became its first Co-Chair, and when illness forced her to step back from that demanding role, she shared its Patronage with Malcolm Fraser.

She kept her illness at a distance. Friends learned that, when either visiting or telephoning, her physical condition would be last on the agenda, and usually not at all! Despite her worsening condition, the last few years and months before her death were full of joy and affection. Her fiftieth birthday celebrations provided an opportunity for so many of us to speak to her publicly of the love and respect which we felt for Carol. Her beloved family, not least the grandchildren, remained the base from which she sought to repair other families, and to help Australians to understand each other. Her largest project was that the rest of Australia should know and understand.

A booklet that she wrote for people using the Link-Up services contained a dedication written by Carol:

Special thanks to those people who had the courage and strength to share their stories, poems, joys and sorrows to give hope to those who may be wanting to find themselves.

No one gave more than Carol. The nation's Link-Up organisations owe her a huge debt. So does Australia.

Peter Read

Politics and demography in a contact situation: the establishment of the Giles Meteorological Station in the Rawlinson Ranges, West Australia

Laurent Dousset

On 24 October 1955, a restricted internal note circulating at the Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) presaged what would become the major reason for important changes in Indigenous people's lives in the Central Reserves of Western Australia:

In connection with the Maralinga Project it has been decided to establish a permanent meteorological radar station at the nominal 600 mile point along the centre line of the range. The exact point cannot be determined until a more detailed reconnaissance is made. ... It is proposed now that a joint reconnaissance and construction team should leave Finke on the Adelaide–Alice Springs railway line, about 5th November 1955, and travel across through Mount Davies to the general area in which it is felt the final point may be chosen.¹

In December of the same year, the reconnaissance survey team chose a site in the Rawlinson Ranges, WA. The patrol officer accompanying the team on this survey later termed it a 'rush trip' in which 'there was no attempt made to select a site that would interfere as little as possible with the Aborigines'.² Some months later, Len Beadell, then Chief Surveyor of the WRE, graded a track from Mulga Park to the Rawlinson Ranges, where the meteorological station, named Giles in honour of the explorer,³ was to be built.

The aim of this paper is twofold. Its first part provides first-hand material illustrating the conditions in which the Giles Meteorological Station (Giles MS; see Figure 1) was established and outlines the policy and behaviour of officials and employees of the WRE in relation to the Indigenous people of the Rawlinson Ranges. This part of the paper is principally based on direct quotes from archival documents.⁴ It illustrates the

¹ National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3–R136/005: folio 176.

² National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3–R136/005: folios 191–193.

³ Beadell 1965.

⁴ I have not considered in detail secondary sources relevant for other contact situations in the Western Desert. The aim is a detailed description of one particular circumstance, the Giles Meteorological Station and the Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people, for which I have at my disposal both archival information and detailed ethnographic material.

contradictory policy adopted by the WRE and its Native Patrol Officers at Giles MS, which oscillated between attitudes of segregation and ideals of assimilation.

The second section of this paper uses the same archival material, as well as data I collected during fieldwork among Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people – the traditional owners of the area – to illustrate socio-demographic changes and their implications in the Rawlinson Ranges since the establishment of Giles MS. The formal kinship structure of Aboriginal groups of the area will be employed to demonstrate how migration to missions and stations from the Rawlinson Ranges area, as a consequence of the WRE policies, significantly accelerated further migration. The data provided in this part of the paper strengthens the hypothesis that the process of congregation at stations and missions had an exponentially escalating effect and further, that this accorded well with the national interests as defined by the WRE. That is, the more people congregated, the more rapidly settlement progressed, and the less likely the WRE need be involved with – and account for – Aboriginal Affairs. However, this part of the paper also shows that Indigenous people, rather than passively succumbing to the dramatic changes, actively engaged in the maintenance of the bases for social interaction through their migration and congregation. Congregation was a means, indeed a necessity, for the preservation of the extensive social networks already in existence.

Background: from Ernest Giles to Giles Meteorological Station

WRE officers were not the first non-Indigenous persons to visit the Rawlinson Ranges. The British explorer Ernest Giles, during his attempt to traverse the central and western deserts more than 70 years before the WRE survey, reached the Rawlinson Ranges on 10 January 1874. Some days later, he lost one of his party west of Lake Christopher and named this desert 'Gibson' after him.

With few exceptions, Giles' accounts of his journeys are not an important ethno-historical source, since they largely concern geographical features and his struggle to find water. His encounters with Indigenous people are most often portrayed by Giles as violent and dominated by his fear of being captured by what he believed to be genuine cannibals. Some meetings, nevertheless, seem to have been more peaceful. Particularly interesting is an encounter at the Rawlinson Ranges, during which an Aboriginal man held Giles' chin – a gesture meaning 'man' – indicating that he knew there were more white men like him.⁵ The interest of this short episode lies in the fact that although hundreds of kilometres away from the nearest colonial settlement, the Aboriginal people of the Rawlinson Ranges were nonetheless aware of who had arrived on the continent. Other evidence for this claim, and against a description of desert families as being isolated from other groups and tribes, are Tietkens' reports on his observations of smallpox among the Gibson desert Aboriginal people encountered during his journeys with Ernest Giles.⁶ The flow of information and the diffusion of illness help testify to the Western Desert's extensive social networks which, at least partly, explain the capacity of Indigenous people to subsequently adapt rapidly when, following the establishment of the Giles Meteorological Station, large numbers of groups and families congregated around a limited number of stations and missions.

⁵ Giles 1993 [1875]: 182–3.

⁶ Tietkens 1882.

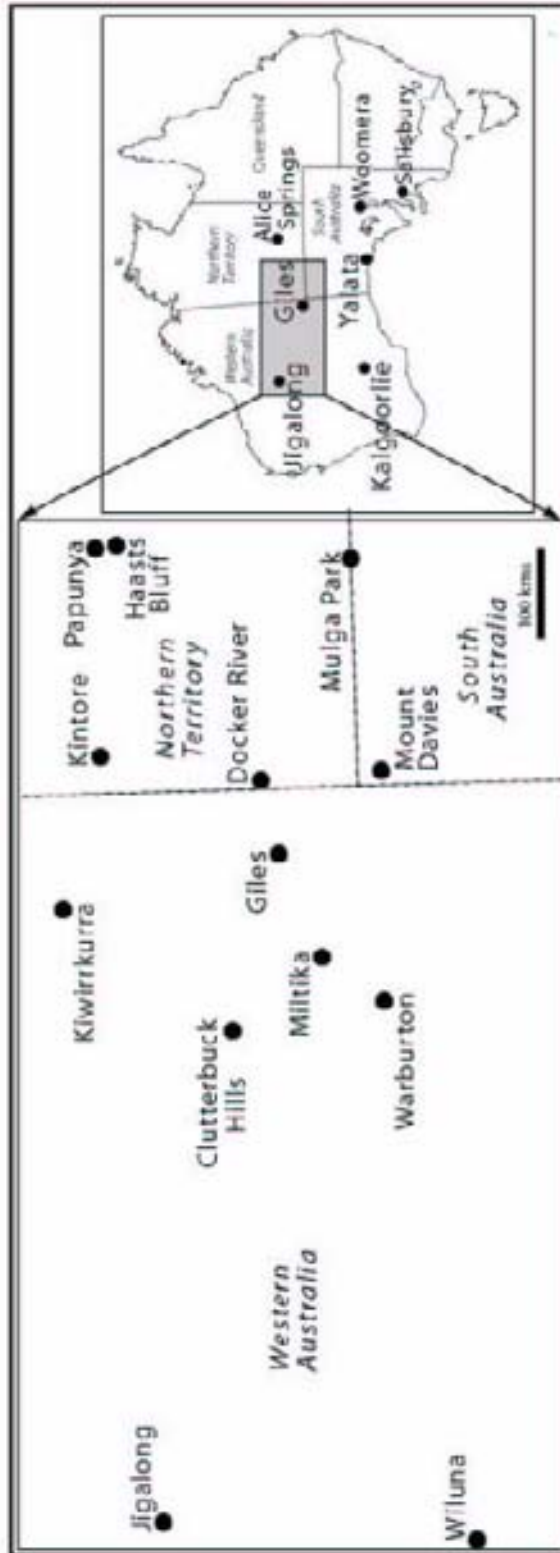


Figure 1: Location map

The contact frontier progressed onto other more favourable regions. The harshness of the Rawlinson Ranges environment and its unsuitability for cattle raising spared Aboriginal people there from lasting intrusions into their homelands, until the arrival of the WRE. The exception was the Warburton mission, established in 1934 by William and Iris Wade of the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) some 200 kms from the present location of the Giles Meteorological Station. However, direct contact with this mission, which had been established on a new, small reserve adjacent to the Central Reserve (gazetted in 1918) was minimal. Some Aboriginal people periodically visited the mission; others obtained billycans, axes and other utensils through exchange with neighbouring families. First-hand descriptions of the existence of white people at Warburton – that is, reports made by members of the Rawlinson population themselves – reached the Rawlinson Ranges at a time when the groups far north of the Rawlinson Ranges – from the sandhills-country – seemed to have already expanded southwards and eastwards independently of colonisation in the late 1940s or the early 1950s.⁷

Norman Tindale of the South Australian Museum made an expedition in the vicinity of the Rawlinson Ranges. He visited the Mann and Musgrave Ranges from May to July 1933, as well as Ernabella to the east in August. In 1935 he visited the Warburton Ranges to the west, accompanied by CP Mountford.⁸ These expeditions yielded scientific publications and Tindale's many field notes were lodged in the South Australian Museum. Tindale reportedly explained later to a WRE patrol officer for the Rawlinson Ranges that there were 'a number of natives somewhere in that direction who are conscientiously and deliberately avoiding white contacts'.⁹

Despite various gold-hunting and other adventurous expeditions in the area,¹⁰ the Rawlinson Ranges remained beyond colonising interests until February 1946, when Great Britain approached Australia with the intent to establish a common weapons research program, including the testing of missiles. In 1948 the Long Range Weapons Establishment was created, and in 1955 it became the Weapons Research Establishment (WRE), with headquarters at Salisbury near Adelaide, a rocket range launching pad at Woomera, and the atomic testing area at Maralinga/Emu.¹¹

Besides the nuclear tests, especially in the Maralinga/Emu region, the WRE also planned to fire rockets from Woomera over the Gibson Desert and into the area of the Great Sandy Desert. In 1955 it was decided to establish a central weather and control station at the 600 miles point from the firing area, which would provide weather reports for choosing suitable launch conditions. The WRE had employed a Native Patrol

7. The reasons given by these early migrants for the expansion is an unprecedented death toll amongst their families, especially the older members and the incapacity to forage sufficiently for survival.

8. Tindale 1933, 1935a, 1935b.

9. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 164.

10. The most famous of these adventurers are probably Lasseter (see Idriess 1939) and Terry (n.d.). Other expeditions around or close to the Rawlinson Ranges were Miller in 1892, Lamp and Macpherson in 1893, Breaden and Oliver in 1897, Hill in 1899, Maurice and Murray in 1901-02, Hann and Giles in 1903, Brumby and Brown in 1930 and Wells in 1930-31. Terry (n.d.: 272ff) lists the expeditions prior to his 1930 journey.

11. More information on the background and history of the WRE can be found in the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia 1985; Milliken 1986; Morton 1989.

Officer whose task was to make certain that no Indigenous movements would interfere with the tests, and that no Aboriginal people would be in danger from them. This officer accompanied the party into the Rawlinson Ranges in 1955 to choose a suitable location for the weather station. The Chief Surveyor of the WRE was in charge of extending the existing track to the planned station, and a construction team of about 40 men was transported to the Rawlinson Ranges in 1956. The station began generating meteorological data in August of the same year. Thus it had taken less than a year to choose a site in a largely unknown area, grade a track and build the meteorological station.

The public was told no more than was necessary about the project, especially as the station was established on an Aboriginal Reserve. Public knowledge about the direct relationship between Giles Meteorological Station and the WRE had to be minimal. Indeed, Dunlop and Gray's film *Balloons and spinifex*, produced by the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit and the Bureau of Meteorology during the construction of the station, presents the team as pioneers and heroes facing a harsh environment for the benefit of meteorological science, and Maralinga or Woomera are only mentioned in passing, although Giles Meteorological Station remained under the responsibility of the WRE until 1972.

Before discussing the impact of Giles Meteorological Station on local Aboriginal families, I will describe the prevailing climate of the early years following the establishment of the station. Two questions arose during archival research. The first relates to discourse about the Indigenous people of the Rawlinson Ranges by patrol officers and other officials. Reports and correspondence show that WRE employees had a clear understanding of the impact of the station on people's lives: how did they reconcile this understanding with their task as government officials and organisers of projects held to be in the 'national interest', and what rhetoric did they use to legitimate courses of action? The second question relates to the concrete conditions in the Rawlinson Ranges: how did officers implement their policies and what was the Indigenous reaction? The answers to these questions reflect a dichotomy between simultaneously applied policies of assimilation and negation of Indigenous culture in general, and the policy of segregation and 'protection' in local areas.

'De-tribalisation' and attachment to land

Reports and internal notes of the WRE testify that the available information about Aboriginal culture was not always of substantial anthropological depth, but was nevertheless sufficient to allow decision makers, as well as their agents, to obtain a good understanding of the impact of their policies on the local Aboriginal people, and to be in a position to predict the consequences of those policies. While reserves, as Rowse writes, were seen by the Commonwealth government as 'transitional, temporary homes for Aborigines' that 'must not be allowed to perpetuate "segregation"',¹² employees seemed, however, to have had difficulties interpreting and applying this understanding in the field. The following extract from a letter written by a Native Patrol Officer and addressed to the superintendent in Woomera in 1950 – that is, before

¹² Rowse 2000: 36.

the establishment of Giles Meteorological Station – illustrates his understanding of the implications for Aboriginal people of removal from their land:

The country that each tribal aborigine looks upon as peculiar to his family is very important to both his domestic and secret life. It is his birth place – his spirit's home. He believes that ceremonies within its boundaries and certain places are necessary for his existence, to ensure the continued supply of game and foodstuffs on which his life depends. If deprived of this by force, he is likely to die of homesickness. If he leaves it voluntarily, he quickly degenerates into the useless outcast seen, among other places, along the East-West line. In fact, he becomes de-tribalized.¹³

On the one hand the general policy, the transitional status of reserves and the particular situation in the rocket range area where Indigenous peoples had to be removed for their own security, all implied that 'de-tribalisation' was a necessary step for the assimilation of Indigenous people into the dominant society. On the other hand, patrol officers understood and regretted that their presence and actions would have an impact on Indigenous culture in a profound and irreversible way. Indeed, reports written by Native Patrol Officers depict 'de-tribalized Aborigines' and 'outcasts' as having 'no pride of race, no faith in their secret life, no law, no ambition except to exist with as little effort as humanly possible'.¹⁴ The trigger for creating 'de-tribalized' Aboriginal people was associated in the field with the dispossession of, or removal from, traditional lands.¹⁵ Eventually, however, patrol officers adopted a rhetorical position, well reflected in Hasluck's writings, according to which 'there was nothing that could be recognised as a homogeneous and integrated aboriginal society. Here and there throughout the continent there were crumbling groups of aboriginal people bound together by ancient tradition and kinship and living under a fading discipline'.¹⁶ Contact with and use of western goods were seen by patrol officers as the first signs of a fading society, and therefore legitimated the removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional lands.¹⁷ The quasi-systematic driving of people away from the Giles Meteorological Station further back into the Rawlinson Ranges (see below) was eventually replaced by a removal to distant stations and missions, in particular Papunya and Warburton. The rhetorical position of the officials legitimated the passage from a segregationist to an assimilationist attitude in and around the Giles station.

Local politics: assimilation with segregation

While assimilation became the implicit policy from the 1940s onwards,¹⁸ segregationist and protectionist attitudes were still detectable, even in official guidelines. The concept of having one Australian community or society, adhering to a common set of customs and believing in identical principles,¹⁹ is obviously indissociable from a certain amount of enforced segregation of those who do not want, or do not have the means, to adhere

13. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folios 15-19.

14. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folios 15-19.

15. See National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 202-203.

16. Hasluck 1988: 131.

17. In Central Australia and probably elsewhere in Australia, western goods, especially food, have also been a social technology applied by administration, missions and settlers to actively change the nature of cross-cultural relations, as Rowse (1998) convincingly demonstrates.

to the concept. Rowse writes that the words used to define assimilation 'not only sustained differences but also denied it. People who were different (from those enacting the policy) would be treated differently (from those enacting the policy) until they became the same (as those enacting the policy)'.²⁰

However, whilst in the midst of assimilation policy, Giles Meteorological Station early on became a place in which segregation and ideas or ideals of assimilation were in contention. One major reason for the mixed and ambivalent local policy was that officials had not expected to encounter so many of these 'shy primitive aborigines'²¹ in the Rawlinson Ranges. Beadell, who had been organising the road construction to the Rawlinson Ranges, still claimed in 1994 that it was an 'uninhabited desert waste-land [and] was the most isolated', and that it was 'the most suitable area in the world for a rocket range'.²² Internal memoranda in 1956, however, testify to the astonishment and helplessness of officials confronted with the real situation. A letter by the acting Controller of the WRE to the superintendent in Woomera states:

The presence of aborigines in the vicinity of the Desert Meteorological Station is causing some concern, and it has been established that the native population is actually far greater than at first expected.²³

Problems, indeed, had emerged early during the construction of the Meteorological Station. An internal letter dated 10 May 1956, this time from the Superintendent in Woomera to its Controller, warns that:

There are 50 Aborigines camped at the site whose lack of camp hygiene is conspicuous. For reasons of the health of the white men and safety of equipment, alone, it is recommended that blacks be kept to the north and whites to the south of the Rawlinson Ranges.²⁴

Many more such notes and letters circulated through the WRE, and a radio message sent on the 14th of May 1956 asks the WRE patrol officer to:

co-operate immediately with Beadell ... and discourage presence of Aborigines in the vicinity. They must not be employed in any capacity at all and must not be given any water or rations except in case of urgent medical necessity.²⁵

In 1957 it was recommended that an incinerator be ordered to Giles Meteorological Station so that food remains would be destroyed and not distributed.²⁶ Some months later, however, patrol reports testify that the situation was still not satisfactory

18. Assimilation was only officially defined in 1961 during the Native Welfare Conference in Canberra. However, there are previous allusions to assimilation within States, such as in Queensland where it was said as early as 1937 that 'the destiny of the Aboriginal people lay in their ultimate absorption by the white race' (Queensland Parliamentary Papers 2, 1938: 1097; State Library of Queensland, *Assimilation era*). For an analysis of assimilation policies in Central Australia, see Rowse 1998, particularly, but not exclusively p. 107ff.

19. Bennett 1989: 23.

20. Rowse 2000: 17.

21. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 164.

22. Beadell 1994.

23. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 341-342.

24. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 240.

25. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 245.

26. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 390-391.

in the eyes of the officials. Below are extracts of such a report illustrating the tragicomic situation that existed at Giles Meteorological Station:²⁷

On arrival at Met. site camp, I found 71 aborigines camped within 100 yards of the white men's camp, enjoying free food and water, rides in and on land rovers, trucks, grader and bulldozer. I moved them all to Sladen Waters [north of Giles Meteorological Station] and recommended to Mr. Nossiter's men that they did not give the natives anything south of the Range, or permit any to ride in or on any vehicle.

The patrol officer then left for the Blackstone Ranges to the south and returned some days later:

On return to the Met. site, I found 50 natives camped almost with the road construction team. I moved them all back to Sladen Waters.

My next trip was a quick visit to Mount Fanny. ... I returned to the Met. Site camp. Here it was suggested that the natives be used to remove sticks from the airstrip. I agreed that they may as well work as they were being fed anyway...

He left Giles Meteorological Station again for a longer trip, to Mount Fanny, Blackstone, Barrow Range and back to Giles:

The aborigines had again collected at the Met. site camp and were convinced that a bullock and large supplies of flour, milk, tea and sugar were being brought from the south for them. This arose from the white men's habit of saying 'Yes' to all that they do not understand.

What appears like a game between the officer and Indigenous people in fact hid another tragedy, which the patrol officer would soon discover: Aboriginal people had picked up some serious illnesses and were seeking help.

Confirming their belief in the incapacity of Indigenous people to resist Western goods and services, officials thought that when they stopped handing out food and water, the Aboriginal people would 'quietly move away'. However they also anticipated the need for 'strong action to be taken with some of the younger men'.²⁸ The WRE decided in the same year (1956) that a second patrol officer should be appointed and should be stationed at Giles Meteorological Station itself. This officer was to enforce the agreed policies of minimal contact. Indeed, an administrative order set up by the controller of the WRE in February 1957 states:

Great care must be taken by all persons associated with this Establishment in dealing with aboriginal reserves. Unwitting damage can be quite as disastrous as deliberate damage to the well-being of aborigines. Where persons skilled in the handling of natives are not on hand on any occasion, staff of this Establishment should exercise extreme caution in making any form of contact whatever with natives, especially in the remote areas where it may be expected primitive natives will be encountered. It must be remembered at all times that intended kindness may in many cases result in harm to the natives.²⁹

²⁷. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 265-273. Unfortunately, the report does not indicate the number of days that elapsed between the various trips cited in the following series of quotes.

²⁸. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 252.

²⁹. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 386.

The controller then reiterated the obligations and conditions to be met by staff entering the reserve.³⁰ These rules concern the prohibition of trade for 'ethnological specimens' or using Indigenous waterholes and disallow giving Aboriginal people 'White man's food or water'. Generally speaking, 'a person entering the Reserve [should be prevented] from clashing with the aborigines, shall not encourage or permit the aborigines to congregate near any camp and shall accept the responsibility for ensuring that none of the party is intimate with female aborigines'.³¹

The same controller, however, had obviously had a rather different view on the policies to be adopted towards Indigenous peoples only some months earlier. In May 1956, he asked for a meeting with the patrol officer in order to discuss 'details of assistance we might give in assimilating aborigines and of training them to work on stations or in other useful and appropriate occupations'.³² Moreover, in 1959, the patrol officer stationed at Giles Meteorological Station suggested that 'the Reserves be reoriented and maintained to give protection to Aboriginal people while they are trained in the pastoral activity', and that 'the unemployed on the fringes of the Reserves be encouraged back onto the Reserves for training and employment'.³³

The dichotomy between assimilation and segregation, and the ambivalent policy resulting from this situation, is also apparent in the encouragement given by the government and the WRE for Aboriginal people to hunt dingoes, resulting in scalps being traded for a variety of goods, despite the fact that, at the same time, handouts of food to locals were prohibited in order to minimise contact.

Personnel experienced internal questioning and doubts regarding the coherence of the WRE's adopted policy. It was claimed that the government had decided to 'keep the Aboriginal people segregated' and that there 'would be no roads in the reserves'. At the same time, it was also recognised that it was 'impossible to keep tribal Aboriginals segregated for ever'.³⁴ A restricted note written by a patrol officer to the superintendent at Woomera states that this policy of segregation had obviously been amended, however not through what he considered to be an appropriate policy of assimilation. It is worth quoting this note at length as it illustrates the contradictions the officers tried to deal with in the field, as well as the 'automatic' or mechanical relation believed to tie 'de-tribalisation' to contact:

The Government had a choice of two alternatives: -

- (a) to keep the tribal Aboriginals segregated
- (b) to make contacts - thereby automatically ensuring their de-tribalisation - and train them to fit into our civilization and be useful and self-respecting citizens.

The Government decided on the first alternative and issued a statement which, inter alia, included promises that:

³⁰. Similar conditions were prepared by the Aborigines Protection Board in June 1955 with respect to granting Southwestern Mining Ltd. and the Mines Department access to the Reserves (National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 145-146).

³¹. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 386.

³². National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folio 248.

³³. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/007: folios 98-101. See also folios 102-106 & 159-168.

³⁴. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 202-203.

- (a) there would be no roads in the reserves
- (b) contacts would be made only by 'fully qualified native patrol officers'.

In my opinion the wrong decision was made since it is obviously impossible to keep tribal Aboriginals segregated for ever ...

I understand that the policy has been changed though oddly enough I, as Dept. of Supply Native Patrol Officer, was not informed ... The new policy appears to be a third and disastrous alternative whereby contacts are made by completely unqualified persons and no provision is made to train the Aboriginals to fit into the twentieth century. The result is certain to be a degeneration from self-respecting tribal communities to pathetic and useless parasites.³⁵

The various reports, notes and letters quoted so far show that the guidelines regarding Indigenous affairs at Giles Meteorological Station and the surrounding areas were contradictory, reflecting the inability of field officers to deal either with the policies, or with Indigenous people in the Rawlinson Ranges. These officers certainly found themselves in a difficult situation, obeying segregationist guidelines but simultaneously implementing assimilationist ideals. The latter seems to have been an inevitable consequence of the rhetoric discussed above, and this legitimated the WRE's interests and actions in the Rawlinson Ranges once Aboriginal people could be considered 'de-tribalised', that is, as soon as contact was made.

On the one hand, there clearly was a segregationist attitude towards Aboriginal people that was explained as a means to preserve as long as possible the traditional state of social structure and individual behaviour. On the other hand, the traditional status of Indigenous groups in the Gibson Desert, and the Western Desert in general, was seen as an obstacle to the development of the military and scientific infrastructure. The closure of Ooldea mission and removal of its inhabitants to Yalata, further south, was another example of the WRE's endeavour to free the area for its military and scientific experiments. Brady explains the complex situation that reigned at the mission and writes:

[T]he establishment was forced to close down suddenly (as a result of internal politics within UAM [United Aborigines Mission]) in June 1952, and 'their people' were handed over to a rival group, the Lutherans.³⁶

However, a letter written by a Native Patrol Officer to the Superintendent at Woomera in November 1950 already testified that WRE had planned to close - or at least provoke the closure of - the mission:

I would like to repeat my recommendation that the Mission be moved and add that the Ooldea Area be made a prohibited area for aborigines, except for those legitimately travelling on the train.³⁷

Only one month following the closure of the mission, the Group Captain testifies to WRE's satisfaction with the situation:

Now that the natives have been moved from Ooldea to the coast, there appears to be little chance of many of them being found in the range area in future. It is

³⁵. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/005: folios 202-203.

³⁶. Brady 1999: 3.

³⁷. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folio 20; see also the patrol report of July 1950 (National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folios 8-12).

highly probable that range activities can be extended for about 500 miles along the north side of the Transcontinental Railway line without any effect whatever on the aborigines, and this highly satisfactory state of affairs is likely to continue and improve in future.³⁸

The passage from the segregationist and protectionist attitude to an assimilationist and negationist³⁹ policy was undertaken in conceptual terms. Contact with western goods was the trigger for recognising the first signs of a fading society, a 'de-tribalised' society whose alienation from traditional lands would not be seen as problematic.⁴⁰

That Native Patrol Officers at Giles Meteorological Station did alter their behaviour from one of segregation to one giving way to assimilation is illustrated by the recollections of a Ngaatjatjarra man, who was a young adolescent during the Giles period described so far:

They [Native Patrol Officers] did not want people to sit around Giles, and they would drive them away, sometimes to Warupuyu [Sladen Waters], sometimes to Kutjuntari [Gill Pinnacle to the east]. The station people [Giles staff] had these big German hunting dogs to chase people away. And, you know, T.'s father, they say he got poisoned meat from them. He sat down to cook it and never got up; and sometimes, the station people, they would shoot with guns to frighten people when they came to get food ...

One day there were two big trucks at Giles, those open ones. I don't know; may be it was that old fellow, may be the middle-aged one [the two Native Patrol Officers]. They were good fellows, not like station people [Giles staff] or mission people [Warburton]. He said: we'll take you to the mission; you got to go to school, and all these other things. And everybody went into the trucks. You know, all the family was at the mission, so we did go ...

I didn't like mission-time [Warburton]; the schoolteacher was too hard, got no heart; and when Docker got a bore, and then an airstrip and a shop [ration-depot], we came back and sat down there.⁴¹

Whether the patrol officers' decision to transport people to Warburton was a genuine effort in the direction of assimilation remains uncertain. What is obvious, however, is that it suited the ambition of the WRE to segregate Aboriginal people from the vicinity of Giles Meteorological Station.

Socio-demographic consequences of removal and migration

The grading of tracks for the establishment of Giles Meteorological Station in the Rawlinson Ranges was doubtless a major precipitating factor in the exodus of Aboriginal

³⁸. National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folio 44.

³⁹. The word 'negationist' is used here to reflect Hasluck's opinions quoted earlier, where he negates the existence of an Indigenous society.

⁴⁰. Another argument advanced for 'de-tribalisation', albeit in a document written before the establishment of Giles MS, is that the 'laws of the tribe are enforced by superstition and imposing of penalties not tolerated by our laws. They break down on contact with whites because: (1) it is seen that white people suffer no magical harm when they unwittingly offend against the law; (2) they can claim police protection from normal results of crime against the tribe' (National Archives of Australia (ACT) A6456/3-R136/004: folios 15-19).

⁴¹. Recorded by the author in April 2002. The original quote contains Ngaatjatjarra-words, which I have translated.

families to missions and stations. Despite the earlier guidelines framed by superintendents and other persons in charge at the WRE, officers in the field transported Indigenous peoples towards bigger centres, such as Warburton Mission or Papunya, away from the Rawlinson Ranges. Patrol officers claimed that these transportations (or removals) were voluntary, and undertaken in response to requests from the Aboriginal people concerned. While this may indeed have been the case, it is nevertheless useful to consider these requests in the context of a changing socio-demographic landscape. This second part of the paper discusses this social context and its evolution, and demonstrates how, in accordance with the Indigenous kinship structure, removal and migration had a reinforcing effect on movements towards settlements. Once migration and exodus had reached a certain level it became difficult for the remaining families to maintain the usual level of social life, forcing them to follow their predecessors in order to maintain the social networks that criss-crossed the Western Desert. As the quote above explains, Indigenous people knew that many other Aboriginal people had reached these missions and stations, and that it was necessary to follow them in order to keep social interaction at a satisfactory level.

These extensive and long distance social networks and their maintenance are not only post-colonial phenomena resulting from improved means of communication and transportation between members of 'modern' communities. Their ancient existence and importance have been illustrated by archaeologists who found 'exotic' material that had travelled throughout the desert, having been traded or exchanged from group to group.⁴² These extensive networks are also illustrated by more recent anthropological work, which shows that intermarriages between distinct and distant families, as well as mechanisms of betrothal, were – and are – one of the vehicles for large scale and pan-regional solidarities.⁴³

Various reasons have been advanced to explain why Aboriginal people of the Western Desert abandoned their nomadic way of life and moved towards settlements. For example, Glass, a linguist who had been working in the Warburton mission, blamed the drought in the early 1960s and the attraction of Western goods.⁴⁴ Others attributed it to the establishment of the WRE, and Long attributes such moves to a combination of curiosity and the need to keep in touch with kin and family.⁴⁵ I concur with this last interpretation, but I would add that the need to keep in touch with family and kin was more a matter of social imperative than individual choice.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly describe the Rawlinson Ranges people. Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people are one of the more than 40 culturally cognate dialectal groups that constitute the Western Desert cultural block, covering more than 600000 km² and stretching from about Yalata in the southeast to Jigalong in the north-

42. Gould 1980: 141ff; see also Veth 2000. The existence and importance of these social networks are also illustrated by the rapid diffusion of the section system – a type of social category system well represented in Australia – throughout the Western Desert from the end of the 19th century at least (a detailed study of this diffusion is in preparation, but see McConvell 1985 and 1996 for some general aspects on the diffusion of language and social organisation in Western and Central Australia).

43. Dousset 1999b.

44. Glass 1993.

45. Long 1989a; see also Meggitt 1986 [1962]: 336 and Reynolds 1982.

west.⁴⁶ The dialectal group cannot be considered a corporate and land-owning entity. However, the regional sub-groups⁴⁷ that constitute these dialectal groups can be localised, even if territorial confines are fluid by definition and responsibilities over specific sites are usually shared among people belonging to, or living with, separate sub-groups. The Ngaatjatjarra were composed by five such sub-groups that, as far as my investigations have revealed, did not have Indigenous names, but which I will identify here by naming central sites in their usual range of foraging. Along the southern edge of the Rawlinson Ranges is the Purli Karil group (literally 'rich hill'). These families would usually forage along the southern edge of the Rawlinson Ranges, as far as Kulail (in the vicinity of Docker River) to the east, and Patjarra (Clutterbuck Hills) to the west. Northeast of the Ranges is the Tjukurla-Kulail group, and northwest the Patjarra-group. The eastern (Tjukurla-Kulail) group would also forage along the northern edge of the Ranges, where the Kurruyultu-group is located, but would occasionally travel along the southern edge of the Ranges as far as Patjarra. The western (Patjarra) group, would travel along a series of waterholes to the north and northeast, but occasionally also along the northern edge of the Ranges in the area of the Kurruyultu group. Further north, in the sandhills country, the Kurlkurlta group travelled as far north as Kiwirrkurra, but also along the waterhole line used by the Patjarra group to the west and southwest. All these groups were not isolated, but frequently intermarried and jointly fulfilled ritual obligations, including with neighbouring groups of distinct dialects, especially to the north and west.

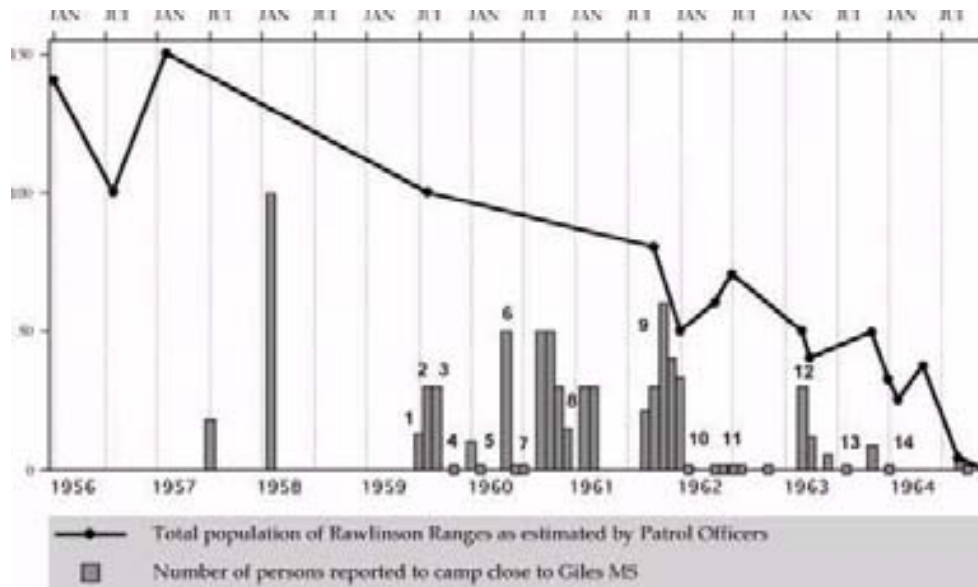
While members of all of these groups, but more specifically of the Purli Karil and the Tjukurla-Kulail groups, occasionally travelled eastwards, for example to Ernabella- especially after Giles Meteorological Station had been established - Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people's movements were usually limited in the south to about level with today's location of Mitika (see Figure 1). As far as I can establish, movements to the Warburton Ranges or southwards into the area of Mt Davies were rare, even though some persons seem to have been married to people from further south. However, this pattern only significantly increased with the establishment of Docker River station in later years.

Why did migration have an exponential effect on migration itself? A first step to interpretation is to estimate the demographic figures of the Rawlinson Ranges area during the establishment of Giles Meteorological Station and its first years of activity. While it is possible to establish the approximate composition for each of the subgroups mentioned above through the collection of genealogies and life histories, it is not possible to determine who was where at what time. Figure 2 illustrates the demographic structure at Giles Meteorological Station and in the Rawlinson Ranges. The information provided is largely based on reports submitted to the WRE by Native Patrol Officers. While these numbers seem in many cases to be rough estimates, they nevertheless indicate the scale of demographic change in the area accurately enough. In addition,

⁴⁶. Berndt 1959. See Tonkinson 1991: II, map 1 which shows the approximate extent of the Western Desert cultural bloc.

⁴⁷. I prefer the notion of 'sub-group' rather than 'local group', as the latter is associated with (usually patrilineal) land-holding units constituted by principles of descent, a notion that is not applicable in the Western Desert.

Figure 2: Population figures in the Rawlinson Ranges and at Giles Meteorological Station from 1956 to 1965 (estimates from archival material^a)



Some notes and extracts from patrol reports

- 1 A family of 13 is removed from Giles MS because they are considered to be living 'too close'
 - 2 Staff of Giles MS complain that 'Natives steal', officer investigates
 - 3 Drought; people are 'tolerated around Giles'
 - 4 Families disperse to the east
 - 5 'Natives moved towards Ernabella'
 - 6 People move back to Giles MS for 'red ochre ceremony'
 - 7 Dispersal to the east for hunting, then move towards Areyonga
 - 8 Patrol officer removes families from Giles MS and transports them eastwards
 - 9 A large number of people are sick
 - 10 A large number of people supposedly moving to Warburton, the remaining ones are dispersed by the patrol officer south and northwards
 - 11 Dispersal after rain
 - 12 People move back to Giles MS and receive water
 - 13 Dispersal after rain
 - 14 Patrol officer transports 37 people to Papunya, the remaining ones to Warburton
- a. National Archives of Australia (ACT) 993-286/63: folios 61-71. National Archives of Australia (NAA) (ACT) 1733-77/62: folios 2-3, 24-25, 123-125. NAA (ACT) A6456/3-R136/006: folios 64-67, 120-121. NAA (ACT) A6456/3-R136/007: folios 57-59, 95-96, 109-114, 129-131, 144-146, 183-184, 186-187, 204-209. NAA (ACT) A6456/3-R136/008: folios 5-8, 11-12, 32-34, 49-52, 59-60, 61-64, 71-73, 82-83, 88-91, 95, 117, 172-174, 203-204. NAA (SA) D250/3, 56/1245: PT1, PT6, PT7, PT8. South Australian State Records GRS 1278/1 R 22.004 R JAN 1962: folio 116. AIATSIS Library reference pMs 1034: J.P.M. Long, *Visit to the Petermann Ranges, September 1961. General Report and recommendations/ Daily Journal of visit to the Petermann Ranges September 1961*. Commissioner of Native Welfare 1957.

estimates of the population density in other areas of the Western Desert, as well as figures resulting from genealogical work I have carried out among families of the Rawlinson Ranges and the area north of these, will be compared with the figures reproduced in the patrol reports. The decline of population density in the years following the establishment of Giles Meteorological Station will be contextualised within the kinship system in order to illustrate its effects on marriage practice, which, jointly with ceremonial activity, can be considered one of the most important socialising mechanisms of Western Desert culture.

Figure 2 reflects the officers' periodic efforts to disperse the population around Giles Meteorological Station (as mentioned above) and their estimates of the total population of the Rawlinson Ranges. It is notable that this population decreased from 150 to zero during a period of approximately nine years. In this respect it is important to note that Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people have never completely left their homelands, but went away on visits to Warburton, Laverton, Wiluna, Mt Margaret and some even as far as Perth. By 1967 many had already returned to the Docker River area, just east of the Rawlinson Ranges, where the Welfare Department had sunk a bore,⁴⁸ and soon after they established outstations, and later communities, in the vicinity of culturally important locations.

A similar decline in the population density can be shown to have taken place in the entire Ngaatjatjarra-speaking area. This area can be vaguely defined as a square between Docker River, the Clutterbuck Hills close to Lake Christopher, somewhat south of Jupiter Well and south of Kintore, covering a surface of about 100000 km². The pre-contact population for this area can be estimated to have been around 500 people. This figure is an approximation based on the genealogies I have collected among Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people, and has been tested against figures from other sources.

Meggitt estimated a density of one person for every 35 km² for the Warlpiri people in Central Australia, resulting in 1103 people for the 100000 km² considered here.⁴⁹ Long, a patrol officer of the Welfare Branch, suggested that the density was less in the Western Desert, at about one person per 200 km², that is, about 500 people per 100000 km².⁵⁰ Tindale wrote that the density in arid regions was about one person for every 260 km², that is, 385 people for the area considered here.⁵¹ The Berndts calculate that the entire Western Desert bloc had a surface of about 670000 km², of which the population at the end of the 1960s was about 3200 people, that is, 478 people for every 100000 km².⁵² However they also claimed that the population was as high as 18000 people before contact, a figure that would indicate, for the area considered here, a highly improbable population of 2700 people. Cane calculates, for a small area in the Great Sandy Desert with a population of 15 people, a density of 1 person for every 170 km², that is about 588 people for 100000 km².⁵³ For the Rawlinson Ranges Yengoyan⁵⁴

48. Long 1989b: 32.

49. Meggitt [1962] 1986: 32.

50. Long 1971.

51. Tindale 1974: 7.

52. Berndt & Berndt [1964] 1992: 26; Berndt 1959: 86.

53. Cane 1990: 151.

54. Yengoyan 1968: 189.

quotes a number, given by a Native Patrol Officer, of 172 people for every 1 4000 km², that is about 1229 people for 100000 km². However, the Rawlinsons is a 'rich country' (cf. *Purli Karil*, 'the rich hill') and would sustain a greater number of people than the sandhill country to the north of it.

The various reports produced by patrol officers help to contextualise these estimates. In 1966 they (wrongly) claimed that the central Western Desert was probably uninhabited, and in a report to the Acting Director of Social Welfare the same year, Long indicates the following figures for the northern part of the area: 35 people arrived in Papunya in 1956, two families in 1957/58 and 127 people between 1962 and 1966, that is a total of at least 168 people (some, however, were from the Lake Mackay area, further north).⁵⁵ On the other hand, it is difficult to estimate the population for the southern part because of the movements in and out of the Warburton mission. However, a calculation from the various reports submitted allows an estimate of 225 people for this southern part. The total would therefore be about 400 people. With the exception of Meggitt's figures for the Warlpiri - who live in richer country than the Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people - and the estimate of the Berndts regarding pre-contact demographic figures, all other figures fit well with the numbers I have proposed, which also reflect the data of the genealogies collected.

Combining these figures with archival reports and the genealogical data, Figure 3 shows three demographic estimates for the area: one for 1956, one for 1968, and, as a test case, another in 1966. The decline of the number of nomadic hunter-gatherers in the area is striking and rapid.⁵⁶

Such rapid decline in population had an important effect on the feasibility of social and cultural imperatives such as ceremonies and marital alliances being met. It was also a cause of distress for the people staying in the desert, who became more and more isolated. I will consider the question of marriage as an illustration of how problematic social life can become in these conditions. To begin with, it is necessary to outline the kinship system of Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people.

The Ngaatjatjarra, like other dialectal groups of the Western Desert, have a highly complex kinship system, which Elkin termed 'the Aluridja type'.⁵⁷ This is not the place to detail this system, and some general explanations will suffice for present purposes.⁵⁸ The Ngaatjatjarra kinship system is of the bifurcate-merging type: kin categories are distinguished in accordance with generation and sex in such a way that father's sister's children and mother's brother's children are cross-cousins, while father's brother's children and mother's sister's children are parallel cousins or, indeed, siblings. These

^{55.} Long 1966.

^{56.} It is important to understand that the families that returned to the area from the late 1960s onwards could not be considered as being sedentarised, but were using the depot station at Docker River as a source for certain services and goods, accompanied by stays of variable duration. (A similar account and subsequent developments of White-Aboriginal relations for Jigalong, on the western edge of the desert, can be found in Tonkinson 1988 and 1991: 160ff). In this sense, the expression 'decline of nomadic hunter-gatherer' used here should be interpreted in its most narrow sense.

^{57.} Elkin 1938-40.

^{58.} The Ngaatjatjarra variant of the Aluridja kinship system type is developed in Dousset 1999a, 1999b, 1999c and 2002.

principles are extrapolated to all known persons so that co-generationals can always be distinguished as being either classificatory (distant, genealogically speaking) siblings, or classificatory cross-cousins. This principle of potentially endless extension of kin-categories was termed by Radcliffe-Brown⁵⁹ the 'non-limitation of range'. Moreover, only classificatory cross-cousins - cousins that are genealogically removed - are potential partners or in-laws. Overall, more than 97% of marriages are congruent with these principles. Ngaatjatjarra-speaking people also have social categories, a four-section system that lies like a sociocentric grid over the various kin types. Sections -

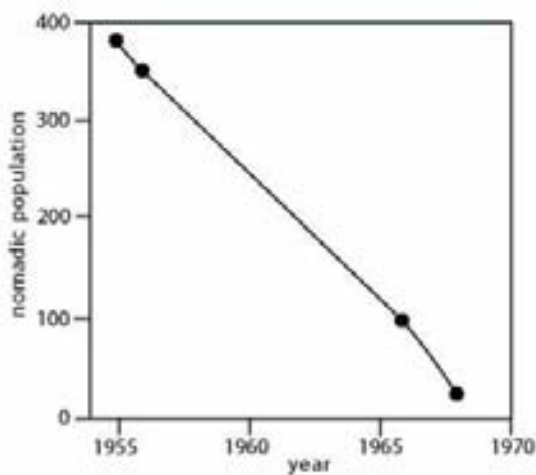


Figure 3: Estimation of the nomadic population decrease between 1955 and 1968 in and to the north of the Rawlinson Ranges for an area of about 100000 km². (The starting population figure is a minimum estimate; the resulting population in 1968 is reasonably accurate)

named Karimarra (also Milangka), Tjarurru, Panaka (also Yiparrka), and Purungu - are ascribed at birth in accordance with the child's father's and mother's sections, and function as general labelling devices. Hence, a Karimarra woman marries a Purungu man and has Tjarurru children. These children marry Panaka people, whose women have Purungu offspring and the men have Karimarra children. Because this system is, generally speaking, compatible with the structure of kin categories, and because it is easier to understand, I will develop the points addressed here using the section system.

Every person belongs to one of the four sections. These sections are in a specific relationship to each other as described above; they summarise kinship categories, and reflect some of the marriage rules and patterns recognised by society. Indeed, every section has a corresponding mother section, a corresponding father section, and a corresponding spouse section. A person's spouse is in a predefined section in accordance to that person's own section. If not, the marriage is considered irregular or 'wrong', and couples attempting such unions can expect sanctions. However, because a person's inter-marrying section also contains other, non-marriageable, categories of kin, sections are not marriage classes and so cannot be interpreted as defining accepted marriage-types in an encompassing manner. Nonetheless, they can be used to test a marriage's regularity in accordance with the normative kinship system. It is important to understand that the spouses defined in a four section system already include what, among other systems such as the eight subsection system, would represent second and

⁵⁹. Radcliffe-Brown 1930-31: 44.

third choice spouses (distant first cross-cousins or other members of the same alternate generational level). The example quoted below therefore reproduces the maximum number of spouses that are tolerated, and not solely the ideal-typical prescribed spouses.

As a model case we will nominate an even distribution of the population among these four sections, so each section contains 25% percent of the total population. We further accept that gender is evenly distributed. The consequence is that any person of a certain section and gender has just 12.5% of the population among which to find a tolerated spouse. Moreover, 45.2% of the population is already married (my calculation from a sample taken from a Ngaatjatjarra-speaking community), which leaves only 5.7% of the population as potential spouses. Additionally, it is necessary to eliminate from this reduced number those persons who are regarded as genealogically or spatially 'too close' and therefore prohibited as spouses. Spatially close persons are those who were born on the same site, have lived together for extended periods, or claim affiliations to identical sites in the landscape. From this diminished figure, it can be readily seen that the probability of finding a partner of the correct spouse relationship in accordance with the kinship system largely depends on the total population, so a decreasing demographic density rapidly reduces the chances of finding a socially acceptable partner. To illustrate this situation I have compared two hypothetical populations from each of which 50 people leave for a mission or other settlement (Table 1).

Table 1: Effect on marriage possibilities of a sample migration from the desert

	Case 1	Case 2
Starting population	500	100
Number of potential spouses	29	6
Number of people leaving the desert	50	50
Remaining population	450	50
Number of potential spouses	26	3

Table 1 shows that the more people leave the desert, the more difficult it becomes for the remaining people to find a regular marriage partner and, therefore, the more likely it is that they will eventually have to move out of the desert as well, in order to maintain the structural integrity of their kinship system and marriage rules. Moreover, among those who tried to maintain their nomadic way of life and minimised contacts with settlements, irregular or unusual marriages were the consequence. A family that was still nomadic in 1967 comprised a man and his five wives, for example, even though polygyny was not a dominant feature and polygynous men usually had no more than two wives. This man complained that his 15 year old daughter had no prospects for marriage.⁶⁰ In 1971, patrol reports noted the marriage of a man who was not initiated, something that would not have been tolerated under normal circumstances, and still is not today.⁶¹ Another example from 1967 mentions an adolescent living with

⁶⁰. Interview by the author in 1996.

⁶¹. Public Records of Western Australia AN 1/8, ACC 1419, 31-10, 1968-70.

a woman of over 50 years old.⁶² There is also the example of a man who had been brought to Papunya but left the settlement several times, walking back with his family to his homeland south of Lake Hopkins. Eventually, however, extreme isolation and lack of prospects for his children finally forced him to return to the settlement.⁶³

This need to move to missions and settlements was expressed by Indigenous people themselves. It was necessary to break their isolation in order to find appropriate partners for their adolescents, as well as in-laws for themselves, because these are the means through which families establish links with one another, share and exchange goods and knowledge, create social networks through relatedness, and, indeed, *form* a society. Long reports similar ideas for the Pintupi, the northern neighbours of the Ngaatjatjarra, and their migration to Haasts Bluff:

In later years, especially when emigration had reduced the range of social contacts for those who remained, it was the young people who were most immediately and drastically affected, although all would have felt concern about such problems as the lack of suitable marriage partners and the lack of a proper range of people to attend initiation rituals.⁶⁴

Long goes on to explain that the new arrivals from the desert at Haasts Bluff led 'to something of a cultural revival'.⁶⁵ From 1963 onwards, WRE patrol officers openly recognised these problems, acknowledged the accelerating effect that migration from the desert was having on migration itself, and conceded that officials and policies were active agents in these changes.⁶⁶

Conclusion

This paper has explored the historical and cultural contexts surrounding the establishment of the Giles Meteorological Station in the Rawlinson Ranges by the Weapons Research Establishment in 1955–1956, and the conditions that existed in the area in the first years of the station's operation. I have shown from official records that the field officers' stance towards Aboriginal people was divided between assimilation and its contrary, segregation. Indigenous people were a disturbing element for the Weapons Research Establishment's activity, because their number had been underestimated and because Giles Meteorological Station was established on an Aboriginal reserve. While the Establishment knew and understood a great deal about Indigenous society and its strong and vital relationship to land, the negation of this society, as inherent in Hasluck's writings, was a conceptual artifice, preparing the field for assimilationist attitudes that would sanction, and even promote, the departure of Indigenous people from the Rawlinson Ranges.

I have discussed the impact of migration to missions and other settlements upon Indigenous families and its effect on their ability to sustain their traditional social activities in the second part of this paper. A simple demographic exercise, using the formal

⁶² National Archives of Australia 1733 78/67: 56/1245.

⁶³ Life history collected by the author in 1996.

⁶⁴ Long 1989a: 23.

⁶⁵ Long 1989a: 23.

⁶⁶ See Gould 1969: 167; National Archives of Australia A6456/3–R136/008: folio 15; South Australian State Records R22.010: folios 2585–2589; Public Records of WA AN 1/8; ACC 1419; 31–10; 1961–4: 1–2.

kinship structure and population figure estimates, showed that the rapid decline of demographic density in and around the Rawlinson Ranges following the establishment of Giles and its accompanying infrastructure, such as laying down of tracks, was a predictable outcome. However, I have stressed that Aboriginal people did not passively succumb to these effects, but actively engaged in these migrations in order to maintain a necessary level of social interaction for the preservation of pre-existing networks that were mainly based on regional inter-marriages and ritual cooperation.

Aboriginal families temporarily left or were removed from the Rawlinson Ranges and travelled throughout the western and southern parts of Western Australia. Soon after, they returned to their homelands and established themselves once again where, close to a century earlier, an old man grasped Ernest Giles' chin and explained to the explorer that, to the west, there were more people like him.

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Dislocating the self: anthropological field work in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1934–1936

Geoffrey Gray

The anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry, author of the now classic study, *Aboriginal woman: sacred and profane*, was a young and inexperienced researcher when she first went to the field between March and November 1934 and again between May 1935 and June 1936. The Australian National Research Council (ANRC) funded her research, acting on the advice of its Committee for Anthropology, chaired by AP Elkin.¹ Elkin, Professor of Anthropology in the only teaching department of anthropology in an Australian university, had control not only over where research was conducted but also over who could conduct that research. Despite the discipline's youth – the chair had been founded in 1925 – a structure and unwritten rules governing the behaviour of anthropologists in the field had already been developed, as well as a methodological approach to field work, driven by an interest in 'traditional' Aboriginal social and cultural practices and institutions rather than the contemporary everyday circumstances of Aboriginal people.² WEH Stanner, a contemporary of Phyllis Kaberry, described the dilemma:

I had been taught to turn my back on the speculative reconstruction of the origins and development of primitive institutions, and to have an interest only in their living actuality ... [but] an interest in 'living actuality' scarcely extended to the actual life-conditions of the aborigines.³

The containment of criticism of government policy and practice went hand-in-hand with this limited research focus. Kaberry's research was framed within this discourse – and its consequent limitations – and a concomitant realisation that they were a pre-requisite to a future career in anthropology in Australia.

To that scientific task I stuck

In Australia, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, the then new discipline of social anthropology was recognised as one that could help colonial (native)

¹ The ANRC was responsible for the distribution of funds from the American philanthropic Rockefeller Foundation (see Mulvaney 1988).

² Mulvaney 1988; Gray 1994.

³ Stanner 1969: 14.

administrations – especially in the Australian territory of Papua, and after 1921 New Guinea – in their control, management and development of Indigenous peoples, as well as assisting Indigenous people both in Papua and New Guinea and on the Australian mainland ‘in the task of adjusting themselves to the great changes which have come upon them’.⁴ Anthropology, one of its main proponents argued, was ‘engaged in work which is of fundamental importance for all who, like the missionaries, seek to influence the aborigines and to modify their culture. It endeavours to supply detailed knowledge of native social life in all its ramifications, and so to be in the position to offer suggestions [to government and mission] with regard to changes which are considered desirable’.⁵ Anthropology could also be a guardian overseeing ‘the weaknesses, anomalies and injustices in law and administration regarding [Indigenous peoples]’.⁶

The discipline developed a discourse of understanding native peoples and helping colonial administrations that emphasised the practical usefulness of anthropology; this was fundamental in convincing both Australian State and Commonwealth governments to support the anthropological enterprise, culminating in the establishment in 1925 of a Chair of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, funded by a combination of Commonwealth and State funding and subsidised pound for pound by the American Rockefeller Foundation.⁷ It was the only teaching department of anthropology in an Australian university until a department was established at the University of Western Australia in 1956. In effect, what anthropology promised those governing indigenous peoples was a new beginning, and this was attractive to governments under increasing international, national and local scrutiny over the conditions and treatment of indigenous people within their jurisdictions.⁸ Governments, seeing their own interests served, therefore facilitated access to the subjects of anthropology. In this way, anthropology depended upon the goodwill of the government and thus was implicated in the colonial enterprise.⁹

To maintain access to the field, anthropologists were generally obliged to restrict criticism of the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people to within the funding body or the sponsoring university, which was then expected to pass it on to the government department concerned with Aboriginal affairs. For instance, Raymond Firth, acting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, advised that ‘any cruelty to natives observed during research should not be reported until after the research is concluded’. Firth was concerned that future anthropological research could be blocked by a public row or departmental indignation over charges of ill treatment of Aboriginal people.¹⁰ On the occasions that anthropologists had publicly questioned or been critical

4. Elkin 1938: v.

5. Elkin 1935a: 34.

6. Elkin to Fitzpatrick, 28 November 1946, copy in Thomson Collection, Museum of Victoria.

7. Mulvaney 1998; Gray 1997(a): 27–29.

8. See for example Reynolds 1998; Paisley 2000.

9. The argument that anthropology was the ‘handmaiden’ of colonialism, or that anthropology needed colonial governments has been much debated. See for example Asad (ed) 1973; Thomas, N 1994; Kuper 1996.

10. Firth, ‘Notes on Anthropological Field Work near Broome’, 3 May 1932. Elkin Papers (EP), University of Sydney, 161/4/1/85; also Firth to Gray, 20 February 1993, in author’s possession.

of specific government actions, or they had reported instances of abuse to government agents – usually the Chief Protector of Aborigines in the State or Territory – the government had taken offence, research had become threatened and good relations had had to be re-established.¹¹ On other occasions, the government could be direct, for example SD Porteus, professor of Clinical Psychology in the University of Hawaii, who conducted psychological investigation among Aboriginal people in northwest Western Australia in the late 1920s, guaranteed the Western Australian government that any material they had filmed ‘would [not] in any way reflect upon the handling of the natives’ in that State.¹²

To be sure, the anthropological field site was intensely racialised and political,¹³ yet much ethnographic writing in Australia for the greater part of the first half of the twentieth century presented a political and social reality in which it appeared that Aboriginal people were insulated from the changes brought about by settler, pastoralist, mission and government. Julie Marcus, for example, observed that ‘the failure to explore the racist nature of the Australian state in most Aboriginal ethnography derives from that state power’ and a reluctance to bring this power and violence into view.¹⁴ Although anthropologists did not write about such social and political realities (and the power of the state) in their ethnographies, which were ‘scientific’ works, they were aware of these changes and their effects on Aboriginal people’s cultural lives and their social and political organisation. For example, in 1928 the Melbourne anthropologist Donald Thomson told AR Radcliffe-Brown, foundation Professor of Anthropology in the University of Sydney, that his research in Cape York, northern Queensland, had ‘been rather broken and disappointing, on account of the extreme disorganisation of the natives’.¹⁵ Ursula McConnel, who had worked in the same area a year earlier, made similar observations.¹⁶ Elkin, an early researcher with the Australian National Research Council, commented that when he was in the northwest of Western Australia in 1928,

the Ungarinyin (Ngarinjin) and Wunambal were hardly effected at all by contact, though the Worora were being influenced by the Presbyterian Mission on their coastal border, but not drastically. I was actually living in a ‘stone age’, that is, with a food gathering and hunting people who relied solely on stone, bone and wood for tools and weapons. However, because of depopulation and lack of progress, both the Mission to the Worora and a Government Station in Ungarinyin (Ngarinjin) territory were closed after the War and the people moved south and finally settled at Mowanjum in 1952. Thus in the space of little more than twenty years, the local and economic organization of these tribes and their tie to the land had been utterly changed, and a new tri-tribal group began to develop in an artificial situation. Although the social organization and culture generally of

¹¹. Gray 1994: 217–245; Marcus 1987: 185–197; Donald Thomson also encountered opposition when he provided evidence of abuse on Arukun Mission, North Queensland (Thomson 1983: 5–6).

¹². Porteus to Neville, 20 November, 1928. Western Australia State Archives (WASA), ACC 993 133/28.

¹³. Cowlishaw 1997: 95; Gledhill 2000: *passim*.

¹⁴. Marcus 1992: 100.

¹⁵. Donald Thomson to AR Radcliffe-Brown, 14 August 1928, National Library of Australia (NLA), Australian National Research Council (ANRC) Papers, MS 482, 832.

¹⁶. Various in NLA, MS 482, 834.

the three tribes was basically the same, the new situation will be reflected in kinship and marriage rules and social behaviour.¹⁷

Anthropologists during the period under discussion were mostly reluctant to publicly discuss the forms of interaction on colonial frontier society or if they did it was in fora outside the discipline's boundaries, even though 'culture contact' was an interest of anthropologists in the 1930s. Many tended to express the contemporary social reality elsewhere: in private correspondence, diaries, field notes and confidential reports to funding institutions and mission bodies.¹⁸ Most, if not all, anthropologists were neither overtly critical of the colonial regime in which they worked in their published works, nor were they driven by humanitarian ideals, although they saw themselves as enlightened members of the community when it came to race relations because of their special relations with indigenous peoples. Some present day anthropologists express the view that anthropologists were distrusted (if not disliked) by governments then as now, as if there is a natural antipathy between administrative interests and academic (anthropological) interests.¹⁹

When I asked Raymond Firth, in 1993, 'why Australian [anthropologists] were so supine when it came to public criticism of the treatment, conditions and welfare of Australian Aborigines' particularly in the 1930s, ²⁰ he chided me as being a 'bit anachronistic' for decrying the 'supineness' of anthropologists sixty years ago. 'It is easy to say this now, but I wonder what you would have done ... if you had been responsible for a research programme'.²¹ I replied that it appeared from his comments that the research programme of describing Aboriginal life 'before it was too late', took precedence over the well-being of Aboriginal people. Some years later Firth was keen to press the argument that while anthropologists of 'the early period [1920s and 1930s] could have advocated the Aboriginal cause more openly ... [they were] not silent witnesses of injustice ... [Nevertheless], they saw their job as anthropology, the study of human social behaviour in all its variety, as the pursuit and presentation of knowledge, not propaganda'.²²

Anthropologists believed that the scientific method would provide both an explanation and the solution to the future of Aboriginal and other indigenous peoples. The

17. Elkin 1965: 13-14.

18. For example Elkin's report to the Australian Board of Missions (ABM) on Ernest Gribble and his running of the Forrest River Mission. Elkin was so sensitive about this that he was anxious, some 15 years after he made the report, that it be made public. Australian Board of Missions (ABM) Papers, Mitchell Library. See also reports and correspondence of Elkin, Piddington, Warner, Stanner, Hart, McConnel. ANL, ANRC Papers, MS 482.

19. The idea of a natural antipathy between anthropologists and government is strongly held and expressed in contemporary discourses about anthropology. Several referees, primarily anthropologists, of both this paper and others of mine have expressed similar views, such as: 'anthropologists were considered [then, as now] dangerous radicals who supported the interests of primitive people against those of the civilising nation builders and missionaries'. Anonymous referee, January 2002. Marcus, in contrast argues that the 'state exercises power to produce both Aboriginal and anthropological selves and the texts, through which each shall be known' (Marcus 1992: 100); see also Asad and others 1973; McKnight 1990: 55ff but cf 43; Gray 1997b: 128-130; 1998: 37-61; Gledhill 2000.

20. Gray 1994: 217.

21. Firth to Gray, February 1993.

British Under-secretary of State for Colonies was quoted approvingly by the Australian anthropologist H Ian Hogbin in a series of articles – ‘Anthropology and the native problem’ – published in 1932 for the *Sydney Morning Herald*: he too saw the value of anthropology:

If we are to succeed in our duties towards native peoples, as rulers, as missionaries, or as instruments for the advance of civilisation, we must study them objectively and base our policy on real understanding acquired not only from personal contact, but from scientific study of their mental and moral characteristics, of native law and custom, of native history, language and traditions. Native methods of agriculture, native arts and crafts, should be examined scientifically before any attempt is made to supersede what we find existing. Herein lies the importance of anthropological work, an importance which is difficult to over-estimate.²³

It could be argued that anthropologists were trying to establish an understanding of a society that was otherwise considered to be irrational, backward and primitive. This was in accordance with their perception of themselves as scientists using a method which was implicitly based on a neutral, value-free science, above and beyond politics, which could provide benefit to government, mission, settler and Aboriginal people alike. Radcliffe-Brown, in an address to the 1926 Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, stated that ‘it is the day for scientific service, and science must ... take a hand in the regeneration of [native] people. ... [I]ndeed ... had scientifically trained minds taken a hand in all past endeavours to ameliorate these people the [present] result might have been very different’.²⁴ Lloyd Warner, a student of Radcliffe-Brown, observed that ‘he [Radcliffe-Brown] treats the human native as the chemist does his substance ... if he admits human sympathies and interests, he impairs the validity of his work. He then becomes a human being. The ideal anthropologist must not judge “this is good, or this is bad”, he must only record and deduce’.²⁵ Elkin, writing of his field work in northwest Western Australia in 1927, emphasised that he had ‘no humanitarian motive ... My task was to record and analyse aboriginal social organisation,

22. Firth 1998: 42; see also Cocks 1994. When working for Vestey's in the mid-1940s, Ronald and Catherine Berndt were confronted by such a choice when the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal workers at Birrindudu, a Vestey's outstation, had been brought to the attention of the Administrator of the Northern Territory, CLA Abbott, by an officer the Native Affairs Branch, Bill Harney; should they support Harney or stay silent? ‘It seems to us that if we are either to evade, or to keep silent regarding, such accusations as we understand Harney to have made, then at the termination of our work with Vestey's there will be no avenues open to us in the field of anthropology’. Ronald Berndt to Elkin, 10 July 1945. EP: 246/613. They remained silent and the welfare of Aboriginal people were subordinated to their future career.

23. Hogbin 1932. Both Elkin's and Hogbin's view of the value of anthropology share some of the ideals of the civilising enterprise of the Christian missions. Cf Burridge, 1973. Elkin, undoubtedly influenced by his training as an Anglican priest, developed close relationships with both mission groups and humanitarian movements. Canon Needham, national secretary of the Association for the Protection of Native Races (APNR), laid down the general principle that there needed to be a close co-operation between government and mission. Elkin, as an Anglican priest, member of the Anglican Australian Board of Missions from the early 1930s and as president of the APNR from 1933, was no doubt influenced by Needham's principle. See ‘Conference of Secretaries and Missionary Leaders, Sydney 25–28 April 1944’, report by Theile, in Correspondence FO Theile and JJ Stolz, UELCA Archives, Adelaide.

24. Quoted Jacobs 1990: 130.

25. Warner et al 1928: 68

ritual and mythology and to that [scientific] task I stuck'.²⁶ Stanner, writing about his early work in Port Keats and Daly River, said that the idea that he, as an anthropologist, should study Indigenous people's "'living actuality'" scarcely extended to the actual life conditions of the aborigines ... We thought it our task to salvage pieces of information and from them try to work out the traditional social forms'.²⁷

The incongruity was that anthropologists believed that the lifeways (culture) of Australian Aboriginal people were under threat of extinction and therefore needed immediate capture and description. In these circumstances it could be understood that opportunism and political expediency appeared to direct the disciplinary practices of anthropology and research rather than the individual anthropologist. As I suggested above, anthropologists were reluctant to describe the social and political realities of a colonised people, but instead described what might be thought of as a 'double' reconstruction - the 'pristine' (before contact) culture and the 'ideal frontier' (at the point of contact). In this way anthropologists provided an 'alternative now', which looked backwards to the past rather than looking at the present, and thus anthropology theorised itself into an 'idealised space'.²⁸ The future was an imagined place of cultural disintegration. This brings into focus the seemingly paradoxical purpose of pre-1950 Australian anthropology: its desire to study the 'primitive' - the 'full-blood' Aboriginal person - and at the same time act as an agent of modernity by assisting governments and missions in their formulations of policy and the training of their personnel. (Of course how to do it, and the role of the anthropologist in this, was problematic). Missions, on the other hand, desired to show the progress from 'primitive' to 'Christian citizen', which meant the modification and sometimes the erasure of Indigenous cultural and social life, and the degree to which it was altered reflected the scope of their efforts and success. Matters to do with the effects of dispossession in the Australian context, especially in the southeast and southwest - 'settled' Australia - were reflected in a lack of interest for an ethnography based on 'acculturated' or 'part-Aborigines'.²⁹

As a consequence of all of this, there are a number of factors which affected the way anthropologists worked and the way anthropological knowledge was produced. Firstly, anthropologists were inevitably compromised by needing to obtain permission and approval of the government to conduct research, which applied to research in all States and Commonwealth Territories. The compromise - finding a balance between the competing interests - was both political, in order to get funding and access to the field, and intellectual, in so far as the object of interest - the 'pristine primitive' or the 'savage savage' - could be studied.³⁰ The utilitarian nature of the research was highlighted, hence anthropologists stated they would study 'culture contact', 'culture change', in effect 'applied anthropology', which would be of benefit to governments in

26. Elkin 1962: 212.

27. Stanner 1969: 14.

28. Some anthropologists even marked their being 'first' by erasing previous anthropological researchers accounts and in the case of Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land, naming and mapping the area. See especially Thomson 1948-49.

29. Cowlshaw 1987: 221-237; Marcus 1992; Gray 2000: 176-200; Elkin 1965: 22-23.

30. H Ian Hogbin commented to Elkin: 'I mourn a little bit because I am not studying the real savage savage' Hogbin to Elkin, 15 August 1933, Hogbin Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

the management and advancement of Aboriginal people in remote Australia. These arguments were then reiterated by the officials of funding bodies such as the Australian National Research Council (ANRC) in its correspondence with government seeking permission for their researchers.³¹ Most anthropologists in the pre-war period were not, however, interested in the analysis of the relations between Aboriginal people and settlers on the frontier or in settlements: their interest was rather in the analysis of 'traditional' culture.

Secondly, as a result of attempting to find a balance between the demands of governments, the requirements of their science, and their membership of the colonial society, anthropologists were often placed in ambiguous situations. Anthropologists possessed knowledge about Indigenous people that inadvertently produced a moral dimension to their work which was seemingly denied to others who worked in native affairs. 'Anthropologists', Reo Fortune told his readers, 'make public information of facts which native reticence would else have kept private and unknown'.³² These facts once made public, had the potential to be used against the interests of Indigenous peoples, especially if they revealed that they were engaging in actions – such as sorcery – detrimental to the maintenance of the good order of government.³³ What Fortune saw as a potential dilemma, Hogbin saw as an opportunity for anthropology. He offered a view that anthropologists, 'men trained in scientific method', were like 'consulting physicians to colonial Governments' who by 'their knowledge of native customs and institutions ... are in a position to advise [governments] on native problems, as, for instance, the decline in aboriginal population or native unrest'.³⁴ It is unclear if Hogbin was implying that there was an illness in the colonial order at the time which anthropology could help diagnose and heal; he did however suggest to Elkin that 'we [anthropologists] have [native] problems to find solutions for'.³⁵

Thirdly, governments needed assurance that anthropologists would not cause problems by bringing matters to do with the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal people to public attention. This had the potential to restrict anthropologists' public criticism of the colonial enterprise and its effects on Aboriginal people, such as Piddington's experience demonstrated, despite anthropologists sometimes declaring themselves as being on the side of Indigenous people and representing Aboriginal interests to government and its agents. For example, Ronald Berndt stated that the anthropologists were on the 'side of the underdog' by 'representing the virtually inarticulate Aborigines';³⁶ Fortune declared that the anthropologist was a 'friend of the native' and did not betray them to the administration.³⁷ This does not imply that

³¹. See various applications in ANL, MS 482.

³². McLean 1992: 51.

³³. Gray 1999: 56–76; 1998: 37–60.

³⁴. Hogbin 1932.

³⁵. Hogbin to Elkin, 15 August 1933, HP. (By the mid-1940s, Hogbin argued that colonised peoples in Melanesia, including the Australian-controlled League of Nations Mandate of New Guinea and the Australian Territory of Papua, should have self-government and be responsible for their own affairs.)

³⁶. R Berndt, 1983–84: 161–175.

³⁷. Fortune to JHP Murray, 22 April 1928. National Archives of Australia (NAA) A518/1, A806/1/5.

anthropologists should have been advocates or engaged in adversarial acts but it does raise a moral dilemma: how did anthropologists understand relations on the colonial frontier, their place in these relations, and their responsibilities toward the well being of their 'informants'?³⁸

The foregoing discussion raises a number of questions about the role and influence of anthropologists, individually and collectively: were anthropologists, even if they wanted to, able to modify Australian Commonwealth and State government policy and practice? Was anthropology and its scholarly production influenced by the demands of governments, or were the processes of knowledge production and governance intertwined so that they only occasionally came into open conflict? Ethnographic texts tended to elide the social and political reality of their subjects – Aboriginal people – and revealed anthropology's interest in the depiction of an idealised, integrated 'traditional' Indigenous culture. Did this silence about the interaction between settlers, government agents, missionaries and Indigenous people mean that anthropologists were not able to express their conscious political position, or was it because they had little interest in such matters? Was recording and elucidating the cultural domain of Aboriginal people part of a progressive and effective politics at a time when Aboriginal people were considered to be on the way to extinction, both culturally and biologically?³⁹ What was the result of maintaining neutrality about the relations between settlers and Aboriginal people? In the light of Piddington's experience, could 'silence' about such matters be seen as a career choice? On the other hand, because of their special relationship with Aboriginal people, did anthropologists feel a special responsibility toward them? These questions cannot be answered outside the historical domain and much work still needs to be done to understand the politics of anthropology and the ethnographic heritage of the pre-war period. This paper makes some inroads into these complex issues but I do not claim to be able to answer them all. In this paper I concentrate on the multiplex relationships that existed between the anthropologist and the gatekeepers (governments, missionaries, pastoralists and settlers) to the field and these relationships in the field; the relationship between government agents and missionaries, between government and the funding body, and between missionaries and the academic supervisor, who usually represented the funding body; the relationship between local missionaries and their supervisory missionary, between anthropologists and their academic supervisors and the funding body. All these relationships existed, to a lesser or greater degree, in the case of Phyllis Kaberry.⁴⁰

The Kimberley as a site for anthropological research

The Kimberley in northwest Western Australia was opened to sheep and cattle in the 1880s. It was a particularly brutal and violent period: 'hundreds of [Aboriginal] men, women and children were shot'.⁴¹ In 1926, the year before the anthropologist AP Elkin

^{38.} Gray 2001b: 27–39.

^{39.} James 1973.

^{40.} I have discussed some of these matters in greater detail than here in my papers on Kaberry's predecessor, Ralph Piddington, who worked at La Grange, south of Broome, and surrounding areas in northwest Western Australia, from March to September 1930 and June to December 1931. See Gray 1994; 1997(b): 123–142.

^{41.} Quoted in Biskup 1973: 20.

first did fieldwork in the northwest, a massacre occurred at Onmalneri, near Forrest River Mission, which was recalled by some of Phyllis Kaberry's informants in 1934.⁴² In many instances Aboriginal people had been forcibly removed from their country and resettled on mission settlements or government reserves. Several government reserves such as Moola Bulla Native Settlement and Violet Valley Feeding Depot had been created in response to pastoralists' concerns about the killing of cattle on their stations by Aboriginal people. Moola Bulla, for instance, had a twofold aim: its primary purpose was to act as a buffer between the 'semi-nomadic aborigines' and the marginal pastoral regions; its subsidiary purpose was to 'civilise' the local Aboriginal people. The Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, AO Neville, argued that stations such as Moola Bulla enabled the gradual transition towards civilisation.⁴³

The area between the Kimberley, Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and Cape York in Northern Queensland was chosen by Radcliffe-Brown as the location for intensive anthropological research. Despite the dramatic effects of European settlement which had led to the dispossession, displacement, resettlement and in some places the almost total disappearance of Aboriginal people, with consequent cultural and social destruction, in this area Radcliffe-Brown considered Aboriginal people to be as 'yet comparatively uninfluenced by contact with civilisation'. In his opinion there were sufficient old people, particularly old men – over fifty-five years of age – who remembered life before contact with Europeans and it was therefore one of the last places where Aboriginal people could be described and so captured for scientific posterity. ⁴⁴ Arnhem Land was likewise an area where 'true' Aborigines – to use an expression used by the anthropologist Marie Reay⁴⁵ – untouched by settlement, could be found. For example Donald Thomson, ignoring Lloyd Warner's earlier work in Arnhem Land, described Arnhem Land as 'the last great tract of country in Australia to be explored. Up to 1935 almost no information was available about the area and its native inhabitants. No anthropological survey had been made and the natives had never been brought under control'.⁴⁶

Radcliffe-Brown sent Elkin, an ordained Anglican priest who had recently completed his Doctor of Philosophy with the diffusionists WJ Perry and Elliot Smith at the University of London, to the Kimberley in 1927–28 under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council to conduct a survey of those still extant tribes, recover what information he could about their social organisation, and make suggestions for future research.⁴⁷ AO Neville was supportive of the anthropological enterprise, believing that science could assist government in the management and development of Aboriginal

⁴². Biskup 1973: 84–89; Kaberry Notebooks, 1/2, MS 739, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra.

⁴³. Biskup 1973: 96–116; Neville to Kaberry, 6 December 1935. Western Australia State Archives (WASA), ACC 993, 178/38. Unless otherwise indicated all correspondence cited is from this file.

⁴⁴. The call 'before it is too late' has weaved its way through Australian anthropology for the better part of the twentieth century.

⁴⁵. Personal communication, February 1993.

⁴⁶. Thomson 1948–49; Warner 1937. Warner appears to have stayed near Millingimbi and not ventured far into the 'bush'.

⁴⁷. Gray 1997a: 27–46.

people, as well as adding to the 'knowledge of mankind': he was 'interested in anything that will lead to a further knowledge of the blacks'⁴⁸ At the same time, Radcliffe-Brown placed Lloyd Warner in Arnhem Land and Ursula McConnel in Cape York. A decade later Elkin, by then Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, took the view that there were 'still almost untouched fields' and in 'some instances the native order of life is not yet fundamentally altered' in the eastern parts of northwest Western Australia, particularly the eastern Kimberley. There was an opportunity for research to be done 'not so much of the study of the changes which are in progress, as of the original culture, of which some, and occasionally much, remains'.⁴⁹

Anthropological researchers were dependent on the various agents of government; Neville, for example, advised Elkin and other researchers where Aboriginal people lived and could be found in Western Australia. He warned Elkin that the east Kimberley was 'an entirely unsettled district, except for the two Mission Stations and the Government Station at Avon Valley, and you are bound to meet with many difficulties'. He therefore advised Elkin to 'have another white man with you, besides one or two trustworthy natives'. Neville explained that Aboriginal people 'have unfortunately had a rather bad experience in their contact with whites, and are said to be treacherous. They are certainly very shy, and may be difficult to get in touch with'.⁵⁰ Elkin, once in the east Kimberley, wrote to Radcliffe-Brown that Neville 'doesn't realise the change that has been wrought in the twenty years ... The missionaries can walk anywhere in safety'.⁵¹ When Elkin discussed future field sites with Radcliffe-Brown he advised that, although Drysdale River was an 'important centre for intense study' he did not think it and Forrest River were 'suitable centre[s] ... even for work amongst the women', nor was it 'advisable to send a woman for research into the Kimberlies (sic)'.⁵²

In 1930 Ralph Piddington, who had recently completed his MA in anthropology and psychology at the University of Sydney, began fieldwork at La Grange Government Feeding Station, near Broome. He was eager to establish a sound working relationship with Neville, and, like Elkin and Porteus, was appreciative of the support Neville and his departmental officers provided him and his wife⁵³ in the field. He visited Neville on the way to La Grange, and on his return six months later, when he discussed matters concerning the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal people at La Grange and the behaviour of the white employers of Aboriginal labour. Neville, grateful for Piddington's tact and discretion, promised to inquire into his allegations. Piddington returned to La Grange in August 1931 to find nothing had changed.⁵⁴ It was after his return to Sydney in January 1932 that Piddington was interviewed by the Sydney weekly, *The World*, and cited specific instances of gross racial discrimination and

48. Kaberry to Neville, 4 May 1935.

49. Elkin 1939: 18.

50. Neville to Elkin, 27 August 1927, WASA, ACC 993, 365/27.

51. Elkin to Radcliffe-Brown, 4 February 1928. EP, 158/4/1/39.

52. Elkin to Radcliffe-Brown, 31 May 1928; Elkin to Radcliffe-Brown, 4 February 1928. EP, 158/4/1/39. Cf Marcus 2001.

53. Piddington and Piddington 1932: 342. This was Piddington's first wife. His second wife, an actress, was also called Marjorie.

54. Piddington and Piddington 1932: 343. During the second visit he was accompanied by the American linguist Gerhardt Laves.

urged, along with other humanitarians, a government inquiry into the conditions of Aboriginal people across northern Australia. This created a furore in Western Australia. Neville in particular took particular umbrage at such allegations. Piddington's were not the only allegations of mistreatment of Aboriginal people in Western Australia: these concerns led to a Royal Commission 'Appointed To Investigate, Report, And Advise Upon Matters In Relation To The Condition And Treatment Of Aborigines'.⁵⁵ Anthropological research in Western Australia was suspended as a result of Piddington's action.⁵⁶

Not the type to cause any complications

In March 1934 Neville received a letter from Elkin stating that he had a 'girl student who has done a brilliant course and has just received her MA degree, who should now do some field work'. Kaberry was the first woman to graduate with an MA (first class honours) in Anthropology. Her forthcoming trip to the Kimberley was breathlessly reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'Miss Kaberry is only 23 years of age, is slight of build and less than 5ft 3ins in height but possessed of great courage and is supremely confident of success in her undertaking. She will work entirely by herself'.⁵⁷

Elkin assured Neville that Kaberry 'is not the type to cause any complications [and] will not cause you any problems such as were unfortunately caused by a previous worker'. He wanted her 'to make a special study of aboriginal women, inquiring into their beliefs, their view of aboriginal religion and the like, and also study the development of the female from birth to death'. A young female anthropologist investigating Aboriginal women was the least threatening enterprise possible to enable the return of anthropological research in Western Australia. And was making peace and building bridges not a woman's special domain? Elkin, who had a good sense of Neville, thus extolled the virtues of his 'girl student' and the chosen research focus, and opened up the problem of a suitable field site as a space for Neville to assert himself. He had considered Mount Margaret, Munja or Forrest River. 'The first may not be very satisfactory ... [Nevertheless] this is the place where I should like a good woman worker to go'.⁵⁸ Neville expressed some reservation,⁵⁹ so that Elkin dismissed the idea of Kaberry working at Mount Margaret; instead he decided to send her to Forrest River, controlled by the Australian Board of Missions (having obtained permission from the Archbishop of Perth), and, if she had time, to Moola Bulla.⁶⁰ Kaberry spent almost six months at Forrest River, leaving at the end of November 1934 because both Elkin and Neville considered the wet season to be too harsh and debilitating for a white woman. Her work at Forrest River and in the east Kimberley was uneventful: Elkin reported that she was getting on well⁶¹ and 'Mr [Michael] Durack has given her a welcome to his [cattle] sta-

55. For a brief summary and discussion on the Moseley Royal Commission (1934) see Biskup 1973: 167-169; Jacobs 1990: 213-217, 220-240; Paisley 2000: 118-131.

56. See Paisley 2000: 118-131; Gray 1994: 217-245; 1997(b): 113-147.

57. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 1935. The University of Sydney did not offer a PhD in Anthropology until 1955; the first Australian university to offer a PhD in Anthropology was the Australian National University, established in 1946 as a research university.

58. Elkin to Neville, 22 March 1934, WASA, ACC 653, 120/25.

59. Neville to Elkin, 9 April 1934, WASA, ACC 653, 120/25.

60. Elkin to Neville, 18 April 1934, WASA, ACC 653, 120/25.

tions'.⁶² Elkin was pleased with the results of her work: she made a 'real contribution through her study of the women and their point of view'.⁶³

Kaberry returned to Western Australia in March 1935. Elkin was still keen for her to work on a mission, settlement or station, along the edge of the settlement north of Laverton, where she could 'observe women in their ordinary native setting'.⁶⁴ Elkin remarked that

women who go out to do anthropological work amongst the Aborigines should work consistently through the native women, not to find out what a male worker can better ascertain through the men, but to get a real understanding of childhood, motherhood, the family, and the women's place in society. [Aboriginal] men spend most of their lives either directly in ritual and ceremony or else under its influence - their life is like an iceberg, nine tenths hidden, secret ... But the women's life, and that part of the men's life which is passed with the women and children, reveal the essential and natural humanity of the aborigines.⁶⁵

Elkin had written to Rod Schenk, the mission superintendent of Mount Margaret, asking 'whether he would risk another anthropologist, after me!' Elkin had briefly visited Mount Margaret at the end of 1930; Mary Bennett, a mission worker, 'outspoken controversialist', and 'also one of the outstanding [A]boriginal educators in Australia', had publicly accused Elkin of having deliberately encouraged 'sorcery practices' during his stay.⁶⁶ Kaberry's attempt to stay at Mount Margaret brought forth Schenk's animosity toward anthropologists,⁶⁷ especially Elkin. Schenk had not forgiven what he understood to be Elkin's deception of not declaring that 'he was an Anglican clergyman while he was here': Elkin had denied his Christian duty. He accused Elkin not only of 'leading our [Christian] men into ceremonies quite contrary to the Scriptures he was supposed to teach' but encouraging 'a revival amongst the natives of most degrading practices ... unseemly ceremonies that even the middle-aged men had not seen'.⁶⁸ Elkin's intervention had awoken ceremonial life which had lain dormant with some of the older men. Schenk, who strove for a speedy breakdown of practically all Aboriginal customs and traditions, had had years of hard work destroyed.⁶⁹

Schenk was not in the mood for anthropologists, whom he considered wanted only to 'keep these souls just for museum specimens'.⁷⁰ He told Elkin he 'has so many white people, visitors and missionaries on his station that he doesn't want any more'.⁷¹

61. She wrote to him regularly, see various EP, 247/631.

62. Elkin to Neville, 2 October 1934. The Durack family, led by Patrick Durack, settled in the Kimberley in the 1880s and established a string of cattle stations. (See Durack 1959).

63. Elkin to Neville, 7 March 1935.

64. Elkin to Neville, 7 March 1935.

65. Elkin 1935b: 197.

66. Elkin to Radcliffe-Brown 6 December 1930; Elkin to Firth 1 August 1931, EP, 158/4/1/40; Biskup 1973: 132. Mary Bennett had been an active and persistent critic of the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal people, especially in Western Australia, and had taken her campaign to Britain. See Paisley 2000.

67. cf Duckham, 2000: 48-51.

68. Schenk to Elkin, 4 April 1934, EP, 167/4/2/52.

69. Schenk to Elkin, 9 May 1935, EP, 167/4/2/52.

70. Schenk to Neville, WASA, 219/1932.

71. Elkin to Neville, 23 April 1935.

Neville then suggested the Warburton Ranges about 250 miles east of Laverton, 'if Miss Kaberry is game to undertake travelling per camel, etc it would certainly be a useful experience for her amongst the people out there if it is these people she wishes to meet. ... There are many natives around this district, and attempts to reach them would, I feel, be justified from an ethnological point of view'.⁷²

Schenk emphasised to Elkin and Neville that Kaberry was not welcome on the Mount Margaret mission compound, and he was sure that the missionaries at Mount Warburton would not co-operate either. ⁷³ Nevertheless, Kaberry decided to visit Mount Margaret on the way to Laverton, 'seeing if [she] could reason with Schenk'. ⁷⁴ She wrote to Elkin soon after telling him that there was 'no hope for Mt Margaret ... Schenk was abominably rude. He lost his temper before I could say anything, abused you, [Frederick] Wood Jones and all anthropologists, and said if I camped he'd do anything to get me shifted. The man was malevolent. Mrs [Mary] Bennett was there and had seen that paragraph about me in the *West Australian*. She was antagonistic'.⁷⁵ The missionaries at Warburton however were willing for Kaberry to go there but 'illness prevented them returning immediately [to the mission station] ... [hence] the Warburtons must be considered a doubtful part of my programme ... At the moment I've reached a deadlock and haven't recovered from my encounter with Schenk. However I expect something of value will emerge eventually'.⁷⁶

At Laverton Kaberry found the mission intrusive: she noted that 'every Black (more or less) ... asked me whether I prayed'.⁷⁷ In a letter to Mary Durack, with whom she had struck up a friendship the previous year, she described the situation:

Laverton was pretty ghastly from an anthropologist's point of view. The natives were very sophisticated, were camped about 2½ miles away and spoke scarcely any English, any who had been contaminated by the mission atmosphere took upon themselves to inquire after your spiritual welfare and continually demand whether I prayed or not!!! After two weeks I reached a zero of depression.⁷⁸

Kaberry decided that she had to leave Laverton. 'Last year', she informed FI Bray, Neville's deputy, 'Mr Neville was rather keen for me to visit Moola Bulla, but I was unable to do so. If the Wiluna district is not good, I may consider a visit to the Kimberleys'.⁷⁹ Bray replied that he hoped Kaberry was not 'unduly worried by the cold atmosphere' at Laverton and advised her 'to communicate with [Neville] promptly and I am sure your difficulties will disappear just as quickly'.⁸⁰ Kaberry also wrote to Elkin explaining her position and her intention to move to Moola Bulla. ⁸¹ But she couldn't

⁷². Neville to Elkin, 20 March 1935.

⁷³. Elkin to Neville, 23 April 1935; Neville to Wade (United Aborigines' Mission), 10 May 1935; Biskup 1973: 132–134.

⁷⁴. Kaberry to Neville, 4 May 1935; Kaberry to Neville, 6 May 1935. For a contemporary discussion about the danger of anthropologists see Cowlshaw 1999.

⁷⁵. Kaberry to Elkin, 9 May 1935, EP, 247/ 631.

⁷⁶. Kaberry to Elkin, 9 May 1935, EP, 247/ 631.

⁷⁷. Notebook (1/6), 21 May 1935, AIATSIS, MS 739.

⁷⁸. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 16 June 1935, Durack Papers (DP), Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia.

⁷⁹. Kaberry to Bray, 12 May 1935.

⁸⁰. Bray to Kaberry, 15 May 1935.

⁸¹. Kaberry to Elkin, 12 May 1935, EP, 247/631

wait for a reply, and the following day wired Bray: 'May I stay Moola Bulla sail 29th urgent wire Laverton'.⁸² Kaberry nevertheless considered that the difficulties she encountered at Laverton were 'largely my own fault'.⁸³

Then they come and undo our work

Soon after Kaberry's departure Schenk wrote to Neville that Elkin had indicated he would use Neville as a way to 'force a way for Miss Kaberry' to work at Mount Margaret.⁸⁴ Kaberry, too, had implied that 'you [Neville] gave her authority to dwell here. I had reason to think that she did not keep to the truth. Perhaps I know more about Miss Kaberry than you do and I know that she is not a person to stay here and no one else with the same corrupt views on Christian teaching. We would not try to force our way on to them' [as contrasted with anthropologists].⁸⁵ He was irate that Kaberry should come

here pretending to be a Christian and yet like Dr Elkin want to encourage the natives into all kinds of superstitious rites in opposition to our teaching is lack of principle and is undoing the work of those who befriend the natives. ... The natives say that at Laverton most of Miss Kaberry's dealings are with the old men, yet she says she came to study the women's side. Moreover, they tell us that Miss Kaberry tells the natives that she is a 'Happy Land' [Christian] lady, yet we know different.

Schenk accused her of trying to 'induce the natives to stage one of their devil devil corroborees for her'.⁸⁶ He reiterated the suggestion that Kaberry was not a fit person: 'We have confidential advice which we cannot reveal'.⁸⁷

The suggestion of improper behaviour by Kaberry was cause for concern. While on the surface Neville supported Kaberry's work – he described her as a 'nice quiet girl' – he was always conscious of the possibility that she could cause trouble with missionaries and other settlers. Bray's reply was immediate: 'I shall be pleased if you will kindly write to me more fully of your knowledge of Miss Kaberry. Miss Kaberry is going to Moola Bulla to study the natives of the North, and if you can furnish me with facts in support of your general statement respecting her, it may appear that she is not a satisfactory person to be entrusted with the credentials of this Department'.⁸⁸ Schenk did not reply.

Neville, on returning from a trip to the northwest, read through the correspondence and followed up on the matters of concern. He thought it regrettable that Schenk felt impelled to adopt the attitude he had, thereby putting the Anthropological Committee of the Australian National Research Council and the department to additional

⁸². Kaberry stayed at Laverton from 10–27 May 1935. Dates from field note books (AIATSIS, MS 739); Kaberry to Bray, 16 May 1935; Bray to Neville, 16 May 1935; Neville to Bray, 18 May 1935; Bray to Kaberry, 20 May 1935; Kaberry to Bray, 21 May 1935.

⁸³. Kaberry to Elkin, 16 May 1935, EP, 247/ 631; Kaberry to Elkin, 22 March 1936, EP, 8/1/1/85.

⁸⁴. For a short description of the philosophy underlying Mt Margaret Mission see Biskup 1973: 131–133.

⁸⁵. Schenk to Neville, 18 May 1935.

⁸⁶. Schenk to Neville, 29 July 1935.

⁸⁷. Schenk to Bray, 10 June 1935.

⁸⁸. Bray to Schenk, 24 May 1935; Bray to Schenk, 21 June 1935.

expense and Miss Kaberry to considerable inconvenience and additional travelling. He desired in future 'no contretemps of this nature'. Rather, he told Schenk, the 'Department, the Missionary and the Anthropologist should work hand in hand. There is certainly a place for each, and your adoption of this view would I feel sure tend towards avoidance of any untoward incidents of the nature referred to and be highly appreciated by all those workers in the cause, who whether they think on the same lines as you or not, are out to preserve the interests of the aborigines generally.' He assured Schenk that no worker under the auspices of ANRC was 'permitted to work in Western Australia without my full knowledge and sanction and I was satisfied of Miss Kaberry's bona fides before suggesting that you might be in a position to help her at Mount Margaret'. He concluded by warning Schenk that his appointment as a Protector of Aborigines was subject to revision and reminding him that as 'a Protector we look for the fullest possible co-operation with the Department'.⁸⁹

Schenk did not take kindly to the reprimand and set out an explication of his actions. Schenk was 'sorry to read ... that my contact with the natives as a missionary depended upon my appointment as a protector'.⁹⁰ He declared that anthropological work was 'wholly opposed to Scripture teaching' and he could provide 'many instances ... to prove this'. Anthropologists were not, in his view, agents of modernisation: rather it was the mission who turned people away from animism to the uplift of Christianity. The work of the mission 'turn[s] the natives to Christ without whom there will be no forgiveness. We want souls saved from hell'. Anthropologists pulled people back by attempting to get them to re-invigorate their past by performing ceremonies which were the antithesis of Christian teaching. Anthropologists undermined the work of the mission. 'They are not even satisfied with asking the natives things, they want to see them staged, they drag them back to hell'. After Elkin's visit, Schenk wrote, 'we were plunged into one of the greatest blood feuds in the district'. It was 'one of our most sorrowful periods of natives going back to *drinking blood* after Dr Elkin's visit' (Schenk's emphasis).⁹¹

Neville concluded that Kaberry had not behaved in a way detrimental to the ANRC nor criticised the WA administration of Aboriginal affairs. He told his Minister there was nothing more to be said 'as Miss Kaberry is elsewhere, and it is hard to reason with a man of Mr Schenk's type'.⁹² But Neville did not let the matter rest there. Margaret Morgan, Schenk's daughter, argues that the action over Kaberry led to an increasing tension and eventual rupture in relations between the two men. It was, she said, the beginning of the struggle and conflict between Schenk and Neville.⁹³ In her biography of Neville, Pat Jacobs declared that it 'caused a further rift in the relationship of Neville and Schenk'.⁹⁴ From the mid-1930s Neville made constant attempts to undermine the importance of the mission: 'instead of helping, rations were reduced, medicines were

⁸⁹. Neville to Schenk, 19 July 1935; Memo, 22 July 1935; Elkin to Neville, 23 April 1935.

⁹⁰. Schenk to Neville, 26 July 1935.

⁹¹. Schenk to Neville, 29 July 1935.

⁹². Neville to Minister, 5 August 1935. By April 1938 Peter Biskup states that 'relations between the department and the [United Aborigines Mission] had reached breaking point', Biskup 1973: 139.

⁹³. Morgan 1986: 197.

⁹⁴. Jacobs 1990: 249.

refused, obstacles were put in the way of Christian marriages, escort fees accorded to others were refused to missionaries, and no financial help of any kind came their way'.⁹⁵

I started work in earnest

Kaberry arrived at Moola Bulla on 11 June 1935, having regained her enthusiasm for work: she was happy to be back in the Kimberley. She intended to put in three months at Moola Bulla, then go north to Violet Valley and 'then do some camping ... The Blacks remain around the station till the "wet" season, when according to the head stockman here, they have their corroborees, and initiation ceremonies'; the 'Blacks are very friendly, and having overcome their preliminary shyness, have no hesitation in discussing their customs with me'.⁹⁶

In the report on her fieldwork she thanked Elkin for the 'loan of his unpublished notes [that] had provided an invaluable basis for [her] fieldwork at Forrest River'.⁹⁷ She corresponded with Elkin, remarking on matters which were of particular interest to him.⁹⁸ She pointed out differences between Elkin's observations and her own, especially on kinship, marriage rules and 'spirit conception'. Elkin was particularly interested in conception beliefs, 'magic men' and religious life. They shared informants: Kaberry referred not only to Whisky,⁹⁹ who 'would be most helpful as he speaks excellent English',¹⁰⁰ but to Aladoa, whom she met at Forrest River in 1934 and who was now at Moola Bulla: 'He should prove useful while I am here'.¹⁰¹ Her main women informants would most likely have been unknown to Elkin.

Kaberry conducted her field work by travelling from station to station and once there she was largely constrained by the geographical boundaries of the station. She frequently discussed, in her correspondence with Elkin (and to a lesser degree with Neville), her travel plans and movement, what she anticipated finding, or an event - ceremony or such like that was due to be performed - that encouraged her to move. There were considerations such as being 'handy to supplies', obtaining suitable transport, locating large groups of Aboriginal people for ceremonies - initiation, circumcision, sub-incision and such like, white people (pastoralists and missionaries) favourable to her enterprise, and the weather, especially during the 'wet' season. An unhelpful station manager or manager's wife could make work difficult.¹⁰²

⁹⁵. Morgan 1986: 128-263; Jacobs 1990: 224, 249, 260-261; WASA, ACC 953, 487/1937, various.

⁹⁶. Kaberry to Elkin, 22 June 1935, EP, 8/1/1/85; Kaberry to Mary Durack, 16 June 1935, Durack Papers, Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia.

⁹⁷. Kaberry 1935: 408.

⁹⁸. Kaberry to Elkin, 11 August 1935, EP, 8/1/1/85. Radcliffe-Brown conducted a voluminous correspondence with his fieldworkers in a manner similar to that between Elkin and his fieldworkers.

⁹⁹. Kaberry's reference to Whisky made Elkin 'anxious to return to the East Kimberley, for he was a very interesting blackfellow'. Elkin to Neville, 8 August 1935. .

¹⁰⁰. Kaberry's language skills are difficult to assess. The anthropologists Nancy Williams and Sandy Toussaint both argue for her language competency. Kaberry, in *Aboriginal Woman* 1939: 9, stated she 'had no time to master languages' although she provides clues in her correspondence that she could speak 'pidgin'.

¹⁰¹. Kaberry to Elkin, 22 June 1935, EP, 8/1/1/85; Elkin to Neville, 8 August 1935; see also Kaberry to Elkin, 22 September 1934, EP, 8/1/1/85.

When Kaberry did have the opportunity to move away from the compound she found a different environment:

One of the more intangible results ... was that I gained some insight into their daily life and saw them as human beings. The last remark needs some explanation. I don't mean that I had previously thought of them as children or as sub-human. But 'interviewing' for 5 hours every day at the mission, there is the danger of regarding them solely as repositories of anthropological information, particularly in the case of one, who like myself has never come into contact with Blacks, or any natives before. The method, though unavoidable, has its artificial aspect in that one hears about their life, but sees very little of it. So that while I did not fill notebooks, I do honestly think the 18 days were valuable ones; were worthwhile.¹⁰³

She told Mary Durack that:

so anthropological have I become that my surroundings no longer seem incongruous; in short I am as adaptable as the chameleon and as nomadic as the Black brethren. Nothing exciting has happened – I bathe in the rockhole with the leeches, collect small ticks, hunt cockroaches and spiders, and I drink water the colour of tea. Apart from that I pursue Blacks like a sleuth ... snaffle genealogies; gossip with the women – and am a picker up of unconsidered trifles (remarks) from which I deduce shattering theories and conclusions. At night I sit with the women and watch corroborees, but so far have not joined in the chanting. These Bks painted with red ochre and white paint seem to have become impregnated with the colour of their surroundings – to vitalise it.¹⁰⁴

Kaberry considered that:

[her] own make up is peculiarly suited to fieldwork. Fundamentally I am of course feminine, and I don't go round looking as though I had a spanner in my hip pocket. But I have the faculty of being able, as it were, to put my sex into neutral gear and conduct relations on that basis in the majority of instances. Perhaps it is a bit abnormal, but when I meet men its only occasionally I am aware of them physically. My first reaction (as a rule) is to them as individuals – persons – rather than as men, and the same applies to women. I think the same is true of my relations with natives: I react to them first as individuals; only secondarily as people of a different culture and environment. Anyway to come back to the point. Even if the attitude did not come naturally to me, it would be essential, since so often in the field I am the only European woman. I have it both ways: that is, I am treated as a woman but there are no emotional entanglements to upset myself and, more importantly, my work.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰². Kaberry to Elkin, 22 September 1934, EP, 8/1/1/85; Kaberry to Mary Durack, 3 November 1935; Kaberry to Durack, 16 June 1935, DP; Kaberry to Neville, 27 November 1935; McBeath to Neville, 26 November 1935; Kaberry to Elkin, 11 August 1935; Kaberry to Elkin 22 March 1936, EP: 8/1/1/85. Ursula McConnel in North Queensland commented that there were advantages away from the station: 'living in the vicinity of the missions means a good deal of expense ... men in the vicinity of the mission expect wage and rations and tobacco for daily information ... In the bush one does not have to give either rations or money just presents and tobacco'. McConnel to ANRC, 15 August 1934, ANL, MS 482, folder 834.

¹⁰³. Kaberry to Elkin, 22 September 1934, EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹⁰⁴. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 3 November 1935, DP. See Kaberry's poem, 'North Kimberley', in Toussaint 1999: 25–26.

Catherine Berndt, whose thesis Kaberry had examined, suggested that not only did Mary Durack and her sister Elizabeth, who were 'sympathetic to Aboriginal interests', provide personal support which gave Kaberry 'the emotional support she needed', but they also 'facilitated Kaberry's travels and contacts with Aboriginal people throughout the region, as well as with station owners and managers who were unenthusiastic or even hostile about research' although Kaberry makes no mention of such hostility.¹⁰⁶ This underestimates Kaberry's fierce independence, her determination and her ability to stand the isolation and demands of field work, and possibly overstates the importance of the role of the Durack sisters as gatekeepers – this was the role of their father¹⁰⁷ – although Kaberry's friendship with the Durack sisters continued until her death in 1977.

It has opened my eyes to the value of such a station

Kaberry commented on the effects of invasion and settlement on Aboriginal social and cultural life. She thought it most noticeable in matters to do with marriage, which she believed had led to a breakdown of male authority. She told Elkin of a young man who had married into the alternative subsection ('wrong way'), who was told he would not be able to see significant religious objects (*kroga* or *gunari*). '[T]his threat might have been carried out in the old days, but the boy while on a visit to the Margaret station, was shown the *kroga* by a tribal *umbana* in return for flour and tobacco'.¹⁰⁸

Other matters where the effects of settlement were noticeable were the 'extinction' of tribal groups or removal of people: '[t]wo Blacks have told me, independently, that formerly the Djaba tribe owned the Fitzroy Crossing country and that the Punaba were further back, and the Kunian all around Cox's. Apparently all but one or two of the Djaba are extinct and the language completely gone'.¹⁰⁹ Kaberry added that 'most of the Punaba Blacks deny that they ever had a section system, but admit that they are newcomers to the Crossing and originally belonged to the Leopold Ranges'.¹¹⁰ There are many other such examples in her field notes and correspondence.

On the other hand Kaberry appeared to take little other interest in the treatment and living conditions of Aboriginal people. There is barely a reference in her correspondence or field notes. While in the field, however, and most likely at Elkin's behest, she kept notes at the back of her notebooks about the living standards of Aboriginal people on the stations she visited. She declared for example that 'station Blacks [are] in a better condition physically than mission Blacks' and '[are] more sophisticated than Mission Blacks'.¹¹¹

Kaberry was impressed by Neville's 'policy of non-interference' and extolled its virtue in an article about Violet Valley for the *West Australian*.¹¹² She told Neville that 'it

¹⁰⁵. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 29 December 1945 (Cameroons), DP.

¹⁰⁶. Catherine Berndt 1988: 169.

¹⁰⁷. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 27 January 1939, DP.

¹⁰⁸. Kaberry to Elkin, 11 August 1935; also Kaberry to Elkin, 10 August 1935, EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹⁰⁹. Kaberry to Elkin, 6 February 1936, EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹¹⁰. Kaberry to Elkin, 20 February 1936, EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹¹¹. Field note books, AIATSIS, 6/1, MS 739. Elkin was interested in such matters and encouraged his workers to comment on the 'vigour' of Aboriginal people.

¹¹². *West Australian*, 9 December 1935.

[his policy] has opened my eyes to the value of such a station as Violet Valley. The Blacks regard it as a meeting place during the "wet" season, where they can perform their rites and ceremonies without molestation of any description'. They told her that they knew there would be plenty of food and tobacco, and the police and station owners would not molest their dogs. She told Neville that 'participation in these rites will serve as an antidote for the contempt with which some of the Station Blacks are beginning to regard their own race. The Blacks will have to change eventually, but if changes are to be beneficial they must be based on pride of race; and in the meantime these ceremonies are keeping the race consciousness alive'.¹¹³

She told Elkin that she was sure Neville 'will have no objection to my saying [in her newspaper article] exactly what I think, and if some of the objections made in passing are becoming hackneyed, at least I think that I have presented some of the advantages in a new light. It is the more important since conditions have altered at Violet Valley, and Mosely's [Royal Commissioner] report on it, would now convey, in some respects, a false impression of that station'.¹¹⁴ Neville was delighted with her article, reading it with 'much interest' and stating that he 'was pleased that [she] could regard the station so favourably'.¹¹⁵

Kaberry most likely exceeded even Elkin's requirements by writing such a flattering item for the newspaper. There is the possibility that she overstated, rather than misrepresented, the value of a station like Violet Valley. Her assessment can also be seen in a sense as due recompense for Neville's assistance. On the other hand, Kaberry was not adverse to a laudatory compliment. On being asked if she would accept a position as lecturer in the Anthropology department she wrote to Elkin: 'Needless to say I particularly wish to have my first experience of lecturing in your department under your guidance - I look on you as my friend and the prospect of further association with you in your work gives me great pleasure'.¹¹⁶ Elkin's support was recognised by Kaberry in somewhat extravagant terms: 'your confidence in me fires a new keenness for my work'.¹¹⁷ She was fiercely determined to achieve her goals, valued her independence, did not suffer dishonesty easily, and would use whatever means were needed to convince her gatekeepers and patrons of their importance.

Kaberry's support of Violet Valley and Neville's policy on that station does raise a query about her views about Aboriginal policy, the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal people, and the imagined future of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. For example she was aware that women were fearful to talk to her near the manager's house, where she conducted much of her fieldwork: they sought to take her away from the manager's compound so they could talk freely.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, she may have taken the view, as expressed by Elkin when he was in the field that he 'was not concerned with Aboriginal policies and problems of contact and clash'.¹¹⁹ But such a

¹¹³. Kaberry to Neville, 27 November 1935; Kaberry to Neville, 4 December 1935; Neville to Kaberry, 6 December 1935.

¹¹⁴. Kaberry to Elkin, 7 January 1936, EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹¹⁵. Neville to Kaberry, 7 January 1936.

¹¹⁶. Kaberry to Elkin 13 December 1939, EP, 247/631.

¹¹⁷. Kaberry to Elkin, 13 December 1939 and various, EP, 247/631.

¹¹⁸. Notebooks, AIATSIS, MS 739.

suggestion is undermined by her praise of Neville and by inference of the Western Australian administration of Aboriginal affairs, whose motto was described as 'uplift by force [and] absorption';¹²⁰ Pat Jacobs, Neville's biographer, argues convincingly that Neville was a supporter of biological absorption, that is, 'breed them [half-castes] white'¹²¹ although he held the view that 'the uncivilized natives have a code of their own which is in a way superior to ours but which seems to disintegrate as soon as they get in touch with civilization'.¹²² The problem of 'the half-caste' was a paramount problem for Neville and for the administration of native affairs in Western Australia.¹²³

Kaberry commented to Mary Durack, who had herself written several newspaper articles on the future of Aboriginal people, that she considered segregation 'impractical for the majority' of Aboriginal people, although there were 'parts of North Kimberley where they have not found gold, where it's no good for cattle, and where the natives have had little contact' with settlers. 'Probably the same applies to parts of Arnhem Land. They should have a medical patrol officer who speaks the language; perhaps some sort of agric. Station on the outskirts, where food can be grown in case of bad seasons, and perhaps bordering tribes given agricultural instruction. But that wd. only cover a few thousands'. For the rest she was

against segregation. Their old lands are gone; they've acquired tastes for flour and tobacco; but what openings are there? You are not going to get past the colour bar for a long time, so that clerical jobs, and that is, education in the three RS seems a waste of time at present. There are parts of West Kimberley, north of Derby, where you cd. go for agriculture, sandalwood, probably other things. And I'm all for agricultural training. Once they became economic producers in our own system it might convince people that they are not unintelligent: that they can have their place in the nation. The point is that the Govt. won't cede that the land cd. be made fertile. ... I don't see how the cattle stations can absorb them, nor pearling. At the moment it wd. be fatal to bring them south. Glad you took up the point about their "improvidence": I entirely agree with you there. I once referred to their increase sites as spiritual storehouses, and they are. By performing the ceremony they believe they insure for the future, and it's about all they can do till they have the agric. training'.¹²⁴

Neville 'liked Kaberry and had gone out of his way to assist her'. He not only anticipated but also looked forward to her visit when she returned to Perth from the field. So when he, 'heard that she passed through Perth but I did not see her ... after all that has been done for her' he was disappointed.¹²⁵ Kaberry indicated she would make an attempt to see Neville on her way to England (where she was enrolled at London University for a Doctor of Philosophy) when the boat stopped at Fremantle, but he noted on her file, 'did not call'.¹²⁶ Why she didn't call on him is difficult to ascertain; we can only speculate. It may have been deliberate or it may have been circumstantial. She

¹¹⁹. Elkin 1994: 299.

¹²⁰. Biskup 1973: 188-189.

¹²¹. Jacobs 1986: 15-23.

¹²². Quoted in Biskup 1973: 122.

¹²³. See Jacobs 1990.

¹²⁴. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 2 December 1939. DP.

¹²⁵. Jacobs 1990: 249.

¹²⁶. File note, 22 September 1936; Neville to Kaberry, 29 July 1936.

may not have had time to travel to Perth from Fremantle; she may have felt ambivalence toward him especially as she was unlikely to return to Western Australia for fieldwork; she may have secretly disliked him. Whatever the reason, Neville's disappointment only reinforced his feelings that he was not properly recognised by anthropologists.

She made a good impression on Malinowski

Raymond Firth reported to Elkin from London that he and Audrey Richards were pleased with Kaberry's progress, and he noted that she had 'made a good impression on Malinowski too'.¹²⁷ Kaberry completed her Doctor of Philosophy - 'The position of women in an Australian Aboriginal society' - within two years, and she returned to Australia in 1939. The same year her book, *Aboriginal woman: sacred and profane* was published. The anthropologist Marie Reay described it as an 'intensive functional analysis', a 'pioneering study of the social position of women' and, with the exception of a brief survey of women's life in northern South Australia by CP Mountford and Alison Harvey, the only one until 1961 to do so.¹²⁸

In retrospect, the Kimberley research was a brief period in Kaberry's life as an anthropologist. Elkin, who offered her a lecturing position in 1939, wanted her to do more work in northwest Western Australia. She asked Mary Durack if there was any hope of Durack's father allowing her to go to Auvergne, a Durack cattle station, if Elkin insisted that she work in Australia: 'I'll want to do more camping and get out from there more than in 1935-36 and make a study of the language'.¹²⁹ However it was unnecessary as she had 'almost talked E[Elkin] round to Melanesia. I'd like to do Auvergne later but as I explained at the moment I am stale on Australian Anthropology and I want the excitement of studying a new native people'.¹³⁰

While she kept in contact with family and friends in Australia, Kaberry's life's work as an anthropologist was devoted to Africa. Jeremy Beckett, one of her students, recalls that she 'did not regard this episode [her fieldwork in Australia] with much nostalgia [although] it figured in some of her courses'.¹³¹ In fact, in some ways she saw Aboriginal anthropology as intellectually limiting internationally and commented that neither the journal *Oceania* nor Aboriginal ethnography generally had much acceptance or interest from British anthropologists.¹³² Ursula McConnel had made a similar observation some years earlier, when she declared that 'after 8 years of research carried out by numerous field workers in Australia ... Everywhere the lack of publication by Australian field workers is commented on'.¹³³

In telling the story of the politics surrounding Kaberry's fieldwork in the Kimberley one cannot help asking: was the control exercised by Neville and the tactful care

¹²⁷ Firth to Elkin, 19 March 1937, EP, 160/4/1/78.

¹²⁸ Reay 1963: 322.

¹²⁹ Kaberry to Mary Durack, 27 January 1939, DP.

¹³⁰ Kaberry to Mary Durack, 14 February 1939, DP.

¹³¹ Beckett 2001: 85.

¹³² See also R Berndt 1967: 252-256. Berndt was critical of the lack of interest in Aboriginal Australian Anthropology by British anthropologists, and secondly their extensive use of material from the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

¹³³ McConnel to David Rivett, April 1935, ANL, MS 482, folder 834.

asked for by Elkin too demanding for such an independent and determined person such as Phyllis Kaberry? The Australian field, Marie Reay asserts, 'was difficult' and 'unrewarding for younger anthropologists'. She thought 'it was no accident that Phyllis Kaberry did her study of Aboriginal women under the direction of Professor Elkin, who was extremely anxious that such studies should be done, and then deserted the Australian field altogether'.¹³⁴ Kaberry's reluctance to see Neville, and her resolve to prefer an insecure future in London over the opportunities – research and a lectureship – offered by Elkin in Australia, seem to indicate that it was.¹³⁵ Fieldwork in the Kimberley and dealing with Neville were truly an initiation for the practitioners of the discipline of Piddington's and Kaberry's generation. It was, I suggest, the politics of anthropology in Australia, as much as the greater freedom and opportunities elsewhere, that led to Kaberry's departure from Sydney, first to the United States of America then to London and the field in Africa.

Conclusion

I began this paper with three main questions: firstly, could anthropology/ anthropologists modify official government policy and practice; secondly, was anthropology influenced by government policy and practice; and finally, if anthropologists were 'silent' about the social and political reality of Aboriginal conditions, did this represent a lack of interest in analysing relations between settlers and Aboriginal people, or did this reflect a lack of political awareness or an unwillingness to be involved in political issues? I have examined these questions in terms of the multiplex relations found between settlers, pastoralists, government agents, missionaries and the anthropologist, in the case of Phyllis Kaberry.

From a review of Kaberry's field work it is apparent that she presented to the reader a portrait of Aboriginal life which largely disregarded contemporary life on reserves, missions and pastoral stations. As Christine Cheater has pointed out, Kaberry recognised the apparent dislocation of tribal boundaries to the extent that she grouped 'people according to the station they worked on', which enabled her to keep track of their movements.¹³⁶ It was not that Kaberry denied that Aboriginal people in the Kimberley were living in a settled area – she noted that 'the natives have been in contact with the whites for over forty years'¹³⁷ – but rather that this contact was not analysed as having any serious effect on the way Aboriginal people lived, where they lived, their ceremonies and such like: Aboriginal life was presented as 'timeless'.¹³⁸ More importantly for my argument, she elided the colonial relations on the frontier, thus seemingly suppressing the consequences of the violent history of settlement, particularly that of the Duracks when they established a string of cattle stations in the last twenty years of the 19th century. The anthropologist Francesca Merlan comments that Kaberry 'did not address questions about the articulation of the particular Aboriginal society she observed (nor, should it be added, its interaction with European pastoralism)'.¹³⁹

¹³⁴. Reay 1963: 325–326.

¹³⁵. Kaberry to Elkin, 5 September 1939, EP, 247/631; also various EP, 8/1/1/85.

¹³⁶. Cheater 1993: 141.

¹³⁷. Kaberry 1939:x.

¹³⁸. Kaberry's poem, 'North Kimberley', discusses the timelessness and anthropomorphic nature of the landscape.

It is difficult to imagine that within the space of two or three years after Piddington had been in the Kimberley that there had been a change in relations between Aboriginal people and settlers. Piddington claimed that the abuses at La Grange were typical of the state of affairs in Western Australia generally. It is apparent, for reasons unknown to us, that Kaberry did not see the sorts of abuses witnessed and described by Piddington. Elkin, although blinkered by his 'adventure' in 1927-1928, declared some years later that he had, slowly and 'unconsciously', become aware of the appalling conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people. Was Kaberry's friendship with the Durack sisters in fact a hindrance in writing about what she saw, or was she immune to such suffering, recognising instead the shared humanity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal? This latter was after all a purpose of anthropology as stressed by Radcliffe-Brown, Firth and Elkin. Or, having seen what had happened to Piddington, was she well advised by Elkin to remain silent about any abuses of Aboriginal people she may have witnessed?

Kaberry's research did little other than lend support to Neville's administration of Aboriginal affairs through her support of Violet Valley. She appears to have had no impact on policy and practice or on the way Aboriginal people were treated, nor did she attempt to ameliorate their conditions. But neither did Piddington alter the way Aboriginal people were treated or the conditions in which they lived on the cattle stations, feeding stations, or government-run reserves, although his public criticism certainly had an impact on the Western Australian government and its administration of Aboriginal affairs. In the end the findings of anthropology did not lead to a modification of government policy and practice. Piddington commented on the Report of the Royal Commissioner into the 'Conditions and Treatment of Aborigines' which had considered his allegations:

The Report is a comprehensive and carefully balanced summary of the evidence presented to the Commission. But, since there is no doubt of the Commissioner's thoroughness and impartiality, it seems that such evidence has not been adequate to reveal the extent and seriousness of the abuses which, it is admitted, occur in "isolated cases". ... [A]n itinerant Commissioner must necessarily experience difficulty in reaching a true appreciation of the position.¹⁴⁰

What Kaberry did achieve for Elkin, which was most important from his point of view, was the acceptance of anthropological research after the Piddington debacle. Nonetheless, Raymond Firth, despite Elkin's success, thought Elkin 'went too far in mollifying government sensitivities'.¹⁴¹ Neville, notwithstanding his cautious support for anthropological research, was nonetheless wary of anthropologists after his experiences with Piddington, Porteus, and Kaberry, doubting the value of anthropology, and not placing anthropological research as a priority. Faced with continuing anthropological research or with using state funds to support research, he would have preferred that that money be 'added to what we have for Departmental purposes, while the position of the natives is as it is'.¹⁴² Elkin had hoped to entice Kaberry back to the Kimberley,

¹³⁹ Merlan 1988: 22.

¹⁴⁰ Piddington 1936: 196-197. Dorothy Billings, a student of Piddington's in Auckland in the 1950s, told me that Piddington always said, 'As anthropologists we observe, as citizens we take a stand'. Billings to author, 10 January 2002.

¹⁴¹ Firth to author, 20 February 1993, held by the author.

¹⁴² Memo to Minister, Neville, 11 May 1933, WASA, ACC 653, 120.

but she wanted new fields and new opportunities, and on her return from London went to work in New Guinea. He did however manage to place the linguist Arthur Capell in the northwest at the end of the 1930s.

Elkin however made only limited use of Kaberry's research. It provided him with further information on the lives of women and supported his argument that Aboriginal women were not merely chattels, as well as answering queries and thus rounding out his knowledge from his earlier research in the Kimberley. But this information was not used by Elkin in his general text, *The Australian Aborigines. How to understand them*, published in 1938. Kaberry told Mary Durack that the 'book is good as a general summary but it has nothing about the women and their part in the life of the tribe'.¹⁴³ Elkin was unable use Kaberry's work as part of a larger discourse about culture contact and modernity – he was still unsure how to 'help them [Aboriginal people] rise culturally' although he recognised that 'our [white Australians'] great need ... is to understand them and the cultural problems which confront both them and ourselves'.¹⁴⁴ Neither did Elkin discuss the outcomes of Kaberry's work with Neville or his successor FI Bray.

Schenk, while only a minor part of this story, maintained his opposition to anthropologists; the United Aborigines' Mission established mission stations at Warburton, Cundeelee and Ooldea. All but Ooldea hindered anthropological researchers in some way, and after 1941 Harry Green, the superintendent at Ooldea, also took a similar view to Schenk. For example, after initially welcoming Ronald and Catherine Berndt, he wrote to the Aborigines' Protection Board that he did not want them at Ooldea as they were 'having a very unsettling effect upon the Natives'. Green 'deeply resent[ed] [the Berndts'] persistent questionings into matters which concern their tribal life and Secret Customs. Also taking photos of them with no covering at all, representing them to be wild bush Natives in Central Australia and they do not get around like that here at Ooldea'.¹⁴⁵

Firth's assertion of the importance of the research programme points not only to the power of gatekeepers like Neville, but at the same time highlights the positioning of anthropology as a discipline which, while encouraging understanding and helping government in the control and care of Aboriginal people, saw the capture of knowledge to be of greater importance than bringing the treatment and conditions of Aboriginal people under government protection to public attention.¹⁴⁶ He also makes an argument for the pragmatic everydayness of these decisions about dealing with government and agents. But as Piddington learnt – and others, such as Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who were instructed by his example – a career in anthropology in Australia required silence about what they often witnessed or were privileged to hear.¹⁴⁷

In Kaberry's case, her elision regarding conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people, consciously or not, benefited her career: she was offered a position in Australia

¹⁴³. Kaberry to Mary Durack, 14 February 1939, DP.

¹⁴⁴. Elkin 1938: v; Merlan 1988; Cf Toussaint 1999.

¹⁴⁵. HE Green to Aborigines' Protection Board, 20 September 1941. State Archives of South Australia, GRG 52/1/1941/25. As a result of Green's representations the Berndts' permit was withdrawn.

¹⁴⁶. Cf Marcus 1992: 114.

¹⁴⁷. Cf Firth 1998: 40–42; Toussaint 1999: 71.

if she wanted it but the declaration of war in September 1939 led to the position being withdrawn. In contrast, Piddington was pushed into permanent exile, returning only briefly to Australia toward the end of the war in the Pacific before returning to Britain. Kaberry's adaptability also enabled the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney to maintain good relations with the Department of Native Affairs in Western Australia. As Elkin had promised, Kaberry caused no problems for either the settlers, the government or the Aboriginal people. Research could continue without interruption as long as funds were available.

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The Stolen Generations, the historian and the court room

Peter Read

In the last two decades I have been asked on half a dozen occasions to present a written submission, and usually also to present myself in person, to give evidence in legal hearings concerned with separated Aboriginal children. The written report is known as an 'expert report'. Some of these hearings concerned disputed custody, others were attempts by individuals to sue governments for wrongful removal and/or subsequent ill-treatment.

In a 1993 hearing, the Aboriginal parents of a man in jail were challenging a Department of Community Services decision to place his child with its white mother. I was called by the grandparents as an expert witness. I stated that I would not recommend, under normal circumstances, that any young child be raised solely by one parent or the other. In any case, it was quite common for Aboriginal grandparents to raise young children, including great nieces and nephews. The deprivation of the opportunity to identify as Aboriginal - which would probably follow a sole placement with a non-Indigenous parent - would not only be contrary to the spirit of the 1987 NSW Child Welfare Act, but also would have the same effect as if the child had been forcibly adopted out to a white family in the 1950s, or forcibly institutionalised in the 1920s. My testimony went unchallenged in the hearing and I was not cross-examined. In his decision for shared custody the judge acknowledged the usefulness of both my written submission and my court appearance.¹ This hearing, ten years ago, was one of the few occasions in which my knowledge of the history of separated children was taken seriously, and proved useful to the court.

1. 'Children of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Parentage', in the matter of *Trindall v. Anderson* at the Family Court, Parramatta, before Mr Justice Coleman, 4-5 May 1993; other appearances by the author as expert witness in related matters include Oral Submission, 'Aborigines and Aborigine History' in the matter of *Russell Moore v. State of Florida*, Brevard County Court, Florida, USA, before his Honor Judge Johnson, December 1989; Dept. of Community Services v. Shona Johnson and Andrea Yates-Bourke etc, (Not published, Closed Court), file Nos 7, 8, 10, 11 of 1992 at the District Court, Wentworth NSW, before Mr Justice Graham, 28 October 1992; Dept of Community Services ats. Alderton, Orange District Court No. 14 of 1993, 27-30 July 1993; *Williams v Minister, Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, (1994) 35 NSWLR 497, NSW Court of Appeal Kirby P, Priestly JA, Powell JA.

Much more testing was an appearance before a Court in Melbourne, Florida, on behalf of Russell Moore in 1989.² Two weeks after his birth, in 1963, Russell Moore was adopted by a white family under the name James Savage. In 1968 his adopting parents took him to California. When he was about twelve years old, and deeply unhappy, Russell ran away from the family. His whereabouts remained unknown until, at the age of 24, he was arrested in Melbourne, Florida, for sexual assault and murder. At this point he was re-discovered, by his American lawyers, to be a Victorian Koori. The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service contacted his mother, Beverly Whyman, who travelled to Florida for the trial.

Moore pleaded guilty. For the penalty phase a month later (in which the same jury hears evidence and recommends a punishment to the judge) a party of Australians was summoned to Florida to present evidence on Moore's behalf. The party included Justice Hal Wootten QC (one of the NSW Royal Commissioners into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody), Bob Randall, Molly Dyer, Alec Jackomos and myself.

A principal problem for all of the Australian expert witnesses was that Florida law only allowed evidence directly concerning the prisoner or his past life to be heard by the jury during the penalty phase. The prosecution objected to any Australian historical testimony being given by any of us. Wootten, pre-eminent jurist though he is, was denied permission to appear by the trial Judge on the grounds that he did not know the prisoner personally. I was first examined by the opposing counsel, on the understanding that I should meet Moore before my appearance in court. Later that day, before the Judge but without the jury, I gave evidence on the Victorian Protection of Aborigines Act, the purpose, history and mechanics of the assimilation policy as it had affected Moore's separation, an analysis of government policy towards Aboriginal people generally, and the likely outcomes to Aboriginal people separated at a young age and raised either in institutions or in family care. The judge ruled that I could give evidence the next day to the jury on what he called 'Aboriginal history and Aborigine culture'. I was warned specifically not to mention my estimate of some 5000 Aboriginal children removed in Victoria and New South Wales.

In the end I did not give evidence before the jury at all because the defence team learned of a legal tactic analogous to that which I myself had been warned against. During my appearance I was to be asked by the prosecution counsel if I was aware that Moore had physically attacked the Brevard County jail guards a number of times, and been tried and convicted of these attacks. The defence team would instantly object that this was an improper question and the judge would probably rule it out of order; but – so ran the thinking – the jury, having heard these damaging facts, would be unable to put them out of their minds. None of the Australians gave any further evidence. The jury ruled 10:2 in favour of a life sentence; some weeks later the judge overruled the jury, and some months later the Florida Supreme Court overruled the judge.³ I did not

2. Oral Submission, 'Aborigines and Aborigine History' in the matter of Russell Moore (James Savage) v. State of Florida, Brevard County Court, Florida, USA, before his Honour Judge Johnson, December 1989. See also my 'In the middle of the ocean, drowning', in Read 1999a; Archie Roach's song 'Munjana', and the Titus Film production *Savage Indictment*.

3. Moore has served about half his sentence. Successive Australian governments have shown little interest in having him return to Australia to serve his sentence here.

at all enjoy these grisly proceedings, but the episode wakened me, even though American legal rules are different to our own, to the tactical warfare which is such a feature of the trial process in both countries. I had naively assumed that the discovery of historical truth was the aim of both sides.

A different issue arose when I was asked to provide historical context to the NSW Court of Appeal in the matter of *Williams v Aborigines Welfare Board*. In 1992 Joy Williams began proceedings against the Minister responsible for the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983 (the inheritor of administrative responsibility for the NSW Aborigines Protection and Welfare Boards), for wrongful removal and for causing physical and mental illness subsequent to her removal. At the initial hearing the judge ruled that the Statute of Limitations should apply and that the case should proceed no further. The appeal against this judgement was heard by the NSW Court of Appeal, a procedure by which three judges without jury ordinarily rule on the matters of law rather than fact that are brought before it. During the public hearings the judges take a much more active part than in lower courts.⁴

To prepare for the appeal against the Limitation Act 1969, the Kingsford Legal Service, acting for Joy Williams, asked me to prepare an affidavit setting out the general historical circumstances, so as to provide a context in which Joy's removal from her mother could be explained. I drew on my previous submissions in custody cases, and my personal knowledge of dozens of people I had worked with while an employee of Link-Up. One historical quotation, I thought, was critical: a statement made by Robert Donaldson in 1909. At the time Donaldson was a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, but in 1915 he became the Aborigines Protection Board's first Inspector of Aborigines, and was therefore able to put into effect the policy of forced separation of children which he had advocated for so long. He told the Australasian Catholic Congress in 1909:

There is no difference of opinion as to the solution of this great problem, the removal of the children and their complete isolation from the influence of the camps. Under no circumstances whatever should the boys and the girls be allowed to return to the camps. In the course of the next few years there will be no need for the camps and stations; the old people will have passed away and their progeny will be absorbed by the industrial classes of the colony.⁵

I hope my evidence helped the Appeal Court to allow Williams' claim, by a 2:1 majority, to proceed to be heard by a judge sitting alone. Joy Williams, they ruled, was entitled to her day in court. Historical context helped to win the day. The hearing was set for April 1999.

Meanwhile the best known of all the stolen generations hearings, *Cubillo and Gunner v Commonwealth of Australia*, was in preparation. Peter Gunner and Lorna Cubillo sued the Commonwealth for wrongful removal and for subsequent maltreatment and abuse by missionaries acting on behalf of the Commonwealth. Peter Gunner was removed from Utopia Station in 1956 and raised in the St Phillips Anglican institution in Alice Springs. The primary evidence for the Commonwealth and against Gunner

⁴ Williams v Minister 1994.

⁵ Edwards and Read (eds) 1989: xiii-xiv.

was his mother's thumbprint on the removal certificate, apparently signifying assent to the removal. In the absence of evidence that her assent was coerced, the mother's thumbprint was admitted as evidence that she had indeed given her consent, as seemed to be required by the rather obscure legislation. Lorna Cubillo was removed in 1942 from an officially-recognised 'native camp' near Tennant Creek and taken to the Baptist-sponsored United Aborigines Mission Home in Darwin.⁶ There was no evidence to suggest whether or not anyone in Lorna Cubillo's family gave consent to her removal. More than fifteen months of intense public interest – and some eleven million dollars – later, the joint test case against the Commonwealth Government was dismissed.

Before the hearing I was asked by the Northern Territory Aboriginal Legal Service to provide an affidavit setting the historical context both of separation of Aboriginal children and of the Northern Territory generally. The lawyers provided me with some 3000 documents, mostly drawn from Commonwealth (Northern Territory) Archives, bound in 28 volumes. I wrote fifty pages of analytical description drawn from all areas of Australia, using some of the Williams material, but seeking also to demonstrate in what ways the Northern Territory, under Commonwealth control, was different from the states. The lawyers responded that they wanted something more specific about the Northern Territory, and more specific to the issue of removed children, rather than, say, the conditions generally prevailing on pastoral stations. They wanted much more relating to the actual legislation, with 'hundreds and hundreds of footnotes'. I rewrote the document completely, this time in 90 pages, including a chronology of developments in the legislation and regulations illustrated by instances drawn from the archival records, with an appendix listing several international criticisms of the Commonwealth's separation policy. Drawing on the archival records, I collated some thirty justifications for separating part-Aboriginal children in addition from the need to 'save' and educate them.⁷ These included the stated need for domestic labour, to 'breed out the colour', to avoid 'half caste' boys menacing society and the girls from becoming prostitutes, to fit them for absorption, and to fulfil their national destiny of institutionalisation and absorption. In 1951 the Administrator, following adverse criticism of the removal policy by one of the Department's own patrol officers, confessed to the Secretary of the Department of Interior that he could not find any actual ministerial approval of the removal policy. I was able to find eight instances from the documents of specific ministerial approval or endorsement in the previous thirty years and many other references to such approval in the annual reports.⁸ My affidavit seemed to me to provide very strong evidence that there was a policy of removal of as many part-Aboriginal children as possible from their communities, and for many other motivations beside the perceived good of the child. The lawyers were uneasy at my use of the word 'Argument' at the beginning of each section. They did not seem to understand the long and difficult processes by which historians arrive at historical judgements. 'It is for us to argue', I was told, 'and for you to provide the historical facts'.

6. Cubillo v The Commonwealth of Australia 1999.

7. Read 1999b, Part Four: Analysis of policy and practice in the removal of half-caste children in the Northern Territory, Sections 1 and 2.

8. Administrator Wise, Policy Submission, 28 February 1952, National Archives of Australia, quoted in Read 1999b Part 4.ii.18.

My historical evidence, as it happened, was not even presented to the court, while another historian who presented an affidavit relating to racial purity policies in the 1930s and 40s was subjected to an extremely unpleasant five days in the witness box, at the end of which her affidavit was not accepted by the Court either, only her oral testimony. I received no credible explanation to my queries about why my affidavit had not been presented and why I had not been called. Some weeks later, after persistent enquiries, I learned that the affidavit was 'not considered good enough.' I strongly resented this explanation, but many phone calls and several letters to the principal of the firm evinced no further response.

On reflection, I suppose my position was not dissimilar to that in Florida. I knew no more of the individual cases than what was contained in the plaintiffs' depositions, but I knew a lot about the general context of 20th century Aboriginal history of the Northern Territory. I had spent 1976-7 recording Aboriginal accounts of massacres, of coming in to pastoral stations, moving out, labour conditions, living in institutions, World War II experiences, equal pay and education, and, not least, two accounts of separation and removal to church institutions. While working for Link-Up in NSW, I had been involved in several more cases concerned with the removal of Northern Territory children to southern States.

I have to presume that the lawyers decided to fight the case on personal rather than general historical grounds, but also suspect that in commissioning my report they had had no idea what to expect, and certainly did not see the relevance of most of the material I brought together. Yet as a historian I know that the general *context* of Northern Territory history in the first half of the 20th century is – or should be – highly relevant to individual cases.

Consider, for example, the journey of Lorna Cubillo from Tennant Creek to the Retta Dixon Home. No evidence could be provided that Lorna's elders had *not* agreed to her removal. It is my belief that consideration of the historical context could provide evidence useful to the courts assessing situations where written evidence no longer exists, or may never have existed.

The context is that of the Coniston massacre of 1928. Following the death of a white man and an attack upon another at Coniston Station north-west of Alice Springs, perhaps 150 Warlpiri and Anmatyerre Aboriginals were killed by punitive parties made up of at least one policeman, black trackers and several pastoralists.⁹ In the mid-1970s, fifty years later, I travelled to many of the sites, sometimes with eye witnesses, collecting oral accounts of these killings which were, naturally, still told with passion, outrage and fear. I learned that hundreds of Aboriginal people, some of whom were in fact regular station workers, fled for their lives before this apparently unpremeditated and irrational attack, to pastoral stations known or hoped to be friendly, to seek refuge. These included the Overland Telegraph Stations of Barrow Creek and Tennant Creek – from where, fourteen years later, Lorna Cubillo was taken. I recorded this conversation with Charlie Jakamarra, a Warlpiri man. His account of the Coniston events included the story of a man who had escaped from the Hanson Creek killing sites to Tennant Creek, who returned to discover the bodies of his murdered countrymen and women:

⁹ Read & Read 1991, see chapter 'A homeland deserted'.

You got another old feller, was run away from, farther out from Hanson Creek, straight to Tennant Creek.

[This] One bloke come back, trying to come up and see the people.

Well he run into ... people.

Like, him bin shootem round there. Make big fire, and bin come along, and see-em dead bodies now.

Just turn back, straight back.¹⁰

Lorna Cubillo was removed in 1942, not fifty years after these events took place, only fourteen. Some of the killings and pursuits occurred less than 150 kilometres from where she was put on an army truck bound for the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. It is inconceivable that any Aboriginal person living in the Tennant Creek region was unaware of the killings in 1928, and most improbable that the subject was still not constantly talked about, or thought about, in 1942. Probably, in fact, almost everyone in the native camp born in the region had a relative who had actually been killed. We may ask now, given this context: was it likely that anyone who had lived with these experiences would have defied a uniformed white man – big boots, big hat, big bunch of keys – who told her to put that little girl on the truck? No, it is not likely. Everyone in the Tennant Creek native camp would have known about these terrible events and drawn their own conclusions as to the propensity of the white men to suddenly and inexplicably lose all self-control and begin killing them. In the absence of any direct evidence at all, the Court was asked to consider whether Lorna's mother, living in what historians know to have been a run-down, malnourished native camp of deep and terrible historical memory, made a free choice to allow a child to go to an institution. In court the story could have been held to be an emotional or rhetorical irrelevance. The defence might have demanded: 'Can you be certain that Lorna Cubillo's elders were affected in the way you describe?' Since I never knew her, I would have had to answer: 'No, I cannot be certain'. What to me is an essential and incontrovertible historical contextual explanation might be legally inadmissible. Yet *not* to acknowledge these wider events as central to understanding the historical context, and therefore to establishing the probability of assent to removal, seems clearly wrongheaded.

Justice O'Loughlin found that Cubillo had indeed been subsequently abused by missionaries, but in the primary matter of her removal, in which the onus lay on her to prove that she had been removed against her mother's will, he found no evidence that she had been illegally separated. In the absence of any evidence regarding the particular matter, the Commonwealth could not be found to have removed her against her family's wishes.

Let's return to Joy Williams, granted permission by the NSW Court of Appeal to proceed against the state of New South Wales, removed from her mother's care in the same year that Lorna Cubillo was taken to the Retta Dixon Home. Lorna Cubillo's and Joy Williams's legal positions seem essentially the same. In the absence of evidence O'Loughlin J found that the Commonwealth authorities had not forced Lorna Cubillo's removal from Tennant Creek. Now Mr Justice Abadee, also in the absence of documentary evidence, was asked to rule on whether Joy had been forcibly removed or not.

¹⁰. Read & Read 1991: 52.

In this hearing Williams claimed, among other things, that she had suffered harm as a result of her childhood experiences, that the Aborigines Welfare Board had committed trespass in taking her from her mother, and that it failed to arrange medical treatment for her which would have avoided the development of Borderline Personality Disorder in later life. No warrant could be found forcing her separation at birth under s.13 of the Aborigines Protection Act; moreover, Doretta had signed an assent form allowing Joy's transfer, at the age of five years, from Bomaderry Children's Home to Lutanda.¹¹ Faced with this apparently damaging evidence, her lawyers no longer tried to argue that she had been 'stolen' but that the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board had 'failed to take adequate steps to permit the plaintiff to remain with her mother'. The implications of the fundamental fact that Joy was the separated Aboriginal child of a separated Aboriginal mother, the product of legislation specifically intended (in Donaldson's words) to produce such results, were not brought to the Court's attention. Instead, Williams' lawyers now argued the much weaker position that the Welfare Board should have known that, in care, she would have had no opportunity, or only an inadequate one, to form the attachment with a caring adult which was necessary for her psychological well-being.

The case failed comprehensively. The Judge found that the plaintiff's mother Doretta Williams,

for reasons no doubt valid to herself, applied to the Board to take control of her child. ... My finding is that the AWB considered the mother's application to give up control of the plaintiff, and having done so, admitted the child to its control. I find that there was not any removal by the Board to the plaintiff, in the sense of taking the child against the will of the mother.¹²

The NSW Court of Appeal rejected an appeal and sharply warned of the dangers of expanding the legal liability of those responsible for the protection of Aboriginal children. 'The present age has a hearty appetite for litigation. Some think this reflects an increasing trend to avoid responsibility for one's predicament by blaming, and suing, others.'¹³

Consider this alternative scenario:

April 1942. Irene English, the Board's senior child welfare officer, and responsible for the placements of the girls after they leave foster or institutional care, is telephoned at her Sydney office by the lady of the North Sydney home where Doretta Williams lives and works. She tells English that she had wondered about Doretta's absence for most of New Years Eve and had been keeping an eye on her. In the last four weeks Doretta had been tired and withdrawn. Yes, she was almost certain: Doretta was beginning to show. So she had sat her down and demanded to know whether or not she was pregnant. At first Doretta had said no, then she said that she didn't know, then she began to cry; then she admitted that she had been with a soldier whose name she did not know, and that yes, she was pregnant.

11. This document is reproduced in Read 1999a: picture 5.

12. *Joy Williams v The Minister, & Anor*: 10

13. NSW Court of Appeal, NSWCA 255 [2000]: 93

Several days later Irene English takes the 25 minute journey by train and foot to North Sydney. Doretta is called. Two cane chairs face each other on the verandah looking down towards the harbour. Doretta is allowed – for Mrs English is a kindly woman – to sit down. English begins:

Well Doretta, this is terrible day for both of us. I can't imagine how it happened, when I consider all the advantages that have been put your way. You were taken away from your people at Cowra, we looked after you at Cootamundra, we gave you a good education, we gave you a fine job in the city. How you've let us down. How you've let down Mr Pettitt, I can't think what he will say. What will Matron think of you now? And your friends. And most of all you've let yourself down in a moment of weakness. I hope you are as ashamed of yourself as I am of you.

Mrs English notices that Doretta, head bowed, is sobbing. She turns to stare at the aching blue of the harbour and returns her gaze to the weeping child.

You know that you won't be able to keep your baby, don't you? Mr Pettitt wouldn't think of it. You wouldn't be able to keep on working, and you would not be able to look after it. I think the best thing if for me to contact the Matron of Crown Street, arrange for you to go in there when it's time, and have your baby cared for. I'll make sure that it goes to a good home. That's the best I can do for you, and really it's for the best. And we'll find you a new job straight away. You'll be leaving here tomorrow.

I cannot say, of course, that the separation of Joy Williams from her mother was arranged like this, but my knowledge of Aboriginal history, based on conducting hundred of interviews and reading hundreds of files, suggests that it is probable. Yet the legal system, unless special circumstances apply, considers such historical contextual information to be irrelevant and unwanted.

There are three sets of issues to be drawn from this discussion: the role of the expert witness, the usefulness of historical contextual argument, and the nature of oral evidence.

Experts have been accepted in English law for many centuries, though not without misgivings. *Cross on Evidence* 1995 notes:

Although they may be an evil, expert witnesses are necessary in a great many cases, so it is desirable to have as clear as possible an idea of their functions. These were succinctly described by Lord President Cooper in *Davie v Edinburgh Magistrates* when he said: 'Their duty is to furnish the judge or jury with the necessary *scientific* criteria for testing the accuracy of their conclusions, so as to enable the judge or jury to form their own independent judgment by the application of those criteria to the facts proved in evidence.'¹⁴ [my emphasis]

General expertise will not necessarily weigh in specific cases, nor, rightly, are judges or juries required to accept what experts say. A police officer's experience in investigating traffic accidents does not necessarily make him an expert in reconstructing a *particular* motor accident.

More widely, the propensity of expert witnesses to espouse the cause of the party by whom they are called, and paid, has caused their value to be questioned. I was told

¹⁴. For discussion, see Heydon 1996. The status of the expert witness in NSW is set in s 76 and s 79 of the Evidence Act of that state.

firmly by one of Cubillo's lawyers, 'No, you are our witness, there's no doubt about it.' But there is doubt. Abadee J pointed out in his judgement, 'The expert's paramount duty is to assist the Court impartially.'¹⁵ In reality, expert witnesses support one side or the other and are expected to. This large issue in the context of the administration of justice in an adversarial system awaits clear resolution. In the meantime, rather than in practice representing one side or the other, I would much rather be a true friend of the court, answerable to the judge. This would mean that the funding of witnesses would have to come from the court itself. I would be prepared to be examined, if necessary, by two hostile opposing lawyers, unusual though this would be in present Australian courts.¹⁶

The second question concerns the nature of evidence as it is differently conceived by the historian and by the court. In the Russell Moore case I intended to present mitigating evidence, drawn from my wider knowledge of southern Australian Aboriginal history, that the prisoner could be held to have diminished responsibility because he was a victim of laws thought to be just at the time but now recognised to have been unjust. In the suits of both Williams and Cubillo I tried to set a similar historical context, sufficient for the Court to understand how an action could occur which is otherwise contrary to human nature, that is, how a mother or carer could voluntarily allow, or request, her child to be permanently removed. I was not allowed to present such evidence to either hearing. Setting a historical context should be the one of the courtroom roles of the historian: that's what we're good at.

Does the problem lie in the way in which we form a historical opinion? A common task of the historian is to argue from a series of known and accepted individual occurrences to a probability of the occurrence of, or motivation for, another analogous event. Twelve people whom I interviewed in 1977 testified to a terrifying massacre on the Hanson and Lander Rivers which caused survivors to flee to certain places, including Tennant Creek. I can't prove, though I'm as certain as I can be, that Lorna Cubillo's relatives were traumatised and acutely aware of the Coniston massacre. If we historians are to be useful to, and respected by, courts, we must somehow convince the judges, and our own lawyers, of the value of our wider contextual appraisal. But how?

Lastly, the question of the nature of the evidence itself: not how we form an opinion but the reliability of the actual evidence on which we form that opinion. Usually, expert witnesses have no particular right to rely on hearsay evidence. Although Blackburn J in the famous Yirrkala Land Rights case of 1971 allowed an anthropologist to express an opinion based partly upon statements made by members of the tribe, normally every fact basic to the question must be proved by admissible evidence. The words of Charlie Jakamarra were, technically, hearsay, probably inadmissible in court, as are the recorded and mostly eye-witness accounts of the other 11 men whose accounts I recorded in 1977 and which formed the basis of the chapter 'A Homeland Deserted.'¹⁷ Despite exceptions to the evidentiary rule, in normal Australian civil

¹⁵ *Williams v Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs* 2000: 191.

¹⁶ However, Deborah Rose, the ANU anthropologist, has acted analogously as Judge's Advocate in certain cases argued before the Northern Territory Land Rights Act. The Commissioner's proceedings are in many ways of course quite different to Court cases. The Federal Court has the capacity to appoint its own experts.

courts, the oral testimony which has become such a basic element of twentieth century historical writing, and upon which so much of our understanding of Aboriginal history has been built, cannot be presented. Often oral evidence is legally unusable unless the eye witnesses present their sworn testimony in Court, which they frequently cannot do. Without the oral evidence of the Coniston Massacre we would have only the faulty and dissembling 1929 report of the official investigation.¹⁸ Despite exceptions, our Courts still remain tied to written or physical evidence, even a thumbprint.

Surely American juries should have been told that Russell Moore was not raised by white adoptive parents simply by chance. Surely it was relevant to a Court that the Commonwealth Government separated part-Aboriginal children from other motives besides humanity. Surely a judge should have been allowed to know that Doretta Williams could not have kept her child even if she had wanted to.

The rules of evidence are important, so is the integrity of the expert witness, and so is the rule-controlled impartiality of the judiciary. So crucial, too, is the revolution in the way that we historians now use oral history. So also is the contribution we historians should be able to make in helping lay people understand the historical atmosphere of a given time and place. So also crucial to ourselves as morally-motivated Australians are the ruined lives of Doretta Williams, Peter Gunner, Lorna Cubillo and Joy Williams.

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¹⁷. Read & Read 1991. 'Deserted' because in the mid 1970s that country was still largely unoccupied following the killings fifty years earlier.

¹⁸. Court of Enquiry 'Concerning the Killing of Natives in Central Australia by Police Parties and Others', 18 January 1929.

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Exploring 'Aboriginal' sites in Sydney: a shifting politics of place?

Melinda Hinkson

In 2000 I was employed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to write a monograph about Aboriginal sites in Sydney. The brief for the project was very broad: what might constitute 'a site' was not pre-determined, nor was any other aspect of the content, although it was stipulated that the book be developed in consultation with Sydney's peak Aboriginal organisations, most particularly land councils. The research was undertaken collaboratively with Alana Harris, renowned Wiradjuri photographer, and the outcome was *Aboriginal Sydney: a guide to important places of the past and present*, published by Aboriginal Studies Press in 2001.¹ The book is a guide to fifty places in the greater Sydney region, an area bordered by Kuring-gai Chase National Park in the north, Cranebrook and Greendale in the west, and Kurnell and Botany Bay in the south. It is intended for a very broad audience, and designed to be used as a straightforward guide book as well as a selective and short social history of Sydney.

The impetus for writing this essay was a keenness to tease out some of the issues that arose in the context of the research that were not canvassed in *Aboriginal Sydney*. When I first travelled to Sydney I was struck by what appeared to be a shifting phenomenon. On the one hand, as has been widely observed, some Aboriginal sites were relatively easy to find, specifically those sites often described as 'pre-contact' such as rock engravings, shell middens, occupation shelters. A good number of these are sign-posted. However sites of colonial and more recent times – the places that mark encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people – were much more difficult to locate. These 'contact' and 'post-contact' sites were largely invisible; many receiving little if any public recognition. In this sense the status of Sydney's Aboriginal places appeared to directly mirror the experience historically common for Aboriginal people living in urban areas – the denial of their existence *as* Aboriginal. Yet on second glance this interpretation was not as clear-cut as it seemed at first. Undertaking this research in the months leading up to the Sydney Olympics, and in the final year of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's ten year term, Alana and I found ourselves in the midst of what appeared to be an explosion of interest in Sydney's Aboriginal history. This interest

¹ Part of the inspiration for this project was provided by Meyer Eidelson's (1997) book, *The Melbourne Dreaming* that proved to be a popular title for Aboriginal Studies Press.

was reflected, among other things, in the number of researchers we encountered who were undertaking similar projects to our own – people working for municipal councils who had commissioned Aboriginal histories of their local area,² for the organisers of Sydney's Olympic Games, for Lonely Planet's *Guide to Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait Islands*, for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and for local land councils. This apparent interest in Sydney's Aboriginal history was making its impact felt keenly in the city's urban landscape, as a series of new sites and new approaches to the interpretation of sites were being implemented. In this process, Sydney seemed to be gaining a past that had until recently been denied – it was becoming a city with an Aboriginal history.³ But what exactly was being produced in this process? What kinds of representations of Aboriginality were emerging? And, in what ways, if at all, could it be said that these representations differed from those identified and analysed in relation to Sydney's Aboriginal sites in the past?

Debunking some binary oppositions

The wider context of this essay – the relationship between the production of certain forms of 'Aboriginality' and the reification of Aboriginal places as meaningful in particular kinds of ways – has of course been extensively discussed by a number of historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and others.⁴ As Attwood has argued, the 'ever present image' of 'the Aborigine' for much of the past 200 years has been one firmly located outside time – historically in Australia Aborigines have been 'consigned to the past, but not to history'.⁵ A key signifying label in this process is 'traditional Aboriginal culture', firmly fixing all 'authentic' forms of Aboriginality within an imagined pre-colonial moment and viewing all forms that diverge from it, and the living Aboriginal people associated with those forms, as diminished and impoverished versions. Wolfe's term 'repressive authenticity' captures well this process, in which living Aboriginal people and the challenges they pose to settler colonial society have been cut loose from the dominant representations of Aboriginality that are prevalent, and indeed traded, within those same societies.⁶ Images of exotic and ancient cultural richness are extremely useful in the workings of nation-states; unresolved political contests are not. Frequently, early anthropological accounts have been pointed to as the prime carriers of this process,⁷ however one does not have to look far for examples that demonstrate the continuing pervasiveness and cogency of repressive authenticity in the present. The widespread use of images of 'traditional Aboriginal culture' in the tourism trade is one obvious example. The perpetuation of such binary frameworks as traditional/modern within which to classify Aboriginal cultures and lives is integral to this process. At a more abstract level, writers have argued that the mobilisation of images of radical alterity or 'otherness' has been central to the construction of nation-states and their maintenance of stability.⁸

² See for example City of Sydney 2001.

³ Byrne 1996.

⁴ See for example Attwood 1989, 1996a, 1996b; Byrne 1996; Colley & Bickford 1996; McBryde 1986, 1989.

⁵ Attwood 1996: xii.

⁶ Wolfe 1999.

⁷ See for example Attwood 1996; Hiatt 1996; Wolfe 1999; Stocking 1996; Povinelli 2002.

Denis Byrne has tracked the ways in which the unhinging of a primitivist or 'traditional' Aboriginality from living Aboriginal people has been carried over into the discipline of archaeology and heritage practice, noting that '[t]hrough a process of monumentalisation, archaeology has helped conceptualise "genuine" indigenous culture not so much as entirely swept away but as contained or confined in the form of archaeological sites ... as the Aborigines faded (ie changed) the sites stood for them'.⁹ Byrne's work provides a compelling interpretive framework with which to approach an exploration of Sydney's Aboriginal sites and to consider any changes that might be occurring in that physical and representational landscape.

Rock engravings, rock art sites, sandstone shelters, and scarred trees of pre-colonial Aboriginal society and the early colonial era are abundant in Sydney, and extensively documented.¹⁰ A disproportionate attention to the pre-colonial era is reflected in the Aboriginal Sites Register maintained by NSW NPWS, which holds records for some 30,000 sites, only a few hundred of which belong to the post-1788 period. Similarly, of the 17,500 sites listed on the NSW Heritage Register (all of which date from 1788) only seven have been placed there for their value to Aboriginal people.¹¹ As Byrne has observed, such registers have come to stand for 'pure products' – sites 'which speak of a pure, authentic and, most importantly, always former Aboriginal presence'.¹² In averting our gaze from those sites that were produced in encounters between Aborigines and Europeans, we shield ourselves from having to confront the reality of our involvement in the colonial process.¹³ This lack of recognition accorded to sites of colonial and more recent significance reflects ongoing contests over the writing of Australia's history,¹⁴ and more specifically, unresolved conflicts between urban-based Aboriginal people and state and federal governments over claims to land and compensation for historic dispossession.¹⁵ While these conflicts are very much alive and well in the present period, as noted above, a visit to some of the 'Aboriginal' places of Sydney suggests that the stark delimitation between the recognition of Australia's ancient past as opposed to that which dates from 1788 is in some sense beginning to fray at the edges.

In what follows I briefly explore a selection of six sites that have emerged in cross-cultural interactions in the Sydney region post-1788, and consider how these places and the events with which they are associated are presented for public consumption in the present period. Many of these sites will be familiar to readers of *Aboriginal History*, while recent developments discussed in relation to some sites may not be.

8. Byrne 1996: 95; Wolfe 1999; Povinelli 2002.

9. Byrne 1996: 87. See also Nugent 2002.

10. McCarthy 1970; Attenbrow 1991; McDonald 1994; Colley & Bickford 1996; Stanbury & Clegg 1996.

11. Nugent 2002.

12. Byrne 1996.

13. Attwood 1996; Byrne 1996.

14. Recent debate over the historical accounting of frontier violence is one example of such contest. See Attwood and Foster 2002; Windshuttle 2002.

15. Goodall 1988, 1996.

Site 1: Bennelong Point

The Sydney Opera House sits astride one of the most symbolically important places of Australia's colonial past. Well before the Opera House was erected on this site, this point of land was a significant meeting place for local Aboriginal people. Two years after the British arrived, Governor Arthur Philip had a small brick hut erected on the site for his close friend, Bennelong, a Wangal man, and the most celebrated cross-cultural mediator of the early colonial period. Bennelong's story reflects much about early colonial encounters in Australia. In their desperation to foster improved communication with local Aboriginal people in the first years after their arrival, in two separate incidents the British kidnapped three Aboriginal men in the hope that they could be trained to act as go-betweens. The first man to be taken was Arabanoo, who died in the first epidemic of smallpox that decimated Sydney's Aboriginal communities in 1789.¹⁶ Six months after Arabanoo's death, Bennelong was taken along with another Aboriginal man, Colebee, in what William Bradley described as 'the most unpleasant service' he was ever 'ordered to execute'.¹⁷ Bennelong was clearly interested and engaged by the activity of the colony and when Colebee escaped Bennelong chose to stay on. He developed close relationships with a number of officers, especially Governor Phillip, relationships he maintained after fleeing the settlement, some seven months after his capture. When Phillip left Sydney to return to London in 1793, he took Bennelong with him. They were accompanied by another Aboriginal man, Yemmurrawannie, who was later to become the first Aborigine to die and be buried in London. Bennelong in turn developed a taste for fine clothes and wine. He returned to Sydney in 1795, but never readjusted. He died in 1813, a lonely alcoholic with a broken spirit, and was buried in the grounds of James Squire's property at Kissing Point.¹⁸ Historical photographs uncovered by Isabel McBryde,¹⁹ suggest that Bennelong's grave may be located in the vicinity of present-day Bennelong Park in Putney.

After Bennelong's death his brick hut at Bennelong Point was demolished. However, this area continued to be an important meeting place for Aboriginal people, as indeed it was prior to its association with Bennelong. Throughout the 1800s Aboriginal people continued to camp in semi-permanent fashion at Circular Quay, until the authorities forced the closure of their camps in the 1880s. The site's symbolic significance to Aboriginal people in the present period was demonstrated at the 1999 memorial service for renowned Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins, with the procession of mourners walking through central Sydney to Bennelong Point.

Although remembered in the place name Bennelong Point, there is no signage in the area where the Opera House now stands to tell the thousands of visitors that flock to this area every week anything of its historic significance. However, in the adjacent Botanic Gardens, horticulturalist and Aboriginal Education Officer John Lennis has recently planted a new display, *Cadi Jam Ora*, which explores the Aboriginal significance of this area. More particularly, the display deals with the first three years of

^{16.} Tench 1961: 150–1.

^{17.} Bradley 1969: 181–2.

^{18.} Smith 2001.

^{19.} McBryde 1989.

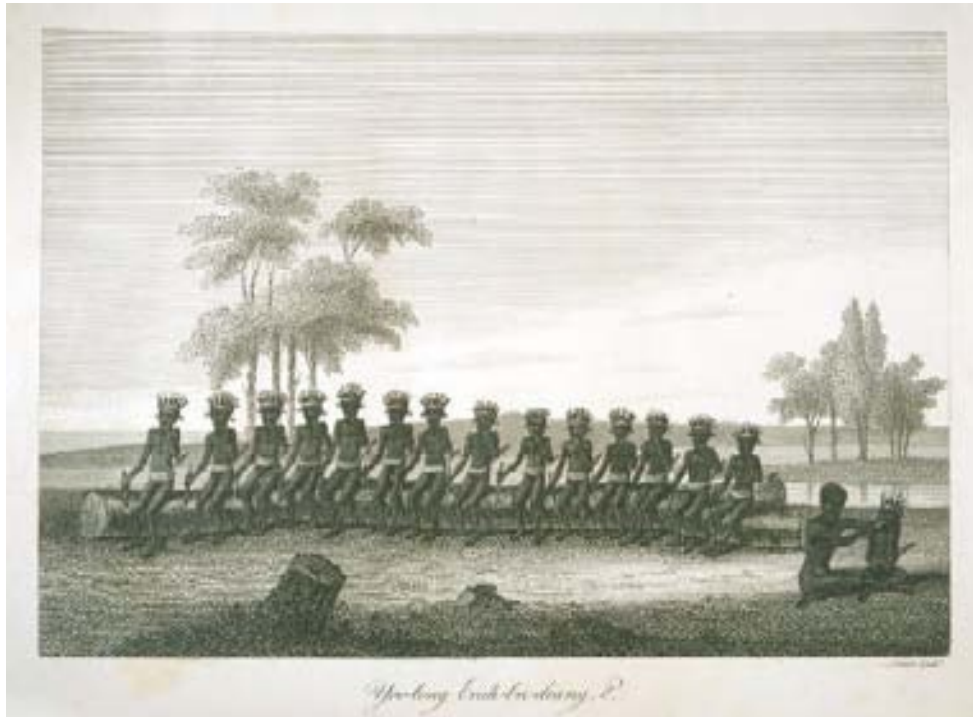


Figure 1: Yoo-lang erah-ba-diang, 1798, drawing by James Neagle, in Collins 1975 [1798]. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.



Figure 2: Aboriginal Education Officer John Lennis with his *Cadi Jam Ora* garden display at the Royal Botanic Gardens. Courtesy of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, through their different use of plant species and attitudes to the environment.

It is believed that a bora ring or ceremonial ground once occupied land that came to be occupied by the gardens. David Collins observed an initiation ceremony on this site in January 1795 – seven years after the British had arrived. Collins' sketches and descriptions of the events he recorded as *Yoo-lahng Erah-ba-diahng*, provided inspiration for Neagle's famous series of drawings by the same name.²⁰

Site 2: Old Government House

Not long after the British had established the colony at Sydney Cove, they faced a looming crisis. Attempts to cultivate land at Farm Cove had failed. Food supplies were dwindling and an urgent situation was arising: by October 1788 there was simply not enough to feed the colony. Surveying expeditions had identified country further inland that was deemed more suitable for opening up to agricultural development. Phillip directed that a second settlement be established at a place he named Rose Hill. He later took the unprecedented step of dropping Rose Hill in favour of the name used by local Aboriginal people, Parramatta, anglicised from Burramatta.²¹ The first fleet diarists provide no explanation for this act, but it reminds us of Philip's early attempts at conciliation.²²

A Government House was built in what today is Parramatta Park. The first section of this house, Phillip's hut, was built in 1790, making this the oldest public building in Australia. Old Government House is a major tourist attraction and the National Trust operates guided tours of the house on a daily basis. Such tours foster an appreciation of the courage and fortitude of the Governors and their families who lived in the house, of the hardship of life in the colony, and of the volatile nature of a society built on the back of convict labour. This framing of the house within the terms of colonial heritage is reinforced at present by the content of the small gift shop attached to the house, whose predominant focus is on local history. Given this focus, I was struck by the fact that there was not a single book included that acknowledged that the Parramatta region *had* an Aboriginal history.

But this framing of Old Government House within an uncontested colonial narrative is beginning to be challenged. In recent years the National Trust has itself made some considerable investment in this process. In 1999 the Trust commissioned a study of the Aboriginal significance of the area.²³ An Education Officer has been working in conjunction with local Darug Aboriginal people to develop an education program, in the first instance for delivery to school groups. Armed with the knowledge that informs this program, a visit to Parramatta Park and Old Government House becomes a very different experience – drawing visitor's attention to such features as the brickwork of the house, held together with mortar made from ground-down Aboriginal shell middens, that once lay in enormous heaps along the Parramatta River; a number of scarred trees, whose bark was removed by Aboriginal people to make food and water contain-

20. Collins 1975 [1798]: 466.

21. Collins 1975 [1798]: 137; Tench 1961: 239; Hunter 1793: 531.

22. Challis and Smith 2000.

23. Kohen, Knight and Smith 1999.



Figure 3: Old Government House, Parramatta Park. Photograph by Alana Harris, courtesy of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).



Figure 4: The brickwork of Old Government House. Photograph by Alana Harris, courtesy of AIATSIS.

ers; and an area behind the house from which significant quantities of stone artefacts were uncovered by archaeologists during their excavation of the area in 1996.²⁴ Archaeological evidence, as well as the accounts of First Fleet diarists, suggest that this part of the river once provided a rich source of food for local Aboriginal people. There has also been speculation that an area at the rear of the house may have once been the site of a ceremonial ground.²⁵ Collins writes of the building of a redoubt or fort prior to the construction of the house,²⁶ overlooking the land where the government farm was to be planted, and facing defensively in the direction of the feared Darug and Gandangara tribes of the west and south-west. While this fort was apparently never used in combat, its construction foreshadowed hostilities that would erupt soon after as the colonial frontier expanded into the Aboriginal hunting grounds of the Hawkesbury region.²⁷

This perspective on Old Government House is by no means self-evident. There is an absence of interpretive material at the site that might provide insights into its presence. Interpretative displays at the Burrumatta Visitor Centre profile some aspects of pre-colonial Aboriginal land use in the vicinity of the park, with material developed in conjunction with local Darug descendants. But interestingly enough the focus of these displays is confined to the pre-colonial period; western Sydney's violent and bloody frontier encounters are not dealt with here. The visitor centre is located at the opposite end of Parramatta Park, some three and a half kilometres from Old Government House and has very limited opening hours. Consequently only a small proportion of visitors to Old Government House would be likely to leave Parramatta with any sense of the area's Aboriginal history. However, the National Trust intends to incorporate aspects of its Aboriginal program into the current house tour, providing visitors with a much broader perspective on the social relations that have inscribed it over time as a significant place.²⁸

Site 3: Native Institution

Just down the road from Parramatta and Old Government House is one of the most important sites of Aboriginal/European encounters in this region. A pile of rubble in a public reserve in outer suburban Sydney is the site of Governor Lachlan Macquarie's Native Institution, which was established here in 1823, after being moved from its original location in Parramatta. Macquarie's Native Institution enacted what is believed to have been the first institutionalised removal of Aboriginal children from their families in Australian history, in an early colonial experiment to determine the extent to which they could be 'civilised'.²⁹

On an annual basis Macquarie held a 'meeting of the tribes and native feast' at Parramatta. He had conceived these events as opportunities for fostering friendly relations with local Aboriginal groups. Blankets were distributed and awards publicly conferred upon those men and women who had 'given proofs of industry and inclination to be civilised'.³⁰ It was at this annual event that certain Aboriginal leaders of the

24. Attenbrow 1996.

25. Kohen, Knight & Smith 1999: 17.

26. Collins 1975 [1798]: 37.

27. Collins 1975 [1798]: 348-9; Kohen, Knight & Smith 1999: 32.

28. National Trust 2000.

29. Brook & Kohen 1991: 57.



Figure 5: The footings of Governor Macquarie's Native Institution. Photograph by Alana Harris, courtesy of AIATSIS.

region were proclaimed 'chiefs' and presented with gorgets or 'kingplates'.³¹ Macquarie also used the occasion of the annual feast to call on Aboriginal parents to give over their children to be lodged in his Native Institution.³² A small number of parents were originally persuaded to do so, before they understood the implications of their actions. Once it was clear that they would not be allowed access to their children again, except on one designated day a year, no more children were voluntarily admitted and many of those already lodged in the institution escaped and returned to their families. Subsequent pupils of the Native Institution were taken by force; the next children to be lodged there were captured during punitive expeditions in May and June 1816.³³ Significantly, it was not only Aboriginal children that were admitted to the institution. The formidable Rev Samuel Marsden, who ran the home for Macquarie for several years, brought a number of Maori children from New Zealand to undergo the same civilising process there.

The native institution experiment was a disaster – in subsequent years a number of children died there, and the institution was finally closed and the land auctioned in 1833.³⁴ Little wonder that local authorities are reluctant to memorialise the site's historic significance. The physical state of this site – overgrown by weeds, used from time

³⁰. Smith 1992: 84–5.

³¹. Flynn 1995: 97.

³². Flynn 1995: 95.

³³. Kohen, Knight & Smith 1999: 83.

³⁴. Brook & Kohen 1991.

to time as a place to illegally dump rubbish,³⁵ and encroached upon by suburban development – might be taken to represent the process of selective forgetting in action.

The reserve is significant not only as the site of the Native Institution, but also as a place that has older as well as more recent significance to local Aboriginal people. There is a silcrete quarry nearby, a place where a highly valued material used in the manufacture of tools was once extracted and traded among Aboriginal groups over great distance. The Native Institution site is also located adjacent to what today is the suburb of Blacktown. Blacktown earned its name during Governor Macquarie's time, quite literally as 'the Black Town' – the area in which, ironically, a number of Aboriginal people received grants of land between 1816 and the late 1820s, as reward for their preparedness to work with the British.³⁶ Today, Blacktown is home to the largest Aboriginal population in the greater Sydney region. Some of these people are descended from the original Darug occupants of the area. Others have migrated from other parts of Sydney and further afield, forming new kinds of community based on their shared historical experience.

A number of Darug descendants have been campaigning for years to have the Native Institution site preserved and its significance recognised. The site was first surveyed in 1982.³⁷ It was listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1992. In 2002 the local Blacktown City Council, Landcom and the NSW Heritage Office commissioned a conservation management plan which at time of writing is at draft stage. Nomination of the site to the state Heritage Register is under way. A range of options for development of the site and promotion of its historic significance have been canvassed in the course of this recent research.³⁸

Site 4: Day of Mourning

In the heart of Sydney, the old Australian Hall building is considered by some to be the birthplace of the Aboriginal civil rights movement in Australia. On Australia Day, 26 January 1938, while the nation celebrated Australia's sesqui-centenary, 100 Aboriginal people and their supporters gathered here to call for an end to what they saw as their callous treatment under the state's Aboriginal protection laws, and for Aboriginal people to be granted full citizenship rights. These meetings were proclaimed as a 'day of mourning'.³⁹ The work of those behind these meetings laid the ground upon which subsequent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people lobbied, eventually successfully, for the 1967 referendum to be held. The building was threatened with demolition in the mid-1990s and Aboriginal people and their supporters led a protracted struggle, which they finally won, to have a permanent conservation order placed on the building. It was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register in April 1999 and purchased the same year by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, with funds secured through the Indigenous Land Corporation. In 2000 the building underwent refurbishment to restore it to its original condition. For urban-based Aboriginal people there is powerful sym-

³⁵. Colin Gale pers comm.

³⁶. Brook & Kohen 1991: 37-44.

³⁷. Bickford 1981, then by Kohen 1986.

³⁸. Tracy Ireland pers comm.

³⁹. Horner 1994: 44.

bolism attached to the Australian Hall. Those associated with the building's reclamation see themselves as continuing a tradition of political activism that has its roots in the activities of the 1930s.⁴⁰

Site 5: Riverside Walk

In Parramatta, a new site gives a sense of the changing approach to the memorialisation of Sydney's colonial and more recent history discussed above. The Parramatta Riverside Walk is a 750m long painted pathway that explores the Aboriginal history of the area, and links the ferry terminal to Parramatta's main street. The artwork was created by local Aboriginal artist Jamie Eastwood. What is particularly interesting in relation to this site is that it not only celebrates the uncontroversial aspects of pre-contact Aboriginal society in the Parramatta area, it also confronts the frontier violence associated with invasion. There is no shirking the darkest corners of Australian history here – the themes of invasion, cross-cultural misunderstanding, massacres, Aboriginal resistance, and the stolen generations are all depicted. Importantly, these are not presented as generalised issues but as specific acts that occurred locally in the Parramatta region. The walk identifies key protagonists such as Governor Macquarie and his Native Institution. The lives of Aboriginal men Baluderry and Pemulwuy and their encounters with the British are also remembered here. Interpretive signage for the walk was developed by Parramatta City Council in consultation with an Aboriginal Advisory Group. The development of the Riverside Walk, as well as a number of other commissioned public artworks in the Parramatta area,⁴¹ was a local council initiative, and a local response to the reconciliation process. This is made explicit in the themes explored along the walk, as well as in its signage: as one of the interpretive panels states, 'the foreshore landscape works has [sic] embraced an Aboriginal viewpoint'.



Figure 6: The Parramatta Riverside Walk. Photograph by Alana Harris, courtesy of AIATSIS.

⁴⁰. Goodall 1988: 181-97.

⁴¹. Hinkson 2001: 128-32.

Site 6: Museum of Sydney

A final site brings this tour full circle. The Museum of Sydney, on the site of First Government House, stands as a powerful symbol of the contested nature of Australia's history. The Museum's unique interpretation of that history is experienced even before you enter its doors, with Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley's *Edge of Trees* installation, a collaborative artwork that symbolises the meeting of cultures that is the Museum's central theme. These trees are full of voices speaking the Aboriginal language of Sydney, and layers of material and memory associated with this site are set into their trunks. Inside the Museum a section of earth beneath the floor is exposed, revealing the original footings of the first Government House. This house was a central location for interaction between British officers and local Aboriginal people in the early years of the colony, especially during Phillip's governorship. It was to here that Arabanoo, Bennelong and Colebee were brought after their capture to be trained as go-betweens. Some reports suggest Aboriginal women sought refuge at the house from violent husbands, and medical treatment from Surgeon White. A number of Phillip's close Aboriginal companions such as Arabanoo and Baluderry were buried in his garden.⁴²

At the time of our visit to the museum, Gordon Syron's haunting artwork, *Invasion 1 – An Aboriginal perspective*, was the first image to be viewed as we entered the foyer, making a clear statement about the Museum's preparedness to make explicit its exploration of the contested nature of Australian history. Other exhibits explore Aboriginal people's continuing presence in Sydney – not just through the lens of continuous attachment to place, but through examinations of some of the new kinds of community that have been forged in Sydney over time. Cadigal Place, named for the original inhabitants of the land on which the museum stands, is a space dedicated exclusively to local exhibitions, which are developed in conjunction with a specially constituted advisory group. In amongst the diverse references to Sydney's Aboriginal past are other representations of colonial life. The Museum is most evocative as a place where aspects of the intersecting layers of Australia's history can be explored.

Making visible our shared history

At the beginning of this article I observed that a common feature of Sydney's Aboriginal places of the post-1788 period has historically been their relative invisibility, but that recent events have seen the beginnings of a shift in this respect. The introduction of a new education program that brings an Aboriginal perspective to a colonial icon such as Old Government House is indicative of such a shift, as is the proliferation of new sites such as the Riverside Walk, the Museum of Sydney, and a range of others not discussed here, including the Muru Mittigar Cultural Centre in Cranebrook, and new dedicated Indigenous display areas such as Bayagul at the Powerhouse Museum. Importantly, not all new sites are the initiatives of local government or cultural institutions. A newly planted 'bush tucker' walk in the grounds of Yarra Bay House at La Perouse, the outcome of a successful local project, reflects one Aboriginal community's interest in participating in this process of a shared and public reinterpretation of history and place.

⁴² McBryde 1989; Smith 2001.

What has been the process out of which these new sites and new approaches to interpreting history have emerged? Key moments of an evolving campaign can of course be charted throughout the twentieth century, in particular since the passing of the 1967 referendum. Stanner's identification of the 'great Australian silence' in his 1968 Boyer lectures,⁴³ and the sea change in the writing of Australian history that followed were critical moments in this process. As Byrne has noted, the 1970s also marked the beginning of an unrestrained embracing of Aboriginal 'heritage' in Australia.⁴⁴ But this was a heritage 'unhinged' from the concerns and aspirations of living Aboriginal people. Throughout the 1980s urban-based Aboriginal people fought in diverse arenas to gain acceptance of their distinctive identity as Aboriginal people. The 1990s were a momentous decade in Aboriginal Affairs, commencing with the tabling of the final report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991,⁴⁵ which included the proposal to establish the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, subsequently brought to life in a bipartisan Act of Parliament. In 1992 the historic Mabo decision in the High Court overturned the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. And, in 1997, as the reconciliation movement gathered steam, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission presented the federal government with its report on the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.⁴⁶ Reconciliation's 'people's movement' reached its pinnacle in May 2001, with more than 100000 people walking across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of the reconciliation process. Similar marches followed in all other capital cities. This people's movement fuelled an explosion of interest in the Aboriginal and colonial histories of Australia, a process grasped particularly enthusiastically at the local community level. Across the country citizens' groups, local municipal councils, and schools have undertaken to revise their official local histories, incorporating previously unrecognised Aboriginal perspectives. As this essay has shown, such activity has been particularly pronounced in large metropolitan centres such as Sydney. The closing ceremony of Sydney's 2000 Olympic Games contributed its own powerful images to this process too, with Australian rock band Midnight Oil belting out their song about land rights, 'Beds are burning', in 'sorry' printed overalls, before an assembled global media.

It would be naive to assume that reconciliation will be the carrier of a complete transformation of Australia's engagement with its colonial past. The process I have described has, of course, been met by a strong and steady counter movement, reflected most prominently since the mid-1990s in the Howard government's attacks on political correctness and the 'black armband' view of history, its amendment of the Native Title Act in 1998, and its refusal to engage in any compassionate way with the claims of the stolen generations. The success of the reconciliation movement in its first stage has lain in its ability to operate as a *people's* movement, acting independent of and indeed in response to the Howard government's approach to indigenous affairs. While this movement clearly attained significant momentum in recent years, the extent to which

⁴³. Stanner 1969.

⁴⁴. Byrne 1996: 99.

⁴⁵. Commonwealth Government, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991.

⁴⁶. National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families 1997.

that momentum might be harnessed again in the future is another question altogether. There are a series of related questions that might be posed: To what extent was the reconciliation movement primarily born of a collective emotional outpouring of grief in response to the public airing of the experiences of the stolen generations? Was it a momentary response, or will it hold its resonance over time? Are there other dimensions of Australia's colonial past that might provide a similarly emotionally charged focal point for a broad-based social movement in the future? What are the prospects of the aspirations articulated by a people's movement being given practical effect by political action?

The inscription of places as meaningful in new ways proved to be an integral part of the reconciliation process in the 1990s. The answers to the questions posed here will have implications for the future status of these places. In the worst outcome imaginable these places would fade from view if the people's movement dissipated. In the best possible scenario these sites would continue to gain recognition as anchorage points of shared history, sites where our different and similar experiences of being Australian could be brought together, exchanged, argued over, and finally, accepted.

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The experimental 1860s: Charles Walter's images of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Victoria

Jane Lydon

This is the first meeting like this I have ever seen. I am very glad this night. When I was camping about in every place I never got any meeting like this. Mr Green spoke to me a long time ago. He told me not to walk about any more. I kept his word. Mr Green told me plenty of good words from the Bible, and they made me very glad. Mr Hamilton spoke to me at Woori-Yaloak, and made me to know more. I now know plenty of good words from the Bible. I am very glad. Mr Green and all the Yarra blacks and me went through the mountain. We had no bread for four or five days. We did all this to let you (Goulburn blacks) know about the good word. Now you have all come to the Yarra, I am glad. You now know plenty. Do not go away any more, else you will lose it again. This is better than drinking. We are all glad this night. This is good.

Simon Wonga, Wurundjeri leader,
Illustrated Australian News, 25 August 1865: 13.

Australian historians have long known of the importance of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, near Healesville, Victoria (1863–1924), as a site of Indigenous strength in responding to the forces of colonialism.¹ The political sophistication of Kulin residents in protesting official treatment during the 1870s and 1880s effectively gained the support of politicians and the public, with the result of delaying attempts to close the station until the late 1880s. Less well known is the station's role as a place of prolific visual production, where meanings about Aboriginal culture, difference, and race relations were created by white photographers, and subsequently circulated amongst an international popular and scholarly audience. As the Aboriginal community closest to Melbourne, Coranderrk was visited by photographers and scientists from its earliest years, assuming emblematic status as an Aboriginal 'showplace', and generating an archive of around 3000 images now held by institutions around the world – the largest body of photographs taken at a single Australian Aboriginal place. These images constituted a powerful visual language which has been overlooked by historians concerned with the documentary record. One of Australia's first travelling

¹ See, for example, Barwick 1998, Mulvaney 1989.

photographers, Charles Walter, took photographs of Coranderrk between 1865 and 1866 which were circulated within a range of increasingly distant contexts. As these images spiralled outward from Coranderrk, they were used to demonstrate very different truths about Aboriginal people: as newspaper illustrations or lush private albums they sought to efface difference, in demonstrating missionaries' successful 'civilisation' of their subjects; conversely, as scientific data they were used to 'prove' an essential biological difference. However, despite the strength of these colonial 'frames', it is also possible to see Indigenous objectives emerge from these powerful early images, in the evidence for their subjects' involvement in the picture-making process.

'This civilising experiment': Coranderrk in 1865

Simon Wonga's speech was reported in one of the station's first real public appearances: a newspaper account of the new 'civilising experiment' at Coranderrk, comprising a full page of text and five engravings based on Charles Walter's photographs.² Over the following year it was followed by several more written accounts of the station, and Walter sold images from his visits to Coranderrk and the surrounding region to several other newspapers.³ Some of these he collated in a commercially available album, titled 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation'.⁴ Consequently Redmond Barry, the President of the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition, commissioned Walter around May 1866 to make a series of portraits of the residents of Coranderrk, which was incorporated into a large display panel and subsequently sent to scientists in Russia, Italy, and England.⁵ These images were also made into an album for the family of John Green, the station superintendent.⁶ As a series of artefacts – here I examine newspaper features, two albums, an exhibition panel and scientific records – it is possible to trace their consumption and effects across a range of different audiences.⁷

At this time the Coranderrk station was a symbol of hope for Victoria's Aboriginal people and their white supporters. Despite opposition and difficulty, it had eventually been established in March 1863, at the junction of Badger Creek and the Yarra River. The station's internal dynamics were uniquely harmonious: relations between John Green, the station manager, and the residents, and between the different Aboriginal clans, were characterised by good will, mutual cooperation, and a sense of common purpose, as Wonga's speech attests. This was also a decade when humanitarians held sway over colonial policy, fostering a climate of public sympathy and optimism.⁸ However, this hopeful local movement had to contend with the juggernaut of colonialism: white government sought to confine Aboriginal people on stations, to

² *Illustrated Australian News*, 25 August 1865. An earlier account had appeared in the *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 24 March 1864.

³ See for example *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 24 March 1866; *Australian News for Home Readers*, 25 August 1865; *Illustrated Australian News*, 25 September 1865: 1, 10; *Illustrated Australian News*, 11 June 1866: 8.

⁴ State Library of Victoria (SLV), La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807, H13881/1-22.

⁵ SLV, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 326, H91.1/1-106.

⁶ Museum Victoria (MV), XP1937-XP 2043.

⁷ My approach, developed independently, echoes Deborah Poole's (1997) model of 'visual economy' and Elizabeth Edwards' (2001) examination of the flow of images through interpretative communities.

⁸ Attwood 1989: 82–85.

impose disciplinary technologies upon them which relied upon the visibility and demeanour of the residents. Walter's images helped to define textual and visual tropes which were repeated over and over during the century to follow, shaping the way people thought about Aboriginal people and difference, but also reflecting something of Aboriginal concerns.

Charles Walter

Charles Walter arrived in Australia from Germany in 1855 and was collecting for his patron, botanist Baron Ferdinand von Mueller by 1856. His earliest known photograph is dated 1862, and he was advertising as a 'Country Photographic Artist' by 1865. Gael Newton locates him at the vanguard of 'the new breed of photographers' specialising in landscape work, who, from the mid-1860s, set off on solo expeditions into remote parts of Victoria in search of picturesque views.⁹ As a collector of plants and images, Walter represented himself as an explorer, battling alone through impenetrable bush to capture the best views of Victoria's natural beauty for an urban audience.¹⁰ In 1873, a drawing showed 'our artist' off to work in pith helmet, axe and camera bag.¹¹ In 1874 another newspaper engraving showed Walter photographing an Aboriginal 'pin-up girl', alluding to his work with Aboriginal subjects, and indicating the legendary status his travels had achieved (Fig 1).¹² The accompanying text explained that:

Our engraving illustrates a characteristic phase of Australian bush life. A travelling photographer on the lookout for subjects has come upon a camp of natives. One, a half-caste girl, has attracted his attention by her wild beauty, and he has placed her in position, and is taking her photograph. Some of the natives squat close by watching the strange and mysterious process, and presently their grim figures will also be photographed to serve as ethnological specimens and curios to send to friends in England as examples of the rapidly disappearing Australian race.

This slightly prurient fantasy bears no relationship to Walter's *oeuvre*, which does not contain any images of naked women. The cartoon showing the 'half caste girl' suggests a gypsy rather than an Aboriginal woman, although the group in the background resembles some of Walter's views of camp groups taken at Lake Tyers, for example. The writer combines romantic fancy with an early allusion to photographic souvenirs of the 'dying race'.¹³ While Walter was known, then as now, for these early and

⁹ Newton 1988: 50; Gaskins 1992: 834–35; Crombie 1995: 1; Gillbank 1992: 3–10.

¹⁰ *Illustrated Australian News*, 10 October 1866. In March 1868 an article accompanying an image of Victoria's Niagara Falls described how he 'scrambled for days over rocks and ravines, through tangled undergrowth and swollen creeks, in order to get the nearest and best views [and] to direct lovers of nature to places hitherto unknown, where they will be able to gratify their admiration to the full' *Illustrated Australian News*, 3 March 1868.

¹¹ *Illustrated Australian News*, 31 December 1873: 212.

¹² *Australasian Sketcher*, 18 April 1874: 6. For an account of Walter's scientific exploits see Gaskins 1992: 834–35.

¹³ While Newton annotates this image as being 'after a photograph', the original newspaper account does not state this, nor does it seem likely that a second photographer would have been on hand to record this moment. Like the text, the form of the image appears to combine a cartoonist's romantic notion of a 'wild beauty' with a version of one of Walter's Lake Tyers views, showing a standard camp scene, such as 'Black's Camp. Lake Tyers Mission, Gippsland', *Illustrated Australian News*, 7 August 1869: 160.

powerful records of a significant moment in Aboriginal history, and he visited Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers subsequent to his early trip to Coranderrk, in the context of Walter's long-term photographic practice there are not many of these images, nor were they frequently reproduced. They should be seen in the wider context of the developing popular interest in the environment which Walter catered to. Despite evidence for a relationship of mutual sympathy between Walter and the Coranderrk community, he used various techniques to comply with contemporary stories told about his Aboriginal subjects, or to invent new ones; his images intersect systematically with contemporary rhetoric about the process of civilising and Christianising Aboriginal people.

Newspapers

In considering how ideas about Aboriginal people – for example, as a 'doomed race' – were popularised during the 1860s, Bain Attwood points to Coranderrk's emblematic importance in shaping the views of Melbourne policy-makers who had little or no other contact with Aboriginal people.¹⁴ One aspect of this discourse which has not been examined is the visual imagery circulated by the illustrated press, which communicated the arguments of a range of competing interests, including humanitarian segregationists such as the Reverend Hamilton and John Green, as well as opponents of this policy, who became increasingly vocal into the 1870s. Elizabeth Morrison has argued that Victoria's very numerous newspapers were powerful agents of political and ideological change: the 'regular, multiple, individual and contemporaneous acts of reading' by its mass audience constructed an imagined world grounded in everyday life.¹⁵ Engraved versions of Walter's first photographs of Coranderrk as an exemplary 'civilising experiment' appeared in June 1865, stressing the rapid progress being made by Aboriginal residents in adopting Christianity, a work ethic, and European material culture.

From the point of view of the Kulin, an important effect of Walter's photographic practice and its reproduction in newspapers was the development of a sharp awareness of their visual representation by whites. In contrast to the contemporary understanding of the 'civilising process', they can be seen to have appropriated these forms selectively, for their own uses. This took place at several levels: as many have acknowledged, the Kulin's political activism was particularly effective because it was adroitly expressed through white structures of negotiation, as in the early and formative deputation to Governor Barkly's 1863 levée. An important aspect of this approach was the manipulation of verbal and visual representations, perhaps more congenial to people who had traditionally stressed these dimensions of sociality. I argue that these visual aspects of Coranderrk's history have been overlooked by historians, perhaps because of European cultural assumptions, equating writing with a more general competence, and reflected in a historiographical bias towards documentary evidence, and political history. While the history of colonial photography has generally presented it as a practice which exploited Indigenous subjects, a detailed understanding of the mechanisms of visual imagery and ephemeral mass media such as newspapers at this period suggests that the Kulin in some degree shaped the content and form of these early photographs.

¹⁴. Attwood 1989: 83–88.

¹⁵. Morrison 1992: 136–38.

At this time it was noted of the station that:

Many of the interiors were tolerably well furnished, the seats and tables being made of rough bush timber, and the walls decorated with pictures cut out of the *Illustrated London News* and the illustrated newspapers published in Melbourne. There were also several photographs, which were highly prized.¹⁶

The Kulin would have had access to Walter's photographs of Coranderrk once they appeared in the illustrated newspapers, from August 1865.¹⁷ In May 1866 another visitor noted that the huts 'were all partially papered with that ubiquitous periodical the *Illustrated London News*, and on most of the side mantelpieces were photographs of the ladies and gentlemen of the establishment'.¹⁸ It seems likely that Walter had passed the results of his work at the station back to his subjects. We know that Aboriginal people had always had a rich visual culture, and they readily appropriated this new form. In the mid-to-late 1860s most Kulin adults were illiterate, but were keen to learn to read the bible and newspapers, and to write letters;¹⁹ their consumption of the newspapers commented on by visitors would have centred upon the images. It is entertaining to imagine the settlement's self-reflexive enjoyment of these mass-produced portraits of themselves and their home, as well as hearing what was written about them.

More to the point, I suggest that the self-conscious awareness of their own public profile and agency in white society through the mass media of the press and commercial photography was one means of enabling residents to develop the 'sophisticated' approach to politics and representation that outsiders were always surprised by and often attributed to external white intervention. A crucial aspect of the residents' political savvy and their ability to manipulate public debate, later to prove so important, was their self-conscious understanding of how they were represented in white discourse, and their dextrous intervention within it.

Queen Victoria's promise: the Governor's levée, May 1863

For example, traditional Aboriginal protocols had involved sophisticated formal negotiations between tribal groups, and the Kulin quickly learnt the value of diplomacy in white society also, enabling them to assert their ownership of Coranderrk. In May 1863, only a couple of months after the station was established, a deputation of Wurundjeri and Taungerong led by Simon Wonga attended Governor Barkly's public levée, celebrating the Queen's birthday and the marriage of the Prince of Wales. They presented him, as the vice-regal agent of Queen Victoria, with weapons for the Prince and rugs and baskets for the Queen. The Jajowrong at Mount Franklin sent their gifts to the Queen independently with two letters written by 13-year-old Ellen, who had also crocheted a collar for the Queen and a doily for the wife of the departing Governor. Later in the year the Jajowrong joined the others at Coranderrk.²⁰

¹⁶. Report of Board inspection on 22/7/1865, Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1866: 4.

¹⁷. *Illustrated Australian News*, 25 August 1865.

¹⁸. 'Country Sketches: The Blackfellows' Home', *Australasian* (Melbourne), 5 May 1866: 135.

¹⁹. Reverend Hamilton's evidence to Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1877: 23; Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1866: 5.

²⁰. Barwick 1998: 66-67.

The levée was reported in the *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 18 June 1863, accompanied by an engraving of the 'Deputation of Victorian Aborigines at the Governor's levée' (Fig 2). It described how members of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines were introduced, 'accompanied by chiefs of the Goulburn, Yarra, Western Port, and Gipps Land blacks, and several members of the respective tribes to the number of about sixteen, clothes in European costume, but wrapped in opossum rugs and carrying spears.' Mr Heales then read an address from the Board which introduced the 'Waworung, Boonorong, and Tarawaragal tribes of Australian aborigines' who wished to congratulate the Queen on the marriage of the Prince of Wales, and explained that the deputation originated with the people of Coranderrk, whom the Board merely assisted. The secretary of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, Robert Brough Smyth, read an address, interpreted as:

Blacks of the tribes of Wawoorong, Boonorong and Tara-Waragal send this to the Great Mother Queen Victoria. We and other blackfellows send many thanks to the Great Mother Queen for many many things. Blackfellow now throw away all war-spears. No more fighting but live like white men almost. Blackfellows hear that your first son has married. Very good that! Blackfellows send all good to him, and to you, his Great Mother, Victoria. Blackfellows come from Miam and Willam to bring this paper to the Good Governor. He will tell you more. All Blackfellows round about agree to this. This is all.

Wonga took a 'large and beautifully worked' opossum skin rug which he spread out, and the 'other blacks, one of them about eighty years of age ['Mr King?'] 'laid on the rug a number of spears, a wimmera, shield and waddy'.²¹ The engraved image shows the uniformed, decorated Governor, flanked by costumed judge and soldiers, facing an elderly man wrapped in a cloak and the taller, younger Wonga. A short white man in evening dress stands behind Mr King, facing away from the Aborigines, hands held apart as if declaiming – presumably Thomas or Brough Smyth. The assembled throng fills the ornate ballroom. The image echoes the written account's attention to protocol and formality, representing the deputation on a footing of equality with the assembly's other delegates, but belongs to an iconographic tradition showing defeated peoples paying tribute to their conqueror.²² The Board was later to report that 'The conduct of the Aborigines was grave and dignified; and Wonga, the principal man of the Yarra tribe, addressed His Excellency with becoming modesty, and yet with earnestness'.²³ This newspaper representation was evidence to the Kulin of the extreme political importance to whites of English government, represented by the Crown.

While Simon Wonga expressed his people's gratitude to the Queen, this was of a limited kind. However, as intimated by the pictorial icon of surrender, it was received by Europeans as an expression of loyalty and submission, subsumed into a model of conquered peoples surrendering to imperial might, as the Queen's response demonstrates. She expressed the:

satisfaction with which Her Majesty has received such assurances of their attachment and loyalty, and the Queen would be glad that the girl Ellen should be

21. *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 18 June 1863.

22. I thank Roger Benjamin for pointing this out to me.

23. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1864: 11.

assured that Her Majesty has had much pleasure in accepting the collar which she has worked. The Queen trusts that the advantage of education may be shown to this poor girl, and that she may be encouraged not only to seek her own improvement, but to acquaint the other aboriginal inhabitants of the interest that their Queen, however distant from her, will always feel in their advancement and welfare.

... their Royal Highnesses have received many tokens of good will and affection from the subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, but conspicuous in their estimation are those which show, as in the present instance, that these sentiments animate the native population of so distant and loyal dependencies.²⁴

The Queen's letters to Coranderrk had a double meaning, equally satisfying to black and white, explaining why it became a central story told by and about the residents of Coranderrk. To the newspaper-reading public and to white officials, it appeared that the Aboriginal people had acknowledged the importance and power of the Crown and the benefits of white civilisation in a suitably grateful manner. The Board report for 1865 recorded that 'when, in obedience to your Excellency's commands, the gracious sentiments of her Majesty were made known to the blacks, they appeared to be sensible of the kindness and favour shown to them'.²⁵ Ellen and her crocheted collar became to whites an emblem of acquired virtues and the 'civilising process', and the honour paid her by the Queen's 'personal' response.

To Aboriginal people, by contrast, the event symbolised their rights to the land. While Ellen's crocheted collar was not presented at the Governor's levée, the personal expression of royal concern, resulting from the protocols enacted between the ambassadors of black and white, was taken to represent a legal and binding promise of ownership.²⁶ Diane Barwick suggests that European rituals such as the Batman Treaty were understood by the Kulin in terms of the Tanderrum ceremony, a means of sharing rights to territory, 'a formal procedure whereby approved strangers were guaranteed the host clan's protection as well as giving and receiving allegiance and access to each other's resources'.²⁷ These competing meanings coalesce in Charles Walter's photographs of Ellen, who crocheted the collar and was singled out by the Queen (Figs 6, 14, and 34).²⁸ Walter's two portraits of Ellen were of great significance: they are very similar in organisation, being oval framed and bust length, showing a young, neatly dressed woman. Both portraits are characterised by her neat and tidy demeanour, easily enfolded into the story of Ellen and the Queen.²⁹

A range of historians have noted the role of 'Queen Victoria narratives' in Indigenous responses to colonialism, in which the Queen gave Aboriginal people their reserves as compensation for dispossession.³⁰ Heather Goodall also notes the recur-

²⁴. Despatches from Duke of Newcastle to Governor Sir Charles Darling, 18 September 1863 and 17 November 1863, reproduced Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1864, Appendix VI.

²⁵. Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1864: 12

²⁶. Several writers have, like the Kulin, conflated the two independent presentations: eg Mulvaney 1989: 153.

²⁷. Barwick 1998: 23–24.

²⁸. MV XP 2003.

²⁹. Ellen makes three archival appearances: in the newspaper engraving reproduced in the *Illustrated Australian News*, 25 August 1865, in the AAUC album; and attached to Walter's letter to the commissioners of 8 May 1866, PROV: VPRS 927/3.

rence of this theme in NSW claims to land well into the twentieth century, suggesting that it reflects the conviction that Aboriginal rights to land had been recognised at the highest levels of the British state.³¹ More specifically, Diane Barwick argues that the deputation members had

for years been told that the Queen had explicitly commissioned the Governor to protect Aborigines and were apparently aware that his formal consent was required for the reservation of land ... The reservation of 2,300 acres [931 ha] for their use on 30 June 1863 was probably coincidental ... But the timing of this decision, whatever its cause, encouraged the Kulin to believe in the efficacy of deputations ... [the Queen's] letters helped to establish their belief, still voiced by descendants in the 1970s, that Coranderrk was the direct gift of the Queen and Sir Henry Barkly and belonged to them and their heirs in perpetuity.³²

The image's mythical status is reflected in the inclusion of Ellen's portrait in *every* set of photographs which survives from Walter's work at Coranderrk, even in a letter from Walter to the Melbourne Exhibition Commissioners, as a sample of his work; no other image appears in each instance. Perhaps the newspaper report of the levée had originally inspired him to go to Coranderrk, where the event's reception by the Kulin as well as by whites directed his attention towards its emblemisation in the person of Ellen. The entangled meanings converging in this image were facilitated by its visual ambiguity; as tangible objects, these portraits could call up the story over and over again. In the Green family album, where handwritten captions reveal something of the personal and idiosyncratic relationships prevailing between the Greens and the residents, the memory of this legendary event is prompted by 'Eliza's daughter. (crocheted a collar and sent it to Queen Victoria, who acknowledged it by a letter.' The queen's presence was also invoked by the portraits of her which hung above residents' mantel-pieces, as noted of Wurundjeri leader and artist William Barak in the 1890s.³³

'This civilising experiment'

The feature article, which appeared in the *Illustrated Australian News* on 25 August 1865, defined several themes which remained influential in shaping representation of the station and Victorian Aborigines. It consisted of a full-page article accompanied by six engravings based on Charles Walter's photographs (Figs 3–8). This account, in a sense, offers a means of anchoring the photographs' often ambivalent meanings, reducing their polysemy through the less ambiguous text. Changes made to the photographs on which the published engraving was based also point towards editorial intention. Roland Barthes suggested that newspaper text becomes parasitic on the press image, 'a kind of secondary vibration'.³⁴ Here, where the image has been changed, even caricatured, it is hard to weigh their relative strength; they are complicitous, telling the same story: that of the humanitarians, specifically the Reverend Hamilton.

The August 1865 feature is dominated by a full-page engraved view of Coranderrk (Fig 3). This differs from the original photograph (Fig 9), known from a

³⁰. Rowse 1993: 13–14; Rowley 1972; Read 1984; Reynolds 1992: 146.

³¹. Goodall 1996: 103.

³². Barwick 1998: 66; Barwick 1974: 60.

³³. Baessler 1895: 173, cited in Sayers 1994: 15.

³⁴. Barthes 1977: 26.

contemporary album, in various ways. In fact, the original panorama comprised four photographs of different sections of the settlement, glued together to form a more comprehensive view, the different vantage points resulting in an awkward distortion of perspective.³⁵ The panorama view encapsulated the station landscape in its entirety, recording its operation as an orderly, self-sufficient system.

The engraver's changes to the original are significant: it has been tidied up. Formally, the complex, untidy elements of the photograph, with its assorted vantage points, have been balanced, and its perspective unified. As Louise Partos notes, the miasmas have been deleted from the extreme left hand side of the image, denying the problem that white officials had in persuading the Kulin to abandon traditional housing and their nomadic lifestyle. Clothing hanging over fences on the photograph's left has also been removed. The neat houses and schoolroom have been enlarged, a distortion introduced by the original collage but conveniently 'imbu[ing] the reproduction with a sense of order and the importance of education', the addition of a central bullock and dray balancing the distant buildings and hinting at industry and wealth. ³⁶ Pictorially, the flattened, businesslike composition of the photograph, attempting to record as much of the settlement as possible, has been organised according to conventions of the picturesque, reducing the complexity of the photograph to a symbol.

These visual insinuations are spelt out by the text, which emphasised Coranderrk's neatness:

Nowhere else in the Australian colonies is there to be seen so large a number of natives collected together, of whom it can be said that they appear to be reclaimed from their former wandering and savage life, and to be conformed to the manner of Europeans. They are all dressed in European clothing, not received in charity, but acquired by the earnings of their own industry. They live in huts neatly constructed of slabs and bark, consisting of two rooms, having two square windows in front and a door in the centre. The houses are separated from each other by a small space, and stand on rising ground in a row, like one side of a street. A little lower down the rising ground, and in front of the natives' houses, stands a spacious school room, with dormitories for the children attached.

This emphasis on the place's physical order accords with the engraved view, underlining the notion of the settlement as productive, shortly to be 'independent of government supplies'. It describes the accomplishments of the children's schooling, and the 'religious element [which] is made a prominent part in this civilising experiment', concluding that 'efforts at civilising the blacks have been made before, and have failed. But, as far as we can judge at present, Mr Green's experiment is very hopeful.' Like the engraved view, the original's complexity has been smoothed out, reduced to a set of tropes stressing industry, improvement, and order.

³⁵ The photograph itself improved on the settlement's layout by lining up the building facades, actually scattered across the hillside, so as to present a united front. From Walter's views onwards, however, images of Aboriginal reserves are characterised by order and regularity; for example, see Caire's view of Lake Tyers, where the houses run in a line downhill towards the water, seeming, like their residents, to stand to attention.

³⁶ Partos 1994: 101-03.

This glowing overview, comprising view and text, is supplemented by several shorter vignettes. First, a portrait of John Green, the manager – a bust of a serious bearded man gazing to the right (Fig 4) – is underwritten by a biographical account of his arrival from Scotland in 1855, and his conversion to the mission. Interestingly, two portraits of Aboriginal residents provide a counterpart to Green's. First is Simon Wonga, the Wurundjeri leader, 'chief of the Yarra tribe' (Fig 5). The text noted his conversion from hard drinking to Christianity, and that 'It was very much owing to Simon's influence with the blacks that Mr Green succeeded in getting them to adopt a settled mode of life; and throughout Mr Green has found him eminently serviceable in the work of native improvement.'

As cited at the beginning of this paper, Wonga's speech, on the occasion of the teacher's birthday, demonstrates the positive view the residents held of the settlement's establishment and future, celebrating his conversion. He alludes to the trek to Coranderrk in epic terms, and interestingly, in integral relationship with his references to the bible. This event was of profound importance to the Kulin, and, indeed, to their white supporters, such as Green and Thomas. Its memory was structured by biblical imagery and, like Ellen's letter from the Queen, passed into local myth, as I discuss shortly. Then followed Ellen's portrait (Fig 6), for whites representing submission to civilisation, and accompanied by a short paragraph re-telling the story of the Queen's letter.

These two examples of a hopeful future are counterbalanced by an account of 'Old King,' (Fig 7), described, however, as docile and elderly, a remnant of traditional Aboriginal culture who yet acknowledges the benefits of white society. An interest in Aboriginal 'nobility' characterises white representations throughout the 19th century, perhaps evident here. Pictorially, 'Old King' is complemented by a view of a 'MI MI', inhabited by a man and a woman dressed in European clothes, which we are told is his dwelling, 'until a hut can be built for him' (Fig 8).³⁷ This image of 'savagery', deliberately excluded from the main settlement view, jars a little with the preceding seamless account of progress and prosperity, a dissonance deployed on several levels as a narrative device constructing an opposition between different ideas about Aboriginal people. Broad thematic patterns are evident within illustrated newspapers at this time, on the one hand contrasting stories about 'wild' Aboriginal people in conflict with white settlers³⁸, and 'traditional' Aboriginal culture, with the redemptive theme of the more optimistic mission features, often written by missionaries, on the other. This tension also exists within representations of Coranderrk itself, as exemplified by the August 1865 feature's inclusion of 'Old King', despite its overt message of evolution: he measured the progress made by the educated residents of the station, marking the difference between traditional and modern.

'Australian Aborigines Under Civilization'

Walter's 1865 Coranderrk images were also collated in the form of a commercial album titled 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilization' (AAUC, Figs 9-13), part of a mid-1860s boom in the sale of bound albums.³⁹ Unlike the newspaper reproductions, its

³⁷. It is not clear what the origin of this engraving is: it appears in neither the AAUC nor the 1866 series.

³⁸. Dowling 1998: 36-38.

only written signposts take the form of captions; in particular, the album's title uncompromisingly directs our understanding of these photographs: we are being shown Aboriginal people who are being changed. Its effects are primarily visual, however, achieved by the internal logic of the choice, arrangement, and relationship of the photographs within the album, as well as each image's individual import. The album's structure, like the popular newspaper reports, imposes on the viewer an understanding of the progress of Christianity and civilisation at Coranderrk, in teaching Aboriginal people how to dress, live and behave like whites. It tells the story of hardships overcome by Aboriginal settlers whose attachment to a new home symbolises commitment to the Christian values of religious devotion and hard work. Again like the newspaper account, the familiar themes of order and industry, attachment to place and their new home, defined against traditional 'savagery', structure this series. However, it is also possible to perceive Indigenous objectives, which disrupt the rhetoric of 'progress', or which, more subtly, appropriate it for Aboriginal purposes.

The album opens with the four-part panorama known from the newspaper engraving of August 1865, its title appearing below in large stamped Gothic script (Fig 9). As I've noted, each photograph assumed a different vantage point, emphasising the schoolhouse, and the Green's home, which were taken from closer up. The photographic panorama, unlike the engraving, makes this disjunction apparent. It also includes rows of schoolchildren standing, stiff and posed, in front of the schoolhouse, with Mr Green on the right, and two unidentified Aboriginal women and Ellen standing on the steps.

Unlike the careful layout of other reserves, a totalising hierarchical plan had not been imposed on the Coranderrk settlement, which arose from more consensual origins, despite the textual accounts which stressed its neatness – and so Walter did his best to portray it. He resolved the technical difficulty of getting everything in, while giving certain landmarks sufficient prominence, by collage, a ruse which allowed him to stress what he thought were the settlement's salient features. The four parts prompt an evolutionary narrative in reading the image, moving from the *mia mias* on the left, across the tidy huts of the 'civilising' Kulin, to focus especially on the schoolhouse and dormitories, also used for religious services, and the Green family's exemplary residence. This comprehensive view was aided by the album format, determining the image's consumption in private; it could be pored over, a slow traverse of the station landscape yielding up many small details about the place and its inhabitants to the interested viewer.

But the unruliness of the Coranderrk landscape hints at other priorities: details erased from the engraved version include a possum skin rug and washing spread out to dry over the split rail fencing across the front of the 'street' of huts, marring its appearance, and the *mia mias* on the extreme left, last of the row of dwellings, which indicate the presence of residents pursuing a way of life which was to some extent traditional.

³⁹. It seems likely that all these photographs were roughly contemporaneous as a number of photographs included in the album appear on the basis of newspaper reproductions to have been taken between August 1865 and before June 1865, while no 1866 portraits are included; in addition their message echoes the newspaper series rather than the 1866 portraits.

These residents were represented as marginal to the settlement's real work, although, as photographs reveal, they continued to live in this way into the 1880s.

As the viewer moved closer into the village other signs of civilisation appeared: turning to page two, we see four similar views of station buildings, captioned 'The Station Kitchen', 'Simon Wonga's Residence', 'Johnny Webster's Residence', and 'Morgan's Residence' (Fig 10). In each of these, a family group stands before neat slab huts, accompanied in almost every case by the Greens. Page three shows more of the same, imposing European structures of domesticity embodied in the nuclear family upon the residents, pictorially effecting a central humanitarian 'civilising' objective by disaggregating the settlement into a series of small family units. Like the Board's periodic inspections, these images exposed Aboriginal homes to white surveillance and report.

By page four, Walter has selected groups ('girls', 'boys', 'lubras', 'blacks') who stand stiffly in front of a blanket hung on an outside wall (Fig 11). These neatly posed groups de-personalise the people involved; they are studies of types, distinguishing between the successfully progressing residents of the first ten images, and, as a kind of savage postscript, what is being left behind.

But while we might be acutely aware of the large-scale, irreversible changes being imposed upon the Kulin, we cannot overlook the fact that they have chosen to cooperate with the photographer, conforming with his requirements: standing stiffly according to arrangement, even where a small boy's hurt foot requires that he be supported from behind. More significantly, they stress a theme which was of central concern to the residents as well as to the missionaries – that *ohome*, arguing for the care and attachment of the Kulin to the place. Like their promise from the Queen, the Coranderrk residents' assertion of their goals within white discourse was characteristic. They had their own reasons, perhaps different from the missionaries', to see settled residence at Coranderrk as necessary and desirable. This is made explicit when we turn to page five.

Coranderrk as Goshen, a 'land of light and plenty'

Here we see a remarkable photograph titled 'The Yarra Tribe starting for the Acheron' (Fig 12). This caption locates the photograph at the moment of setting off for the promised reserve, in February 1860 (Coranderrk was finally chosen in February–March 1863) – but it is impossible for Walter to have been present at this time. Instead it is a fictionalisation, a historical recreation of the mythical story of the station's foundation. It reflects the extreme importance of this event to the Kulin and to the Green family. This unique reconstruction of a key event in Aboriginal history must have been prompted by the Aboriginal subjects; while its form may have been Walter's idea, and the importance of the theme to Coranderrk's residents was certainly recognised by sympathetic whites such as William Thomas, *Guardian of Aborigines*, its conception reflects an Aboriginal perspective. Like Ellen's portrait, the story represented by Walter's image had a double meaning: to whites it signified progress; to the Aboriginal people it symbolised their rights to the land.

Despite the technical requirement to remain quite still during the exposure of the plate, Walter has attempted to achieve a sense of movement by posing the line of men and women as if taking their first step forward. Each man holds a gun over his shoul-

der, and a swag, as do the women lined up in the background, but parallel with rather than following, the men. The leader is presumably Simon Wonga, who we are told was tall, at 5ft 10in. The third man in line is John Green, his face slightly obscured; he carries a staff instead, as befits a man of the cloth. As 'manager' we know that John Green's relationship with the residents was close and 'equal'; interestingly, Walter was able to represent the relationship between Green and the Aboriginal people pictorially, with the Aboriginal leaders at the head of the line but Green occupying a central position. This technique also assigns the women a secondary but complementary role. Rather than addressing the camera in an explicit relationship of mutual regard, as in the posed groups, here the remembered event itself is the subject.

The story of the blacks' journey to Coranderrk was translated into biblical figures of speech, and condensed into this heroic pictorial form by the white photographer. It is predicated on Coranderrk as a 'Goshen', a land of light and plenty. The road to Coranderrk was indeed a long one, so it is not surprising that it was remembered in epic terms. We know that a deputation of Taungerong and two Wurundjeri as interpreters had visited William Thomas in February 1859 to petition for 'a particular part of the Upper Goulburn, on the Acharon [sic] River.'⁴⁰ On 10 March the delegation and Thomas set off to select the land, and on his return to Melbourne, Thomas met groups of Aboriginal people 'wending their way to their Goshen.' This is an allusion to the story of Exodus, where God's promise to Abraham, subsequently reaffirmed to his descendants, is fulfilled after Moses led the oppressed Israelites out of Egypt, through a period of exile, spent wandering in the desert, finally to Canaan.⁴¹ The men assured Thomas that they would 'set down on the land like white men',⁴² as Marie Fels notes, a landmark moment in cross-cultural history.⁴³ But they were moved from the Acheron in August 1860 to another reserve, the Mohican, and finally to Coranderrk in February–March 1863.

The biblical imagery used by William Thomas suffused the memories of those connected with the founding of Coranderrk, as evidenced by Simon Wonga's speeches of August 1865 (quoted at the beginning of this paper) and again at a wedding in February 1865:

This the way always- meeting together- this what I want you for- to come down here- Ye were all nagging about before. This the way Mr Green want all the people gather here from the bad place- bring you all up here to this good place- this place a home- God give the blacks this place. We have Mr Hamilton here alongside Mr Green- always come when we want him- good friends to blackfellow. These town ministers preach to us- make every fellow know more about God and Jesus Christ- make blackfellow- know all about it.⁴⁴

⁴⁰. Massola 1975: 7; Fels 1989. The Select Committee into Aborigines of 1858–59 had just concluded, in a climate of sympathy; it recommended that Aboriginal people had a right to compensation. The Mohican Run was requested 11 January 1861 and the first report by its manager, R. Hickson, was included in Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1861.

⁴¹. Genesis xlv, 10, Exodus viii.22, ix.26, The Holy Bible 1974; See also 'Promised Land', in Metzger and Coogan 1993: 619–20. Although, as David Frankel has pointed out to me, the Israelites spent their time in Goshen as slaves, an irony of which Thomas was probably aware.

⁴². Thomas to Brough Smyth, 20 July 1860, NAA: CRS B 312, Item 3, 6/912.

⁴³. Fels 1989.

Coranderrk's importance and attachment as a permanent home and refuge for its residents cannot be overestimated. Many scholars have seen the story of Exodus as sanctioning the dispossession and oppression foundational to western colonisation.⁴⁵ The figuring of Coranderrk as promised land is an ironic inversion of this pattern, for the Aboriginal people by no means became the triumphant conquerors who took possession of Canaan. Perhaps this is why this story (unlike that of Ellen and the Queen) was displaced by white settlers' views of themselves as the protagonists; seeing themselves as exiled, having won the land through suffering and hardship, white settlers have had difficulty in recognising Indigenous perspectives.⁴⁶

Despite traditional links to different territories at the time of establishment, as the speeches of Wonga testify, there was a firm alliance between the Kulin clans, the Taungerong (whose land at the Acheron the first reserve had been established on) and the Wurundjeri (whose territory Coranderrk lay within) and agreement to share the reserve. This unprecedented amalgamation and settlement must have seemed like the only option available to these people, who by 1860 had experienced 25 years of social dislocation. The biblical story told them by white supporters like Green would have provided an explanation for the process of settlement on a reserve, and a promise for the future, one which might have been expected to be understood and acknowledged by white society also.

But more than simply making sense to the Kulin, surely we must acknowledge that the Aboriginal people themselves played a large role in deciding to make this image, as well as in determining its resultant form. Available evidence for Aboriginal awareness of their plight, a determined and active response to it in establishing Coranderrk, and their lasting commitment to retaining the station, suggests that the story of how the residents endured great hardship for God's reward, their own land, would have been of primary symbolic and historical significance.

Further, the form of this image might be seen to owe something to traditional visual practice. As a re-enactment of a historical event, this image is almost unique in 19th-century photography. It is true that a very few examples are known of re-enactments, or purported eyewitness records, in fact staged after the event: for example, in 1916 an 'artificial reconstruction' of the capture of Maori leader Rua was produced as a piece of police propaganda.⁴⁷ But these address white exploits such as capturing 'wild' or 'criminal' blacks: a view from the European side of the frontier. They utilize the medium's supposed power as realist document, adopting the stance of an eyewitness: for example, Thomas Andrews' 1890s images of Fijian 'barbarism' purport to represent timeless ethnographic moments.⁴⁸ Again, Lindt's 'genre' scenes such as 'Gossip', showing an encounter between a maidservant and a male visitor, attempt to present accidental

^{44.} *Illustrated Australian News*, 2 February 1866: 14. Earlier, in 1863, John Green passed on fragments of Woiwurru to local anthropologist Robert Brough Smyth which are similarly patterned by these tropes of destruction and hope: Brough Smyth 1878, volume II: 111–12.

^{45.} Docker 1999: 3.

^{46.} Curthoys 1999: 32.

^{47.} Binney and Chaplin 1991: 437, Figure 7. And see Roslyn Poignant's study of Ryko's reenactments of the 'Fort Dundas Riot' (1996), also produced in 1916.

^{48.} Thomas 1994: 33–36.



Figure 1: 'Charles Walter at work', *Australasian Sketcher*, 18/4/1874, reproduced in G Newton, *Shades of Light: photography and Australia 1839-1988*, Australian National Gallery & Collins Australia with assistance from Kodak, Canberra, 1988: 50.

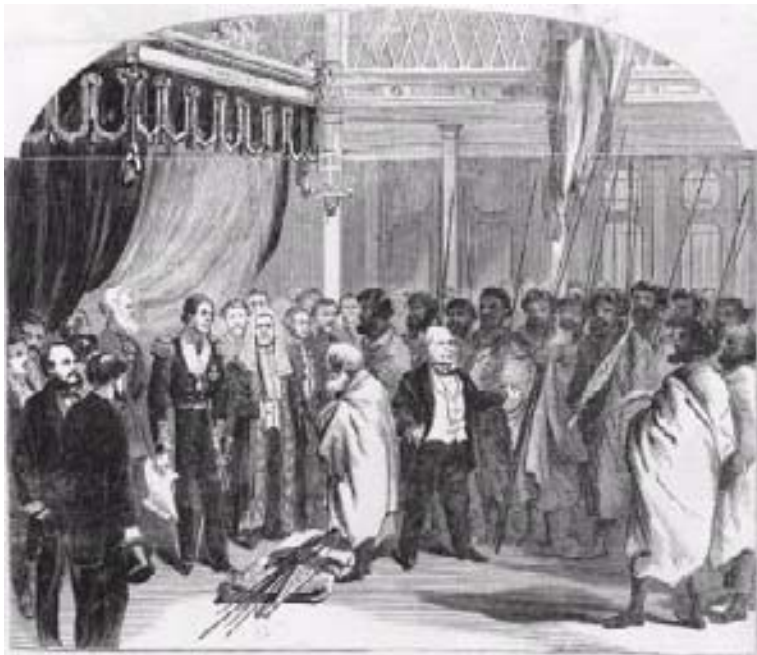


Figure 2:
'Deputation of
Victorian
Aborigines at the
Governor's levée',
*Illustrated
Melbourne Post*,
18/6/1863,
National Library of
Australia.



Figure 3: 'The Aboriginal Settlement at Coranderrk – from a photograph by Charles Walter', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



Figure 4: 'Mr John Green [From a photograph by Charles Walter]', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



SIMON.

Figure 5: 'Simon', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



ELLEN.

Figure: 'Ellen', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



Figure 7: (right) 'Old King', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.

Figure 8: (below) 'Mi Mi', *Illustrated Australian News*, 25/8/1865: 13, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.

OLD KING.



MI ML.

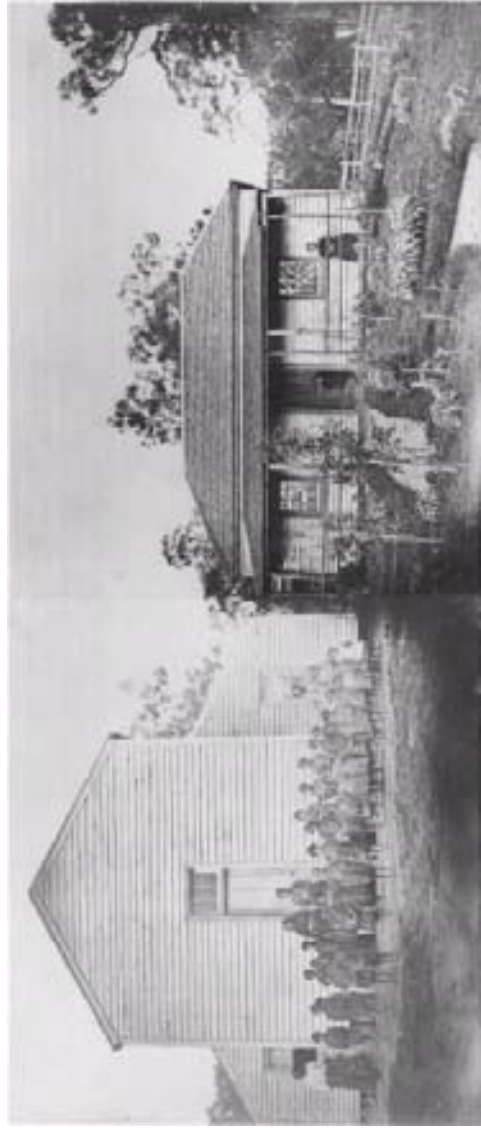


Figure 9: Charles Walter, Four-part panorama, 'Front View of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Village' page 1, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807. Within the album, these images form a single, continuous strip.

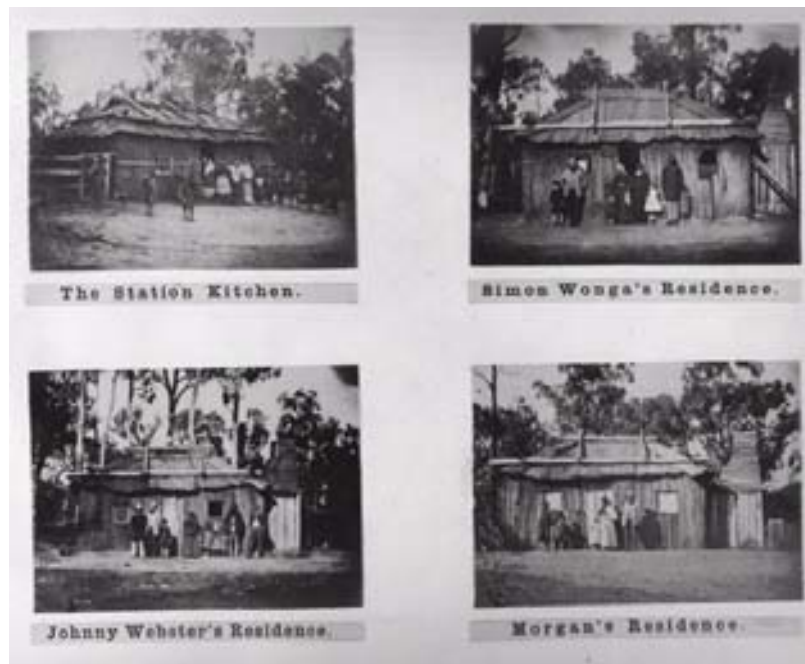


Figure 10: 'The Station Kitchen', 'Simon Wonga's Residence', 'Johnny Webster's residence', 'Morgan's Residence'. Page 2 (H13881/2-5), album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.

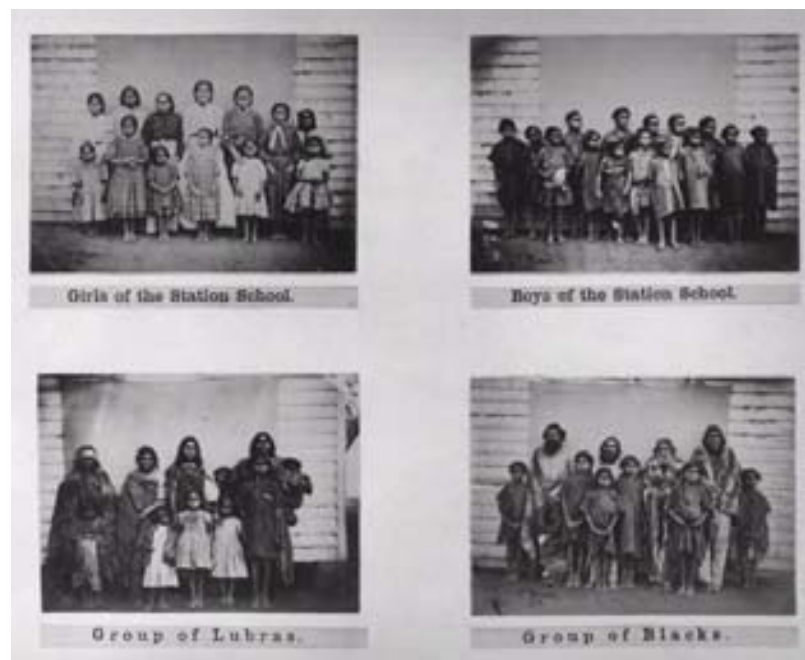


Figure 11: 'Girls of the Station School', 'Boys of the Station School', 'Group of Lubras', 'Group of Blacks'. Page 4 (H13881/10-13), album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.



Figure 12: 'The Yarra Tribe Starting for the Acheron 1862' (H13881/14). Page 5, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.



Figure 13: 'Open Air Service Amongst the Blacks in June 1865' (H13881/15). Page 6, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807



Figure 14: (left) Ellen (H13881/16). Page 7, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807

Figure 15: (right) Mr King; Chief of the Goulbourne tribe (H13881/17). Page 7, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.

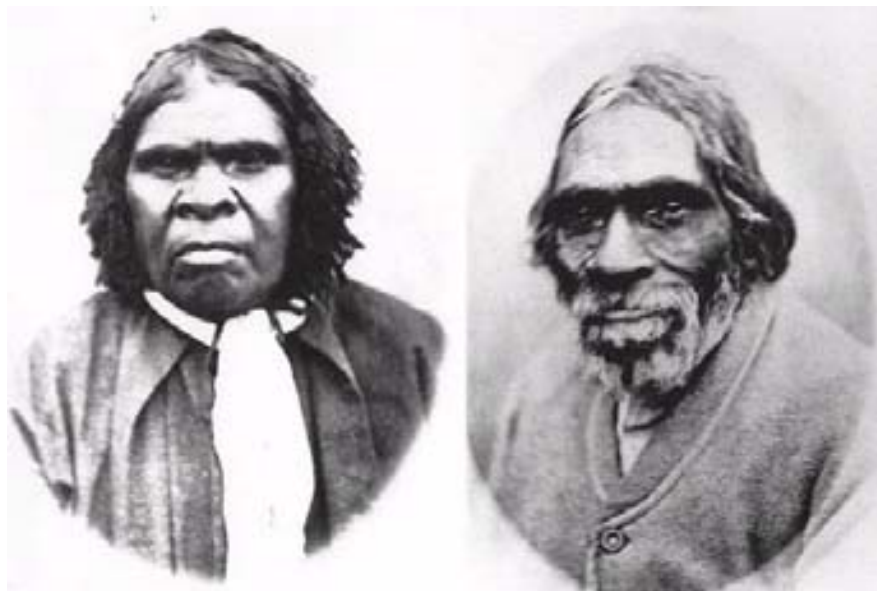


Figure 16: (left) Mrs Cotton (H13881/18). Page 8, album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.

Figure 17: (right) Mr Cotton; the oldest Native in Victoria (H13881/19), album 'Australian Aborigines Under Civilisation', State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection, LTA 807.

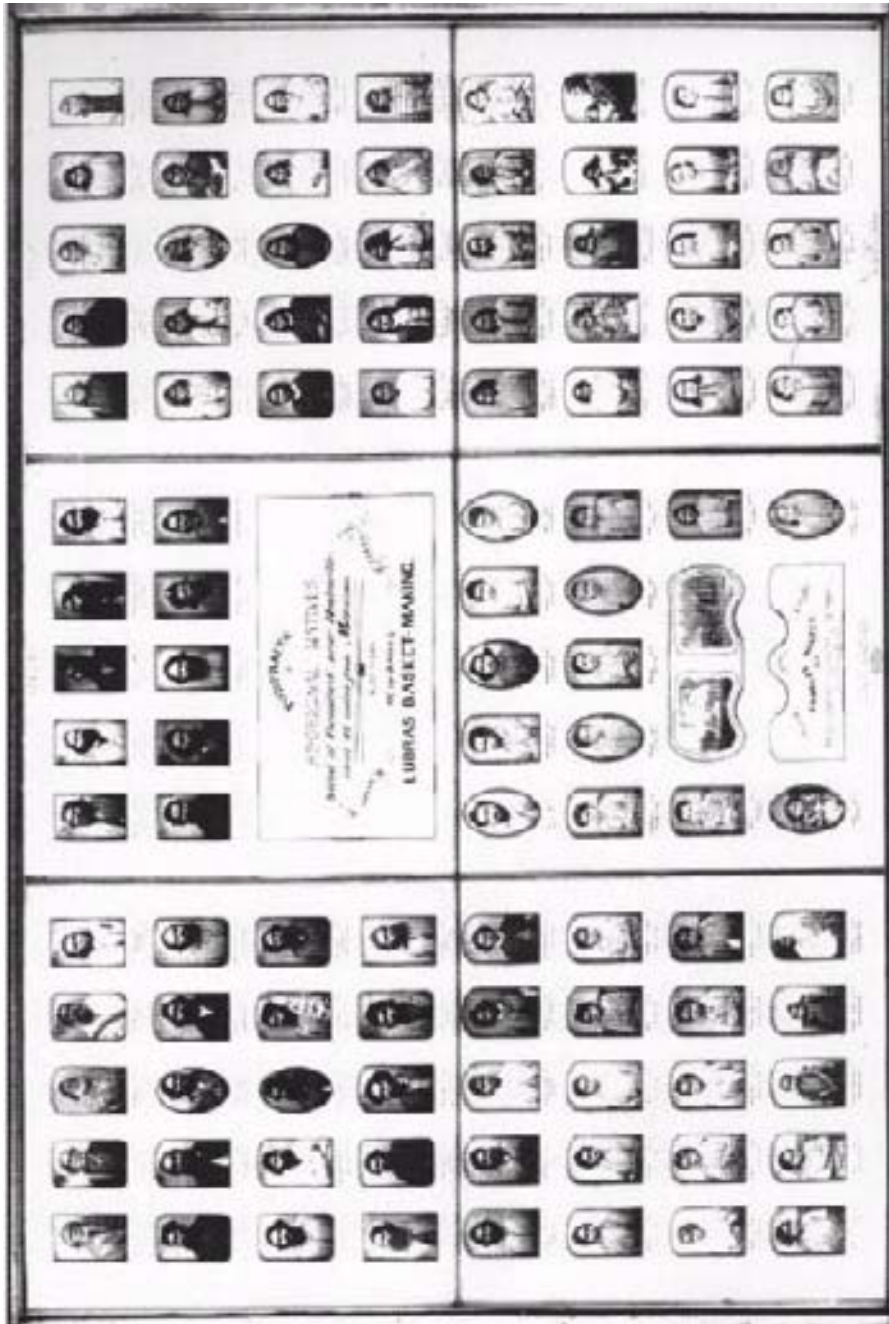


Figure 18: Panel produced for Intercolonial Exhibition, 1866. 'Portraits of Aboriginal Natives settled at Coranderk...' (H91.1/1-106), State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.

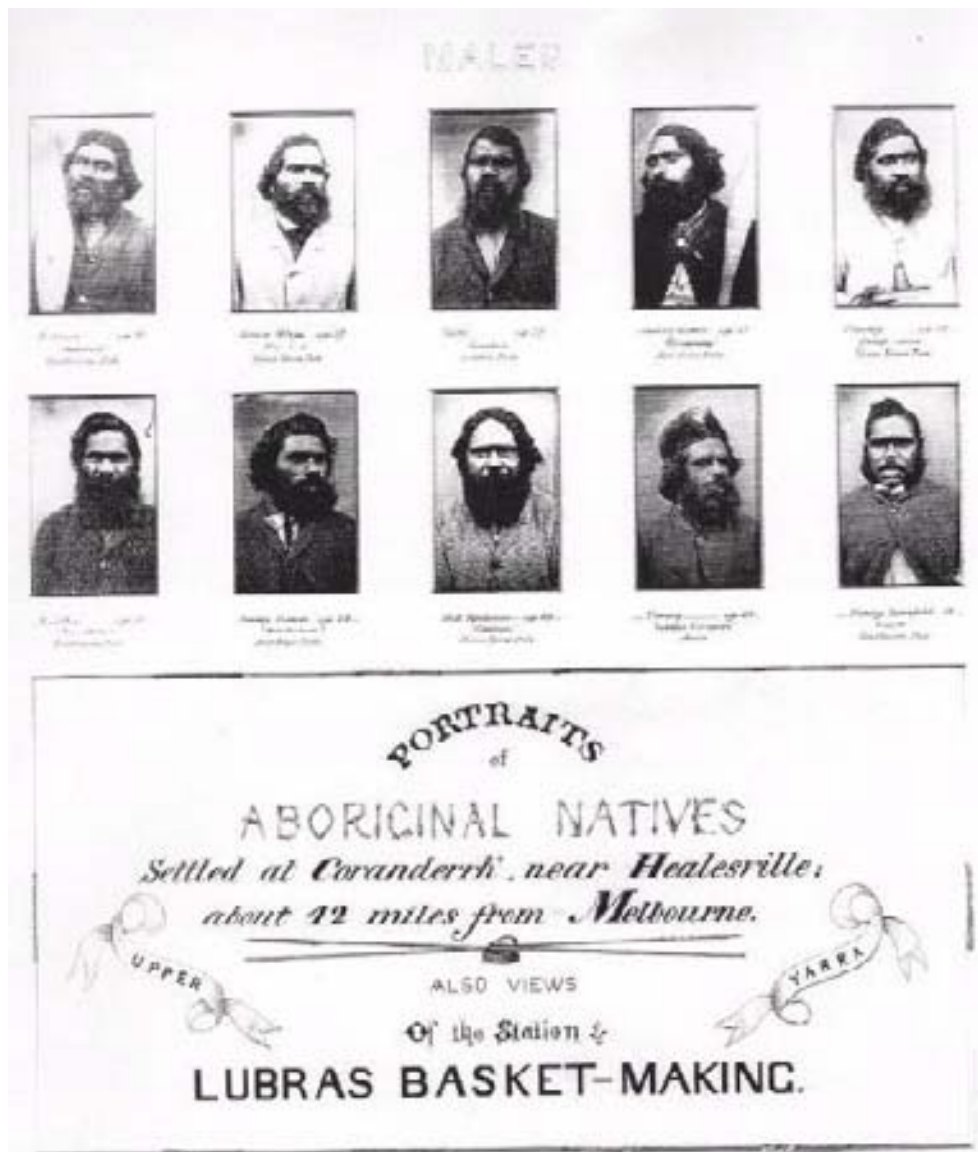


Figure 19: Detail of panel produced for Intercolonial Exhibition, 1866 (top, centre, showing 'Males' ('full-blooded')). 'Portraits of Aboriginal Natives settled at Coranderrk...' (H91.1/1-106), State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.

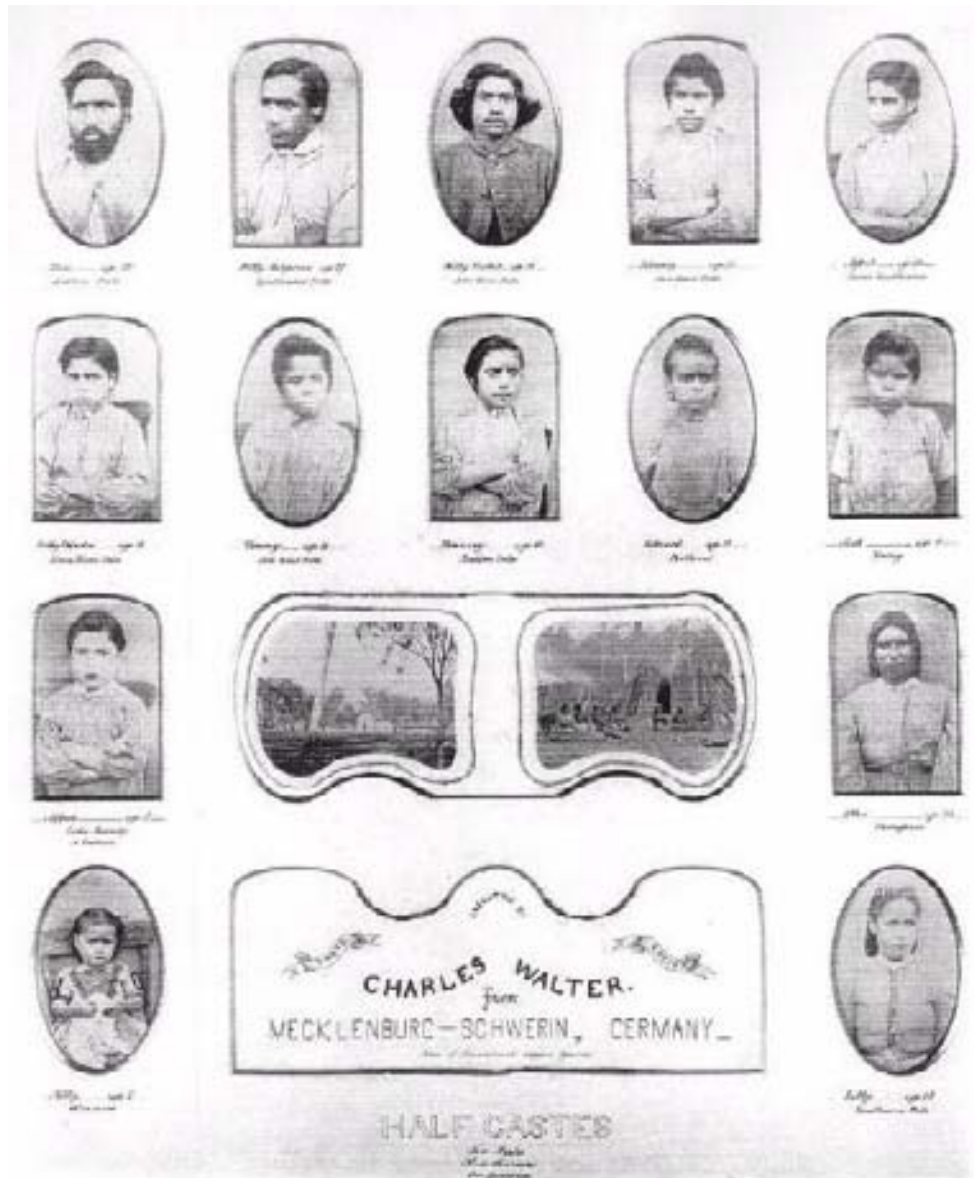


Figure 20: Detail of panel produced for Intercolonial Exhibition, 1866 (bottom, centre, showing 'Half Castes'. 'Portraits of Aboriginal Natives settled at Coranderk ...' (H91.1/1-106), State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



Figure 21: Page 1, 'Coranderrk and my Aboriginal Friends', Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1937.



Figure 22: Page 2, Man climbing a tree, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1938.

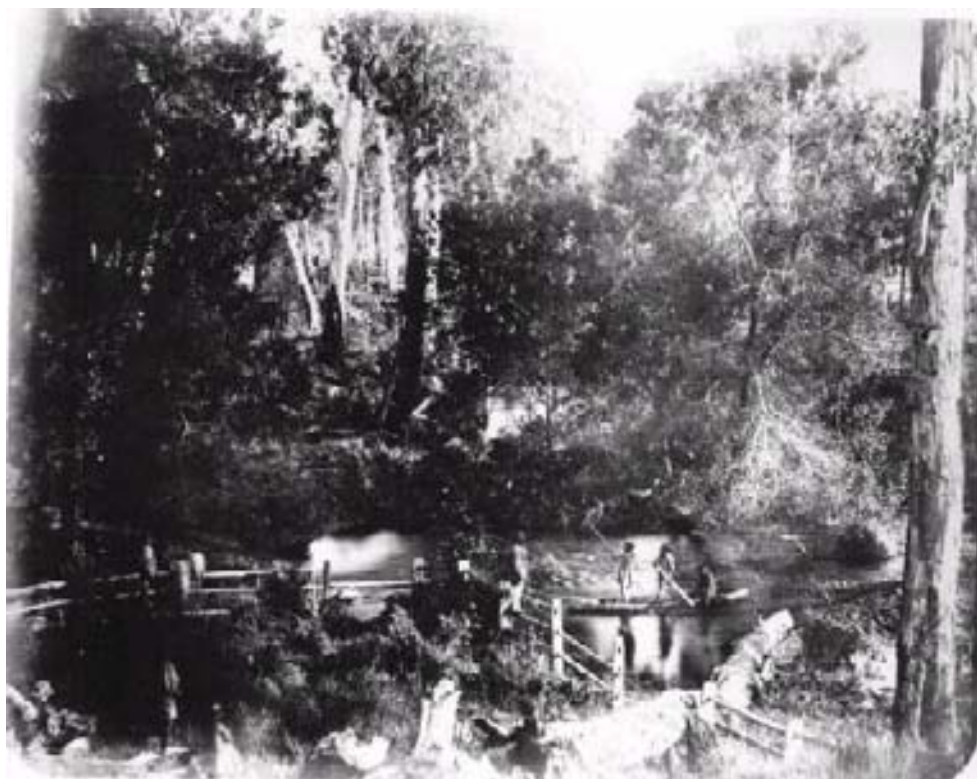


Figure 23: Page 3, Canoe on Yarra, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1939.



Figure 24: Page 4, view of settlement, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1940.



Figure 25: Page 4, 'Women with baskets', Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1941.



Figure 26: Page 5, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1942–1946.

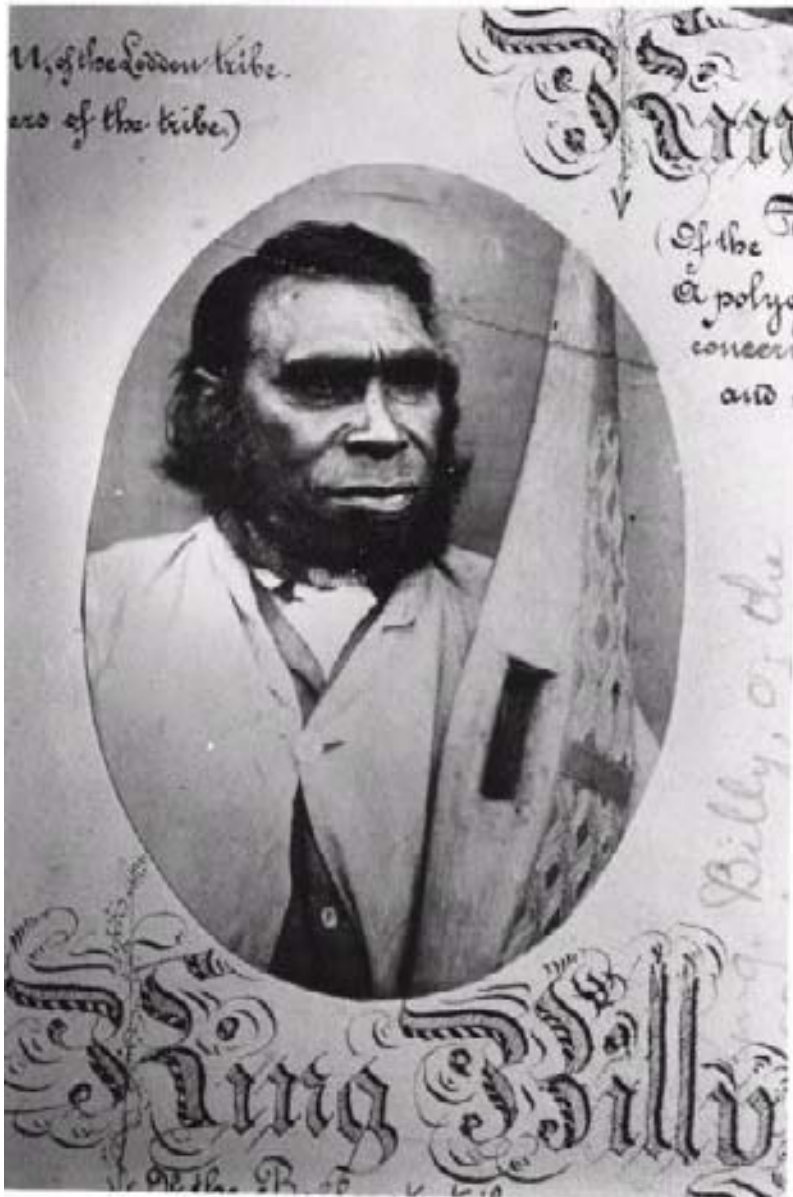


Figure 27: 'King Billy (Of the Upper Goulburn tribe) A polygamist. Once in the hulks for being concerned in a murder, jumped overboard and escaped to Healesville', Museum Victoria XP 1944.



Figure 28: Page 6, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1947–1951.

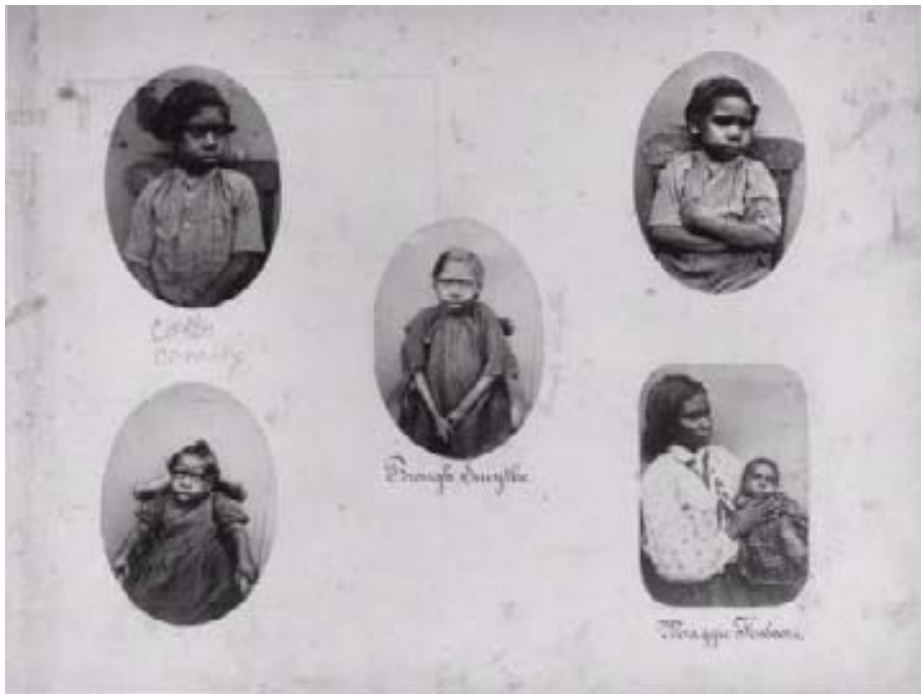


Figure 29: Page 12, Green family album, Museum Victoria XP 1977–1981.

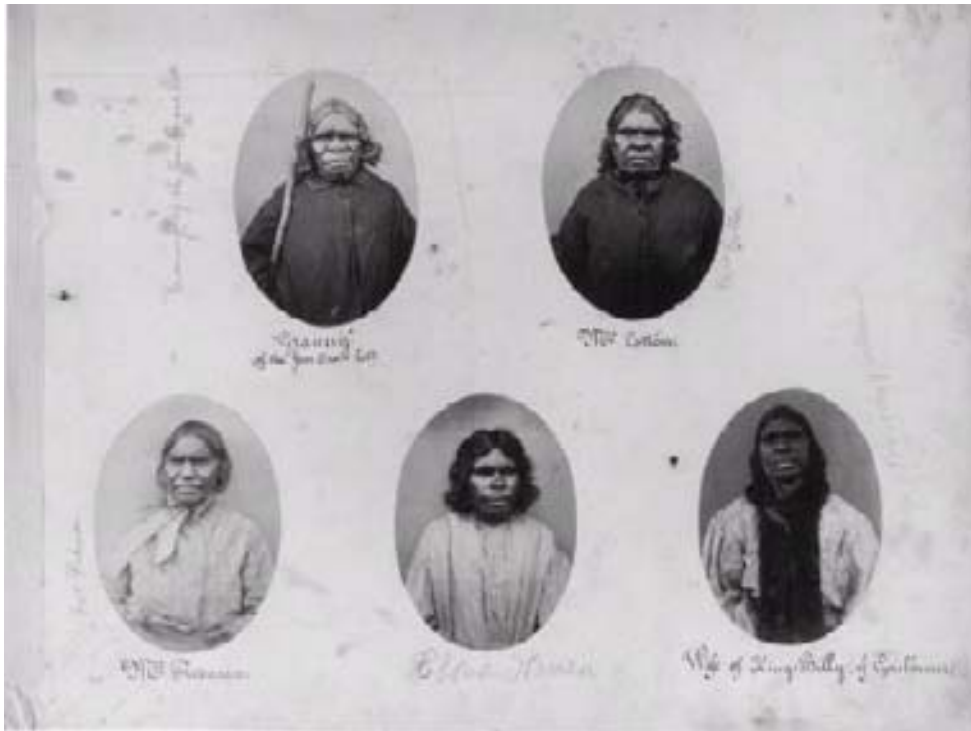


Figure 30: Page 13, Green family album, Museum Victoria XP 1982–1986.



Figure 31: 'Harriet', Museum Victoria XP 1990.

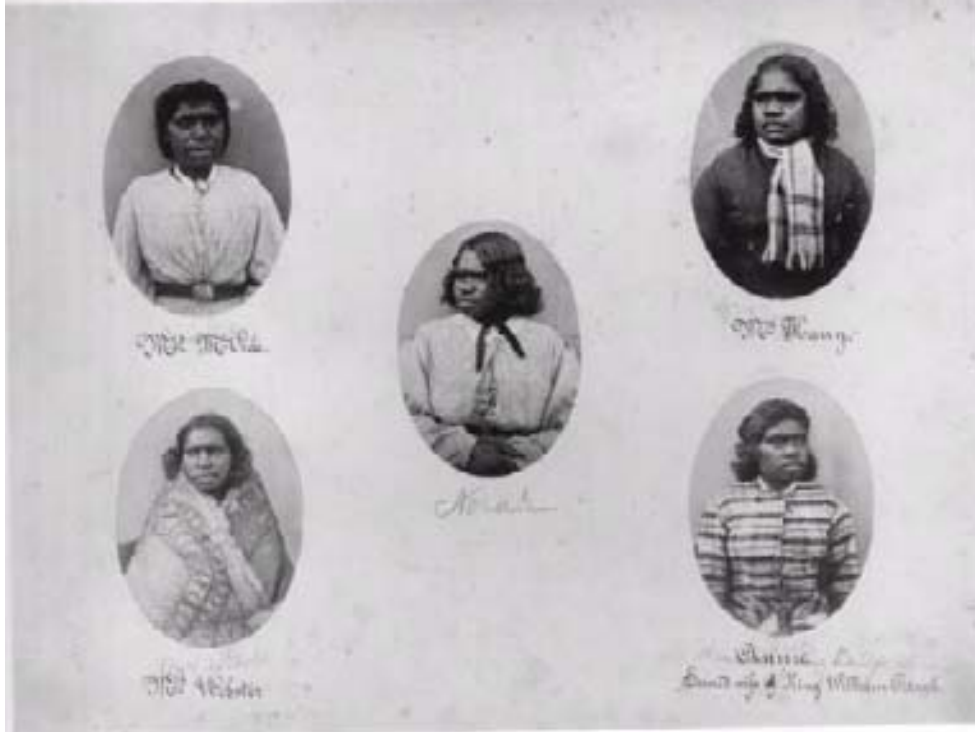


Figure 32: Page 16, Green family album, Museum Victoria XP 1997–2001.

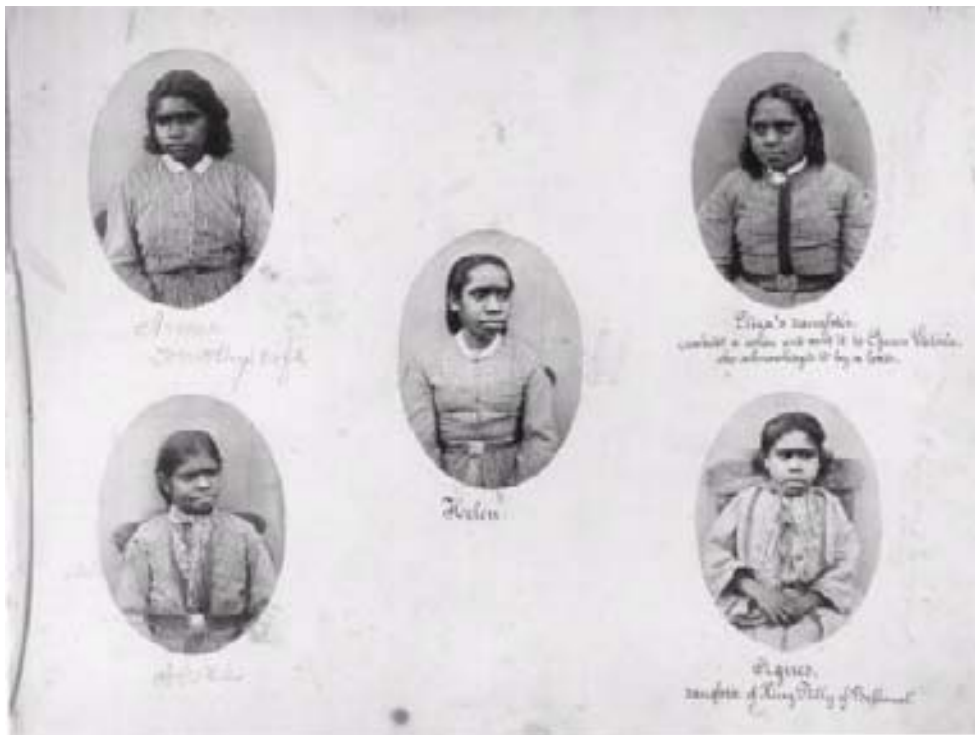


Figure 33: Page 17, Green family album, Museum Victoria XP 2002–2006.



Figure 34: 'Eliza's daughter (crocheted a collar and sent it to Queen Victoria, who acknowledged it by a letter)', Museum Victoria XP 2003.



Figure 35: Timothy, Green family album, Museum Victoria, XP 1951.

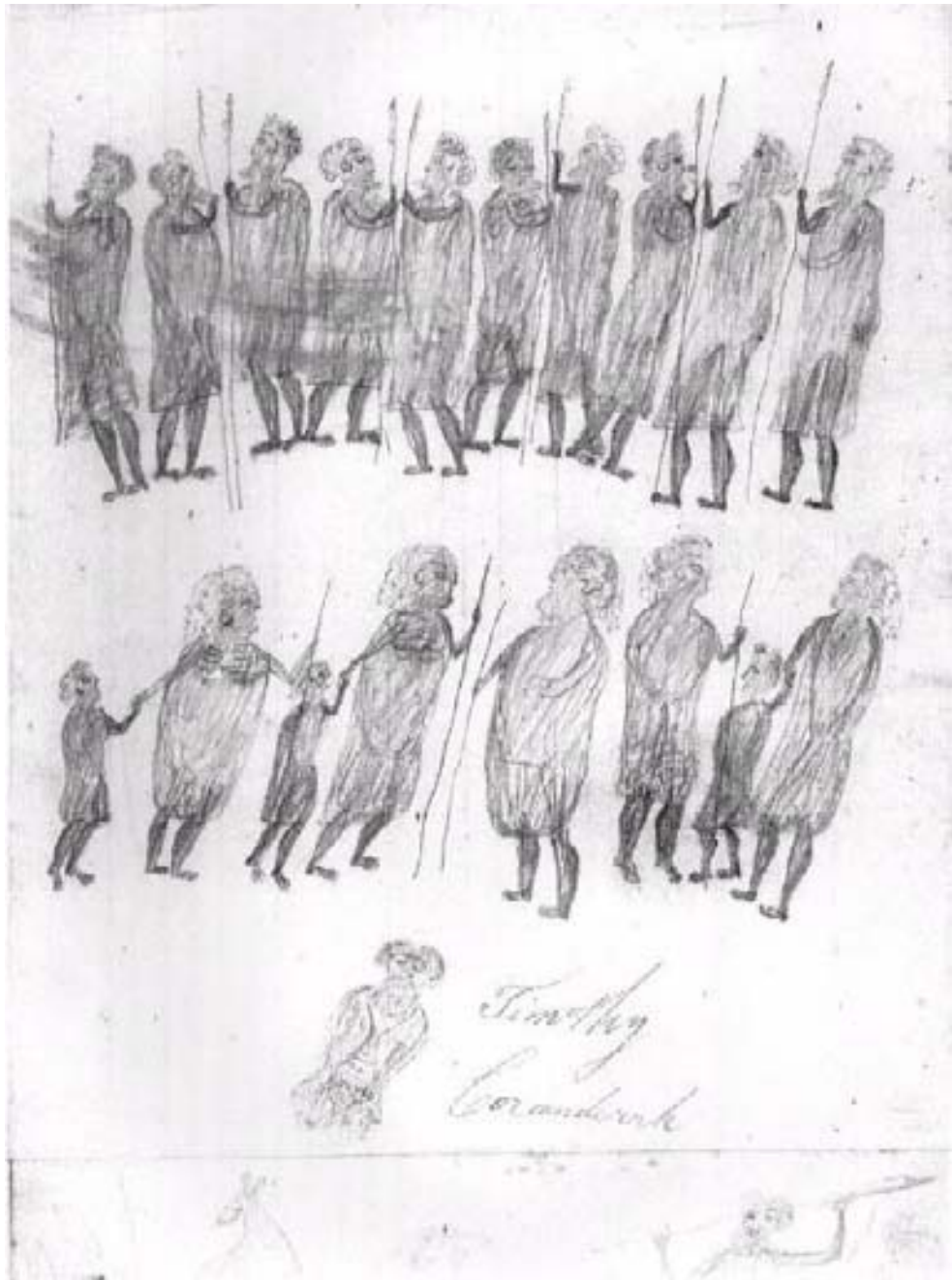


Figure 36: Drawing by Timothy (detail), Museum Victoria, XP 86705.

moments of observation;⁴⁹ there is a sense of triumph, as if the camera has stalked and captured its subject.

By contrast this much earlier image, belonging to the experimental days of view photography, has adopted a uniquely dynamic structure – posed as if in mid-step. Instead of attempting to adopt the naturalistic stance of a bystander to actual events, a vantage point facilitated by the wide availability of the dry plate from around 1880, its composition is clearly staged. Despite the stillness required by the photographic process, it does not incorporate the frontal regard characteristic of portraits of this time, instead centring our attention upon the *event*. Its complex pictorial structure is formal and symmetrical, symbolising certain elements of the foundation story: Wonga's leadership, Green's guiding role, the women's complementary status, yeoman strength marshalled to accomplish a gruelling trek, and a new beginning.

I suggest that we can explain this remarkable image in terms of traditional Kulin visual practice. While it deviates from contemporary European photographic conventions, it presents certain features which are reminiscent of Aboriginal representational codes. During the early days of white settlement several observers noted a traditional 'narrative style', which, as Carol Cooper has noted, appeared to be 'almost totally naturalistic and figurative in content and to be concerned with recording historical events.' Figurative drawings in charcoal on bark were often noted to decorate the inside of shelters, depicting real events such as encounters with white settlers.⁵⁰

Finally, perhaps even the formal arrangement of the figures within the scene might be linked to Kulin pictorial conventions. The persistence of this tradition is best known through the art of Wurundjeri leader William Barak, whose paintings, predominantly depicting ceremonial and hunting scenes, are also interpreted as images of the past.⁵¹ Barak's work combines geometric and figurative elements, for example in the detailed rendition of the abstract motifs incised upon the cloaks worn by corroboree dancers. He also tended to abstract forms such as human figures, forming banded patterns.⁵² While the uniform spatial distribution of figures across his sheet of paper was impossible for a camera to imitate stylistically, the arrangement of the Kulin and Greens in 'The Yarra Tribe starting for the Acheron' reminds us of the repetitive lines of figures which feature in Barak's art. Hence, in the photograph's thematic and pictorial relationship to traditional Kulin visual practices, we can perhaps perceive the active engagement of the Kulin, informing Walter of their recent and momentous history, suggesting this key event as a photographic subject, and helping to develop the tableau.

Turning to page six of the album, we return to Walter's and the residents' present, with 'Open Air Service Amongst the Blacks in June 1865' (Fig 13)⁵³. Clearly the image of the white preacher, Green, declaiming to his black congregation, had power in contemporary eyes. The people, many recognisable individuals, are neatly arranged

49. Davies and Stanbury 1985: 78–79.

50. Cooper 1994: 105–7. See also Morphy 1998: 355–68; Cooper 1981: 38–39; Eagle 1997.

51. Tommy McRae's silhouette drawings of the 1880s and 1890s have also been read as retrospective in viewpoint: Sayers 1994: 20–24 and especially 27–49; Morphy 1998: 356.

52. Sayers 1994: 19.

53. And see 'Open air service, Lake Tyers Mission Station, Gippsland', c.1868: *Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 24 March 1866: 233, 244.

according to age and sex, and each man holds a book, symbolic of literacy and Christianity. It forms the logical sequel to the 'setting off' image, representing the residents' Christian thanksgiving after their arrival, for the fulfilment of God's promise. This powerful narrative structure effects a movement from the station's origins to a hopeful future, inserting the album's evidence for progress and a settled lifestyle into a Christian teleology.

Finally, on page seven we see Ellen and Mr King, 'Chief of the Goulbourne tribe', reproducing the logic of the newspaper feature (Figs 14-15), and on page eight we see 'Mrs Cotton' and 'Mr Cotton, the oldest Native in Victoria' (Figs 16-17). Whites were interested in his status as elderly 'King', a link with the past, and possibly as indigenous 'royalty'; perhaps he signified the melancholic passing of his race.⁵⁴ The album's production was prompted by an interest in the 'civilising' of the residents within the dominant contemporary discourse of Christianity and humanitarianism. Its narrative structure invokes past, present and future in amalgamating a range of popular and local ideas about Coranderrk, framed by Christian rhetoric.

The 1865 images produced by Walter, as circulated within both newspapers and in the AAUC album, comprise a uniquely celebratory record of Aboriginal life in this period. In the period before more extreme views of fixed biological differences between different human groups gained popular currency, it was in the humanitarians' interest to stress the pliable, teachable nature of the Aboriginal people of Victoria, and their potential for conversion, seeking to diminish rather than exaggerate difference, in the interest of persuading white audiences of the worth of the missionary project.⁵⁵ In campaigning for civil rights, photography was seen as a useful tool by missionaries.⁵⁶

On one level the AAUC can be read as missionary propaganda, intended to show a Christian audience that progress was being made at Coranderrk, that this 'civilising experiment' was indeed a success. From another angle however, Aboriginal interests emerge too, through images which commemorate Kulin stories about their ownership of Coranderrk, a claim of central importance throughout the station's life.

In the larger context of theories about Aborigines and civilisation, which at this time were beginning to undergo scrutiny and revision within developing scientific frameworks, Walter's next series of photographs were to play a rather different role.

Walter's 1866 exhibition portraits: 'communicating correct ideas'

Walter's commission

Charles Walter visited Coranderrk over a period of at least six months in 1866, during which time he made a series of portraits of the Kulin.⁵⁷ This series was to travel around the world in the service of science and colonial progress. Redmond Barry, the President of Melbourne's Exhibition Commissioners, had apparently seen the newspaper engraving

⁵⁴. I discuss this trope and its later uses further in Lydon 2000.

⁵⁵. Cf Thomas 1993: 50-54.

⁵⁶. *Weekly Review and Christian Times*, 17 October 1863: 7; see also Jenkins 1994: 115-45. Further, that the English owner of the AAUC viewed these images within a missionary framework is indicated by a newspaper clipping preserved within the album, which recapitulates Christian activist Charles Kingsley's career as parson, historian, and social campaigner: H13881/20, 9.

ings of Coranderrk and sent a message to Green requesting photographs for the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866.⁵⁸ Barry undertook several 'Aboriginal projects' around this time, including life-cast busts of sixteen Coranderrk residents and a vocabulary, following the approach set out by Prichard's chapter on 'Ethnology' in Sir John Herschel's *Admiralty Manual of Scientific Enquiry*.⁵⁹

These projects were intended to produce scientific data, but their immediate purpose was to put Victoria's Aboriginal people on display within the international exhibitions. These spectacular but temporary blockbusters were held throughout the modern world from the mid-19th century, presenting the richness, enterprise, and industries of participating countries.⁶⁰ They were symbols of stability and civilisation in a chaotic colonial society, asserting an imagined local identity on the world stage: when Redmond Barry opened the 1861 Melbourne exhibition he proudly welcomed the opportunity to

set the people of Europe right upon many points relative to this country, respecting which ignorance and confusion prevail ... Victoria will appear to advantage and the progress made by her during the last decade may rival that of any of the numerous possessions of her Majesty.⁶¹

In May Walter responded enthusiastically to Barry's request:

Sir, Mr John Green the Superintendent of Aborigines of Victoria has informed me that it is desired to have Photographs of the Blacks for the forthcoming Exhibition. Now as I shall be most happy to comply to the wishes expressed by Sir Redmond Barry I beg to inform you, that I am intending to take the photographs required as follows:

separate, single portraits of both sexes and all ages from infancy (6 month) up to old age (80 years!)

The different tribes as far as they are represented in this establishment (there are 123 Blacks in all belonging to about 10 or 12 different tribes!)

The photographs will be bust portraits the head of each portrait of the size of a half a crown piece.

Those photographs can be arranged according to the tribes ages & sexes on different large plates holding from 12 to 24 different portraits, as might be suitable for framing.

^{57.} As indicated by his signature on local documents, for example, witnessing several marriage certificates over this period: Sandra Smith, Museum Victoria, personal communication, 1998. His letters from Coranderrk are dated from May to November of that year. It is possible that he sometimes used the station as a base for his expeditions into the bush for the years that he worked in the area.

^{58.} 11 May 1866, Walter to Secretary Knight 14 May 1866: State Library of Victoria (SLV), Australian Manuscripts Collection H17247, Exhibition Commissioners' Letterbook, 'Intercolonial Exhibition 1866-7': 85.

^{59.} Downer 1989: 27, links Summer's commission to Barry's knowledge of local phrenologist and waxworks proprietor Sohler, following a request for 'aboriginal skulls of both sexes, and at the different periods of life': *Australasian*, 21 July 1866: 497. However Barry's 'Aboriginal projects' were already well under way, and there is strong evidence for his reliance upon the Admiralty Manual: see Lydon 2000.

^{60.} Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia 1866: 9-10; Galimany 1995: 26-27.

^{61.} Hayes 1995: 2-3.

If anything more should be desired as above already stated, I shall be very glad of being informed of it.

If Sir Redmond Barry approves of their arrangement I will be most happy to know and also very thankful for any hints as additional information on the Subject.

I may further remark that it was me who has supplied the proprietors of the *Melb. Illustrated periodical paper* with the portraits and photographic views of the Aboriginal settlement.

I enclose the portrait of Eliza [sic] a black girl of ab. 18 years of age, not as a sample of a photograph but merely to show the size of the portraits.

Hoping not to impose to (sic) much upon your kindness by expecting an answer soon,

Believe me to be Sir, Yours, Most obedient servt, Charles Walter, Photographic Artist⁶²

It is apparent that Barry had not specifically sought Walter out, but that Walter was eager to take the job. The selection and arrangement of the portraits – by sex, age and tribe, as well as the focus on the subjects' heads – echoes a contemporary ethnographic interest in individuals as racial types, and specifically Barry's preferences, as I explain further.

The Melbourne exhibition, as noted by the Commissioners in the *Official Catalogue*, was 'in some degree preparatory to the arrangements for forwarding certain productions to Paris for the Exhibition to be held there in 1867'.⁶³ In October, the month the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition opened, Walter, presumably having overseen the installation of the series, wrote again to say that he had 'Returned to my residence amongst the Natives here, I intend to make up now the Collection for Paris'.⁶⁴ He went on:

Whenever you have done with the list of the names of the Blacks I beg you respectfully to oblige me by returning the same as it would save me the trouble in making a new list.

As I cannot obtain here the Copyright for these photographs I beg you to grant me the favor of the Commission, that they will not permit the copying of this collection as long as the photographs remain the property of the Commission.

If desired by Parties interested in the Blacks, I shall be most happy to furnish duplicates of the whole collection at a moderate Charge, but I do not wish my black friends to be sold in every shop at the rate of 6d. each!⁶⁵

Walter approached his task systematically, recording all but one or two of the station residents.⁶⁶ His surviving lists record the English name, native name, tribe and age of each of the 104 sitters, starting with the eldest men, progressing through younger and younger men, to end with number 50, baby Thomas Harris (sitting on his mother's

⁶². Walter to Barry, 8 May 1866, 9 October 1866, PROV: VPRS 927/3.

⁶³. Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia 1866: 10.

⁶⁴. PROV: VPRS 927, unit 3, Notes and letters Oct–Nov 1866.

⁶⁵. PROV: VPRS 927, unit 3, Notes and letters Oct–Nov 1866. The existence of two lists, held by the Pitt Rivers Museum, suggests that Walter was indeed forced to transcribe the list again.

⁶⁶. Statistics for June 1865: Barwick 1972: 25. By 1871 the total had increased to 107: Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1871: 1.

lap), aged 3 months. It continues with the 'Female Sex', from the oldest woman (51, 'Old Mary, age 60, Jim Crow tribe) to youngest (80, Minnie, Yarra Yarra, 9 months), then there is a section headed 'Half Castes', starting with men (81, Dan Hall, Loddon, 20 years) descending in years to the boys (91, Alfred (Quadrone) 93, Lake Mering, 5 years - father a native of Ireland. Jemmy Davis), then 'Female sex, half castes!' beginning with 92, White Ellen, Carngham, 21 years down to 104, Nelly Bly, Wimmera, 2 years.⁶⁷

Hence the category 'pure blooded' man was of the greatest interest or importance, the male elders representing the archetype of cultural otherness. This hierarchical ordering of the population descended systematically to the youngest, 'half caste', female (Little Lizzie, age 5, Jim Crow tribe). Below this list, Walter noted under 'Remarks' that:

No. 95 and 99 sisters the only half castes with grey eyes. Nos 82, 98 and 102 are Brothers and Sisters (all half castes!) No 86 and 78 Brother and Sister; the first born a half-caste Boy Bobby and the last born a pure black Girl Mary!

All the Aborigines in this colony have assumed english Names, generally the vulgar names of Bob for Robert, or ? Jack, Larry, Jimmy, Ned etc etc. I have added the Native Names, where I was able to obtain them'.⁶⁸

This interest in 'blood', and the effects of miscegenation, may have stemmed from Walter's familiarity with the contemporary concerns of local ethnographers such as Robert Brough Smyth and Baron Von Mueller, for whom Coranderrk was a kind of archive of Aboriginal culture, perhaps transmitted by the latter's informant John Green.⁶⁹ Here Walter was actively collecting ethnographic information, a role which perhaps he saw as analogous to his acquisition of botanical specimens on Von Mueller's behalf.

Barry's decision to commission a photographic series reflects larger currents of inquiry into human difference, and specifically contemporary notions of the medium's accuracy as a means of making scientific records. The 'type' portrait was the most common form used by adherents of the emerging discipline of anthropology for collecting data, imitating the precision, taxonomic arrangement and comparative approach of the biological sciences.⁷⁰ The 'racial type' assumed fresh importance after the Darwinian theory of natural selection gained popularity from the 1860s, but the notion of 'type specimens' and the idea of racial fixity had long been accepted by monogenists and polygenists alike. Huxley and Lamprey developed standardised photometric methods in the late 1860s, attempting to ensure that photographic types would contain comparable morphometric data, allowing systematic comparison of racial form.⁷¹ Walter produced his colonial 'type series' before the better-known English methods were developed, but his experience as botanical collector, Barry's instructions, and perhaps

67. Album PRM.AL.56, Photograph Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Numbers in brackets after some names indicate kinship ties with other individuals on the list.

68. The second list includes only the 80 so-called 'full bloods'. Photograph Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

69. His comment on 'half-caste' and 'full-blood' siblings appears to refer to a debate regarding the effect of Aboriginal women's intercourse with white men: Brough Smyth 1878: 92-93.

70. Spencer 1992; Edwards 1990.

71. For example, see Huxley 1869: 513.

his knowledge of popular debates about Aboriginal people all shaped his 'scientific' approach to his commission and its resulting form.

The surviving panel measures around 176cm wide by 123cm high; a central, elaborately-painted title reading 'Portraits of ABORIGINAL NATIVES Settled at Coranderrk, near Healesville, about 42 miles from Melbourne. ALSO VIEWS Of the Station & LUBRAS BASKET-MAKING' (Figs 18–20). The panel was displayed, as intended, in 1866 at the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition, hung in the photography section of the Fine Arts Gallery between '71. HEWITT, C. 95 Swanston Street – Portraits, in fancy dress' and '74. NETTLETON, C., – Coloured Photographic Views of Melbourne'.⁷² In the centre, below the title, we see two views of Coranderrk: a distant panorama which achieves the expansive scope of the collage, but at the expense of detail – Walter has backed into the bush, and trees have started to obscure the distant buildings, giving an impression only of a tiny bush settlement; the second view shows women making baskets, an activity lauded, encouraged and photographed perhaps because it had the novelty of cultural difference but accorded with European notions of appropriate gender roles and industry, was aesthetically pleasing, and contributed to the support of the residents.

The arrangement of the palm-sized portraits over the huge space of the panel amplifies the logic of the list: the ('full-blood') older men occupy the top left hand quarter of the panel, boys below, and the adult women the top right. So-called 'half-castes' occupy the lower centre. As our gaze sweeps downwards and to the right, we see increasingly younger, whiter faces, graphically predicting the future of the race. As human *types*, the individuality of the people of Coranderrk was lost in their massed and diminishing arrangement over the huge panel, made to form a human pattern structured by sex, age and blood. In a final reductive movement this single object abridged 104 people, making them stand for the Aboriginal 'race' as a whole.

Victoria on show

Yet the 'Aboriginal' works were not a prominent feature of the 1866 or 1867 exhibitions, nor were Walter's portraits highly regarded: although two Tasmanian photographers received medals in the 1866 'Photography' category – Charles Woolley 'For portraits of Aborigines', and 'S. Spurling, Hobart Town – For portraits of Tasmanian children' – Walter received merely an Honourable Mention, some way down in the list, and the dismissive comment: 'For a collection of Aboriginal portraits, on account of the interest they possess, although exhibiting little merit as photographs'.⁷³ Despite their relative insignificance as an individual exhibit, we can perhaps see these works as helping to define larger conceptions of humanity and civilisation. From the mid-1860s living Indigenous people were displayed at expositions, and later in the century cultural difference became one of their basic structuring principles.⁷⁴ In this context, Aboriginal

⁷² Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia 1866: 102.

⁷³ Woolley's portraits were probably regarded more highly than Walter's because, by showing each of the five Tasmanian subjects full-face, in three-quarter view and in profile, they conformed more closely to developing anthropometric conventions, as well as because of their subjects' tremendous, tragic significance as the supposed 'last of their race': List of awards, *The Argus Supplement*, 14 February 1867:2.

⁷⁴ Greenhalgh 1988: 82–85; Çelik and Kinney 1990: 34–59.

people seemed to represent the modern industrialized nations' past, measuring their relative advancement and justifying imperial expansion.

Here, domestic Aboriginal policy – which consistently sought to separate the residents of Coranderrk, as a place of Aboriginal incarceration, from the white population – intersected with a contemporary, countervailing, movement, which Tony Bennett has termed the 'exhibitionary complex'. Bennett suggests that, counter to Foucault's panoptical control, ran a tendency which effected control by re-orienting the gaze outward, making the forces of order visible to the populace.⁷⁵ This new technology of vision located nations within the development of Western civilisation, construing Indigenous peoples as mankind's past, underlining the 'rhetoric of progress by serving as its counterpoints.' The exhibitions' totalizing organisation celebrated empire, metonymically constructing a public identity in temporal and cultural opposition to 'the primitive otherness of conquered peoples'.⁷⁶ Walter's images were also sent to the 1872 London International Exhibition and the 1873 Vienna Universal Exhibition.⁷⁷ These events asserted a colonial identity before a European audience, defining colonial society and culture; the Aboriginal portraits occupied its margins, marking the boundaries of civilisation.

The exhibition panel represents Walter's idiosyncratic attempt to draw upon both his background as botanical collector and his newly-acquired local knowledge of debates about Aboriginal people in applying the methods of natural science to the task of representing a race. He took his own, taxonomic, approach to the problem of human difference: the scale and arrangement of the exhibition panel revealed the form of a group rather than individuals. Significantly, Walter created a visual text whose internal relationships and differences would have been read from top to bottom by the exhibition-going public, showing the 'full blooded' men and women, arranged in decreasing age order, displaced by the young so-called 'half castes'. With all the evidential force of visual imagery, this temporal organisation appeared to demonstrate change over time consequent upon contact with whites, simultaneously constructing a relationship between black and white, explaining the community's past and calculating its future.

The international culture network

But the lasting scientific impact of Barry's 'Aboriginal projects' was felt after the exhibitions closed, when Walter's photographs and Summers' busts, standing for the Aboriginal people of Australia, were sent to Europe to participate in scientific debates about human evolution. Baron von Mueller seems to have played an active role here, using Walter's images as scientific currency within an international network extending to England, Italy, Russia and France. He was appointed Director of Melbourne's Botanical Gardens in 1857, shortly after his arrival in Australia, and was already employing Walter to collect botanical specimens. By 1858 he was sending botanical specimens to the Imperial Botanical Gardens of St Petersburg and the Moscow Botanical Gardens. Dr Edward Regel, his counterpart in St Petersburg, also took an interest in anthropology, and they exchanged information and specimens throughout the 1860s. In May 1864 von

⁷⁵. Bennett 1995: 59–63.

⁷⁶. Bennett 1995: 73–79; see also Davison 1988: 158; Greenhalgh 1988: 53.

⁷⁷. Partos 1994: 60.

Mueller was elected to the *Russian Society of Amateurs of Natural Sciences*, coinciding with the Society's proposal for a national exhibition which became the 1867 Ethnographic Exposition of all Russia, held in Moscow.⁷⁸

Von Mueller was requested to send Australian material in early 1866, presumably for the 1867 exhibition, and he responded with energy, assisted by his friend and fellow-collector Robert Brough Smyth, who, as member of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, had been collecting artefacts and information since the early 1860s.⁷⁹ Both were members of the *Ecological and Acclimatisation Society* (as were other members of the Board), which visited and collected at Coranderrk. Brough Smyth's large collection held many Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung) duplicates, and these formed a significant proportion of the two consignments of material which von Mueller sent in 1865–68. Von Mueller's appreciation of photography as a scientific tool is indicated by his gift of a pair of photographs by 1868, and four more stereoscopic tableaux by 1869, apparently also by Walter.⁸⁰

Von Mueller's second major dispatch in 1869 also included 102 photographs, and later accounts of their use in Moscow reveal these to belong to Walter's 1866 series.⁸¹ While they are not described in detail in Moscow collection records, eighty portraits of Aboriginal people, including Simon Wonga and William Barak, 'figured prominently' at the 1879 Moscow Anthropological Exhibition, presumably the eighty so-called 'full blooded' residents, indicating that it was this supposedly 'pure' group who were of interest as specimens of a race. Most of the views are recognisable from their captions as Walter's 1860s images of Coranderrk, Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck.⁸² The Society repeatedly expressed its gratitude to von Mueller in its reports, and by bestowing an honorific title upon him, while Alexander II presented him with a vase. The contemporary value of Walter's series and its continuing scientific usefulness is further indicated by its subsequent use by museum director Anuchin, who like many contemporaries, saw photography as useful evidence for the variations among humankind.

It may also have been von Mueller who sent the series to the Anthropological Society of London, or to the geologist J Flower, before it lodged finally with Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum.⁸³ It is currently housed in a 'mixed album of visual material which appears to have been shown at meetings of the Anthropological Society of London' in

⁷⁸. Objects from the 1867 exhibition subsequently formed the Dashkov Ethnographic Museum and are now part of the Moscow Public and Rumiantsev Museum: Barrett 1982: 14–21.

⁷⁹. For a detailed discussion see Barrett 1995: 10–15; Board for the Protection of the Aborigines 1864.

⁸⁰. Russian Society of Amateurs of Natural Sciences' Bulletin 1868 XLI(4): 111; Bulletin 1869 XLII(2): 17, cited Barrett 1995: 10.

⁸¹. Barrett 1995. As do its size, and Von Mueller's close links to Coranderrk.

⁸². Titled 'Native Types of the Colony of Victoria (Australia)': 'Divine service in an encampment in Gippsland', 'An encampment of natives', 'Natives from Suovy (sic) River', 'Women weaving baskets', 'Girls of the Tambo Tribe', 'Fisherwomen on Lake Tyers', 'A Camp of the Tambo Tribe in Gippsland', 'Capital of the Gippsland Chief, Glengarry Tribe', 'Divine Service in a Gippsland Church (Ramma-hanga)': *Antropologicheskaja Vystavka 1879 goda: opisania predmator*, 1879, part 4: 10, cited in Barrett 1995: 10–20.

⁸³. Von Mueller was possibly a member of the Anthropological Society: Gillbank 1992: 3–10.

1867.⁸⁴ It was collated with photographs from India, South Africa, and the European margins, crania (from all over the world), drawings of archaeological sections, maps, photographs of stone tools, and Peruvian mummies, represented as one of many 'primitive' human groups, irrespective of their ethnographic origins. This was standard within a typological system which constructed an evolutionary series leading from the simple to the complex, in which the lowest stage was represented by Australian Aboriginal people.⁸⁵ As curator Elizabeth Edwards notes, the arrangement within the album is significant: the eighty 'full bloods' appear first, 'in closely mounted grids of nine per page'. The 'half caste' series was mounted separately, and 'Scars on the album show that the lists [written by Walter] were originally pasted in separately to document what were clearly perceived as two different sets, on racial grounds.'⁸⁶

Giglioli's 1867 series

Von Mueller also presented Walter's series to Italian scientist Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy in Florence, in May 1867. The internationally-respected ethnographer Giglioli belonged to a scientific expedition attached to the voyage of the Italian naval vessel *Magenta*; he made an excursion to the Dandeenongs with von Mueller on which they hunted possums and observed the flora and fauna. On a separate visit Giglioli made to Coranderrk, he described the settlement and its inhabitants in some detail, and made his own series of photographs. Giglioli was also pleased to note that 'Later I received from Dr Mueller an almost complete collection of photographic portraits of the aborigines (sic) and halfbloods (sic) living at Coranderrk, which has been very useful to me in recalling my impressions', and which he also used in making arguments about the origin and distribution of different human 'races'.⁸⁷ Giglioli's own images form an interesting contrast with Walter's, made only months before. While I have been unable to acquire the full series, eleven photographs by Giglioli in 1867 are reproduced by Aldo Massola in his documentary history *Coranderrk*, and nine appear to have been taken at the station.⁸⁸ These show the residents in less elaborate dress than Walter's, capturing the people in their everyday circumstances, and some, for example 'Man of the Hamilton Tribe, 1867', are seemingly naked except for a possum skin rug. One even shows a 'woman of the Yarra tribe' wrapped in a blanket and with one breast exposed – a uniquely revealing and impersonal image for this appearance-conscious community, whose women are otherwise always fully-clothed.⁸⁹

The images complement Giglioli's published account of the visit, which assumed the imminent extinction of the race. In this publication he reiterated his hypothesis that the whole of Australia had been 'populated by a people identical with the Tasmanians, and that this people was destroyed or assimilated by the present aborigines (sic) of New Holland', whom he believed to be unique among the peoples of the world (occu-

⁸⁴. Pitt Rivers Museum: Photograph Collections catalogue.

⁸⁵. Bennett 1995: 79; see also Morphy 1988: 48–61.

⁸⁶. Elizabeth Edwards, Curator, Pitt Rivers Museum, email correspondence, 25 June 1999.

⁸⁷. Giglioli 1870: 774.

⁸⁸. There are 'extensive Australian collections' in the Museo Nazionale di Antropologia e Etnologia, Florence, but my letters and email queries received no response. Massola 1975.

⁸⁹. Massola 1975: 49.

pying an 'isolated position in ethnical terms'). He supported his argument with detailed anatomical comparisons, based upon the Coranderrk portraits.⁹⁰

As active members of an elite and close-knit international scientific network, von Mueller, Flower, Giglioli, Regler and other men of science exchanged information and objects, including Walter's Coranderrk series. Despite some evidence that local whites were not unsympathetic to the Aboriginal subjects, these photographs were used in both public and scientific contexts to represent the people as objects of science. The portraits, and especially the eighty 'fullblooded' subjects, constituted evidence for the biological difference of Aboriginal people, visual data deployed within scientific arguments of the day. They were emblems of a culture which was assigned a specific place in the history of Western civilization, designed to complete the larger cultural and historical schemes which assured European civilization its pre-eminence. As Prichard argued, 'words afford but very imperfect means of communicating correct ideas'; physical form more effectively signified invisible attributes and capabilities.

The Green family album

It is astonishing to see these same portraits – as if unfurled, or fully developed – in the context of the Green family's photograph album. Here the people come to life. John Green, the first manager of the station, is an exceptional figure in the history of Australian race relations. His closeness to the Aboriginal people of Coranderrk was doubtless shaped by his Presbyterian beliefs, and contemporary notions of civilisation and progress, but in many ways he was unusual for the period in his sympathy with Aboriginal traditions and needs. The Reverend Hamilton recalled that Wildgung (Jemmy Webster, c.1806–1874) believed Green to be the reincarnation of his brother; hence 'Jamie implicitly believed' his Scriptural teachings about the 'unseen world' because he thought they were based on direct experience.⁹¹ His policy was to help the residents rather than manage them, and a court was established which communally 'laid down rules of conduct and punished offenders by administering fines, withdrawing privileges or imposing the ultimate sanction of banishment'. Green resigned under pressure in 1874, and went to live nearby in Healesville; the efforts of the residents to persuade the Board to reinstate him were unceasing until his death. Hence the 'Green family album' was viewed in a context of friendship between the Aboriginal subjects and the Green family.

On the first page we see a third version of the view of the settlement, here captioned in Walter's hand: 'Coranderrk and my Aboriginal Friends' (Fig 21). Presumably Walter presented the album to the Greens (perhaps on behalf of the Aboriginal residents) following his lengthy stays at the station. Again, this distant view gives only an impression of a cluster of houses with smoking chimneys. It is only when we scan the image in to Photoshop and blow it up to enormous proportions that we notice the cricket game several children are playing in front of the schoolhouse. But this is how the 19th century viewers would have viewed the album – repeatedly, holding it to the light, close to their face to see every familiar detail.

⁹⁰. Giglioli 1870: 777–95; first published in Giglioli 1871.

⁹¹. Reverend Hamilton's *History of the Presbyterian Church*, cited Barwick 1998: 71.

On page two we see a man climbing a tree, surrounded by an actively involved audience (Fig 22). This activity fascinated whites, as indicated by its recurrence in photographs throughout the century, as well as in the fine arts, such as Joseph Lycett's paintings. The image is structured by the relationship between photographer and subjects: in documenting Aboriginal skill in climbing a tree; the camera is openly acknowledged and welcomed. It is not that the people have stopped what they are doing to watch the photograph taken – *this* is what they are doing! Several figures have even climbed on to the cottage roofs to get a better look – or a better chance to be included. I believe this relationship of mutual regard characterised Walter's work at the station. While largely obscured by the images' subsequent manipulation and circulation, here is evidence for the interest shown by the Aboriginal subjects in the process of taking pictures. We are then shown a canoe scene (Fig 23), the 'exhibition' views of the settlement, and 'Women with baskets' (Figs 24–25), reflecting an interest in traditional pursuits which were acceptable within the missionaries' Christian framework.

The Kulin's evident engagement with Walter's activities implies their active choice of subject, staging and performance. Whites observed Aboriginal people and recorded feats such as tree-climbing, which they admired; Aboriginal pride in their own skill, for example at boomerang-throwing, tracking, or fishing, also structured relationships between the residents and visitors to the station. Performing for white observers became the ritualised, public face of the station, and photographs taken throughout its life record these encounters. The recurrence of the subjects of tree-climbing, canoeing, fishing, or boomerang-throwing in the photographic archive reflect this dialogical process of imitation and refinement; an integral element of colonialism's ambivalent operation, this process undermines totalising notions of colonial photography as structured solely by the exploitative, controlling eye of the white photographer.

Pages five to 24 are filled by the portraits, their arrangement following Walter's list, but only five to a page, allowing us to examine them closely (Figs 26–35). Pencilled captions, presumably by John Green or another family member with an intimate knowledge of the people, have later been inked carefully beneath them, in fancy lettering. These post-scripted captions record sometimes idiosyncratic details about some of the subjects, such as Mussy Fundert's (Mr King's): 'King Billy – of the Upper Goulburn Tribe. A polygamist. Once in the hulks for being concerned in a murder, jumped overboard and escaped to Healesville' (Fig 27). These hint at the Greens' memories of the people.

When we look at these portraits now, we are struck by the dignity and strength which radiate from them. The people are well-dressed, in good quality European clothes. They stare to one side or the other, permitting us to gaze unashamedly. The oval frame, cropped tightly around the head and torso, embraces each person, bringing them into close proximity with the viewer, allowing their force of character and individuality to emerge. Where many photographs of Aboriginal people (as is often noted of the studio portraits of JW Lindt or the later Coranderrk visitor, Frederick Kruger) prominently display artefacts – deploying them, as props, to maximum effect – the possessions of many of the Kulin are often cropped or obscured, subordinate to their owner (they wear the cloak rather than the cloak wearing them). They signal the importance of clan identity as represented by cloak designs, also a central feature of William Barak's

drawings. I believe it is because of this power as individual portraits that descendants today are drawn to this series.

Timothy

There is evidence for a similar fascination on the part of at least one sitter. One portrait shows a mature man recorded as 'Timothy', 34 years old, of the Yarra Yarra Tribe, his Aboriginal name 'Garrak-coonum' (Fig 35). As we stare at Garrak-coonum, he looks seriously out of the frame, past us, at something in his own time, his expression heavy and thoughtful. Like the other men in the series, he is well-dressed in a serviceable suit – coat, waistcoat, shirt – with neatly brushed hair. But, unlike the others, he holds a small book in his right hand, deliberately central, chest high, one finger marking his place.⁹² Amongst this gathering of men he doesn't immediately stand out – it is only when we stop and take up his oval framed image, peer closely at his expressive eyes, his grave face, partly shielded by his beard, that we begin to wonder about him. Like each one of the portraits in this series, the man's personality is tangible and vivid. Although he doesn't engage directly with us, his gaze cannot be dismissed: to my mind, it conveys something profoundly touching.

In staring at Garrak-coonum, we reproduce Walter's gaze: the white photographer imprinting this Aboriginal man on to his plate, mechanically reproducing his likeness in permanent form. Why were Walter and his patrons so interested? Did their fascination lie in the successful appropriation of European ways – clothes, industry, religion, goods and accomplishments (of which the book was just an example) – that is, in the Aboriginal mimicry of whites? The evidence for the missionaries' pride in such transformations suggests that this was so. But perhaps beneath the rhetoric of improvement lies something more fundamental. As Michael Taussig notes, photography 'concentrates to an exquisite degree the very act of colonial mirroring, the lens coordinating the mimetic impulses radiating from each side of the colonial divide'.⁹³ In Walter's interest in the people of Coranderrk (and other reserves), expressed through a visual language, we see the circulation of mimesis and alterity, as white fascination with Aboriginal mimicry is itself expressed mimetically, as subject reaches out to embrace object.

Timothy's averted gaze does not mark a refusal to engage with the new circumstances he found himself in, nor with us. In an astonishing drawing held by Museum Victoria, our yearning to share Timothy's vision, see what he sees, is extravagantly satisfied (Fig 36).⁹⁴ This drawing measures 75cm long by 52cm wide, comprising two pencil sketches glued to a cardboard and cloth backing. It is signed by 'Timothy, Coranderrk' in running script, and beside it appears a thumbnail sketch of an Aboriginal man, dressed in a suit, and holding a book (Fig 37). This drawing comprises seven scenes of Aboriginal life: a cosmological frieze of stars, clouds, and planets, hunting scenes, ranks of men, and of women, and a ceremonial meeting.⁹⁵

⁹². The irresistible supposition is that it is a Bible.

⁹³. Taussig 1993: 25.

⁹⁴. Museum Victoria, Ethnographic collection Reg. No. X 86705.

⁹⁵. Museum Victoria's catalogue notes that the drawing is 'probably by two artists' – perhaps because of stylistic discrepancies. Sayers 1994: 22.

Timothy's traditional choice of subject, like Barak's better-known art, preserves memories of life before colonization, but it is given a different inflection by his self-portrait. When Garrak-coonum made his mark, identifying himself as owner, author of this story, he signed his drawing in a new language, as 'Timothy', and, beside the word, he signed it with his new image of himself. Just as he presumably chose to be photographed holding a book, symbol of a new skill (and, if it is a bible, a new religion), Timothy self-consciously names himself as the white photographer saw him, as an Aboriginal man who had adapted to new circumstances. Cooper argues that what is essentially new about the work of 19th-century Aboriginal artists was that their work, unlike traditional art which was intended to be read only by insiders, communicated with outsiders.⁹⁶ Similarly, Timothy's drawing demonstrates the Aboriginal appropriation of white forms, and expresses a new consciousness of himself.

Conclusion

Charles Walter's Coranderrk series demonstrate that the different cultural frameworks which existed for viewing these complex images allowed them to hold more than one meaning simultaneously, although in 1860s practice a range of strategies effected closure and decided their significance. Within scientific discourse, the series was deployed by ethnologists arguing about Aboriginal people and humankind. The 1866 exhibition panel used techniques such as the reduction of scale of each person's portrait, and its diminished standing within an assemblage of patterned visual differences, which created physical, cultural and temporal distance between observer and observed, subject and object, allowing the subjects to be seen as scientific data, objects of public curiosity. In other contexts these same portraits effect an opposing tendency, drawing the viewer towards the viewed, as in the Green family album, where the oval framing hugs the subjects' head and shoulders, the lens caresses his/her face, revealing texture, form, and expression in fine detail. The Aboriginal subjects were an integral element of the circumstances of the series' production, and their form must be acknowledged to owe much to the subjects' decisions and intentions, as well as to European conventions.

These different readings also reflect the medium's fluidity, able to be endlessly reproduced, made large or small, crammed on to a large display panel for consumption during a single public event, or scattered over the pages of an album, to be pored over repeatedly, in private. This polysemous quality belies the images' apparent clarity, inscribing them with multiple and contradictory meanings. Walter's experiments with this new medium survive as evidence for a time when ideas about race and difference were changing and contested, defining new ways of seeing black and white.

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⁹⁶. Cooper 1993: 93.

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Mapping Aboriginal nations: the 'nation' concept of late nineteenth century anthropologists in Australia

Kevin Blackburn

From the late 18th century to the end of the 19th century, the word 'nation' underwent a change in meaning from a term describing cultural entities comprised of people of common descent, to the modern definition of a nation as a sovereign people. The political scientist Liah Greenfeld called this shift in the definition of the word nation a 'semantic transformation', in which 'the meaning of the original concept is gradually obscured, and the new one emerges as conventional'.¹ The historian Eric Hobsbawm noted that the *New English Dictionary* 'pointed out in 1908, that the old meaning of the word envisaged mainly the ethnic unit, but recent usage rather stressed "the notion of political unity and independence"'.² The political scientist Louis Snyder observed that the 'Latin *natio*, (birth, race) originally signified a social grouping based on real or imaginary ties of blood'. However by the end of the 19th century the term 'nation' had come to mean an 'active and conscious portion of the population', who shared a 'common political sentiment'.³ The work of historians Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger suggests that in the 19th century a nation was not only a cultural group of people of common ethnic origin, but such a group of people who in addition believed that they were a united political entity possessing or desiring sovereignty.⁴

The cultural anthropologist Benedict Anderson has described the idea of the nation as an 'imagined community'. He argued that a nation 'is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives their communion'. The modern nation 'is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which the Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm'. The French Revolution, with its ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, ushered in the idea of the nation as a sovereign people with a citizenship and possessing defined rights. Anderson noted that the modern idea of a nation 'is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of actual inequality

¹ Greenfeld 1992: 4-9.

² Hobsbawm 1992: 18.

³ Snyder, 1954: 29-31.

⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 6.

and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'.⁵ Was the modern idea of a nation as defined by Anderson as pervasive in 19th century political thinking as various political scientists and historians have assumed? What were the definitions of a nation current in the discipline of anthropology that during the 19th century was involved in the study of communities?

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some of the pioneers of anthropology in Australia regularly wrote of how Aboriginal people comprised nations. They drew the boundaries of these Aboriginal nations on maps, which were then published in international anthropological journals. Several early Australian anthropologists, principally AW Howitt and RH Mathews, but also ALP Cameron, John Mathew and William Ridley, had an enthusiasm for delineating and mapping Aboriginal nations. Their impressive array of data was drawn from interviewing Aboriginal people in post-frontier Australia, just after they had been defeated and subdued. From these sources, as well as white informants living in isolated rural areas, they were able to delineate nations and in several cases draw maps of parts of Australia divided into Aboriginal nations, which were further divided into smaller groups that they called tribes. Were these maps of Aboriginal nations representations of cultural groupings rather than maps of nations possessing sovereignty? Perhaps the 'nation' concept used by these men and their contemporaries can be seen in the general context of the existence in the 19th century of a definition of the word nation that pre-dated the modern meaning of what constitutes a nation – a sovereign people. Using Benedict Anderson's words, what type of 'imagined communities' were these Aboriginal nations?

Anthropology and mapping the 'nation' concept

AP Elkin and Norman Tindale, two Australian anthropologists from the mid-20th century, have described how common this concept of Aboriginal nations in Australia had been among their predecessors, even though they both saw it as erroneous. Tindale, preferring to see the tribe as the basic unit of Aboriginal territorial organisation, noted that these 'less scientific' and 'amateur' early anthropologists incorrectly assigned 'nationlike status to blocks of tribes'.⁶ Elkin also preferred to see the tribe as the unit for the 'modern scientific' anthropologist to study, but he was forced to note how common what he and Tindale called the 'nation' concept had been among the early anthropologists working in Australia. Elkin wrote that 'groups of tribes have been called nations by some writers, but in view of the linguistic differences which usually exist between members of a group and of the lack of any common central organization or sentiment, it would seem inadvisable to use the term "nation" in this connexion [sic]'.⁷

The contrast that Tindale and Elkin drew between the 'nation' concept of the age of 'amateur' Australian anthropology and the notion of tribe as a precise term of 'modern scientific' anthropology does not appear to have been an accurate one. In the 1970s, RMW Dixon, an eminent linguist of Aboriginal languages and one of the critics of Tindale's work on the division of Aboriginal Australia into tribes, argued that the 'nation' concept could be fruitfully used to describe Aboriginal groups. Dixon endorsed the

5. Anderson 1991: 6–7.

6. Tindale 1974: 156.

7. Elkin 1964: 74.

idea of nation put forward by his Aboriginal informant Jack Stewart of the Yidinjdji in the Atherton Tableland. Stewart had explained to him that 'what the Europeans called a "tribe" was more appropriately described as a "nation"', and that 'Aboriginal Australia had many separate nations, just as did Europe (he mentioned France, Italy, Germany, and so on)'. Dixon also mentioned that 'each Australian nation had its own "language"; this would sometimes have a degree of intelligibility with the language of the next nation, and sometimes not'. He compared the Australian nations to the Scandinavian nation-states, 'where several nations speak dialects of a single language, whilst maintaining that they do speak different languages'. He gave Dyirbal as an Australian example: 'a single language, corresponding to six separate Australian nations' – Djirbal, Ngadjan, Mamu, Djiru, Gulnay, Giramay.⁸ Dixon's idea of an Aboriginal nation was not the notion of a 'block of tribes' speaking the same language and sharing similar customs. Nonetheless, Dixon was prepared to acknowledge that the 'nation' concept had validity.

Dixon's example of Jack Stewart, as early as the 1970s, seeing himself as part of an Aboriginal nation similar to France and Germany, and telling anthropologists whom he meets this conception of his people, raises some interesting questions about how the term nation has been used by Aboriginal people to describe themselves. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Aboriginal people are telling the Australian legal system through Native Title and land rights claims that they are nations – a term which they use to describe aggregates of tribes who have common purpose in applying for land rights and Native Title. In 1993, Isabel Coe of the Wiradjuri unsuccessfully sought recognition from the High Court of Australia that 'the Wiradjuri are a sovereign nation of people', and demanded compensation for the dispossession of their lands. The case was a landmark one because it was the first time that an Aboriginal community sought legal confirmation of the status as a first nation. Isabel Coe clearly outlined, in the second and third paragraphs of their statement to the High Court, the claim of the Wiradjuri to be seen as a nation that historically possessed a national language, self-government, laws, and boundaries:

2. Since time immemorial, since 1788, since 1813, since 1901 and since within living memory (hereinafter collectively referred to as 'since time immemorial') the Wiradjuri people, who are known as Wiradjuri Kooris and who are included in that group of people known as Aboriginal people, are a nation of persons who have continuously lived on and occupied that land now known as central New South Wales, in whole or in part, according to Wiradjuri laws, customs, traditions and practices, with their own language.

3. The Wiradjuri nation have rights to all [land bounded by the common borders it shares with its neighbours ... and extends from the upper reaches of Wambool (Macquarie) River in its northern border, the Murray River in its southern border, and the Great Dividing Range and the Murrumbidgee (Murrumbidgee) River in its eastern border and the flood plains of the Kalar (Lachlan) River in its western border and comprises approximately 80,000 square kilometres] and have continued to have rights to the said land by reason of their traditional connection to the said land, notwithstanding any wrongful or unlawful extinguishment, forced dispossession, or forced abandonment of the said land pleaded herein.⁹

8. Dixon 1976: 213–214.

Interestingly, late 19th century anthropologists mapping Aboriginal nations concurred that a Wiradjuri nation existed. Perhaps the late 19th century ancestors of the Wiradjuri today were telling anthropologists more or less the same as the Wiradjuri were saying to the Australian legal system in the 1990s, and perhaps this helped influence ethnographic practice amongst a group of anthropologists who mapped Aboriginal nations instead of tribes?¹⁰

From the late 1990s into the 21st century, the Yorta Yorta people – who are sometimes known as the Bangerang – were also engaged in a fight similar to the Wiradjuri for Native Title over 2000 square kilometres of their traditional land along the Murray River in northern Victoria and southern New South Wales. In 1998 the Yorta Yorta/Bangerang people, like the Wiradjuri, claimed before the Australian Federal Court that they were a nation of people who have continuously lived on and occupied their land, according to their own laws, customs, traditions and practices, with their own language. This Native Title case raised issues over the meaning and significance of Aboriginal people's relationships and claims to land and the modes of their verification and demonstration. The Yorta Yorta/Bangerang, like the Wiradjuri, were also identified as an Aboriginal nation in several maps of late 19th century anthropology. These maps have varied considerably. The work of Rod Hagen, an anthropologist involved in this Native Title claim, suggests that the Yorta Yorta/Bangerang are indeed, in the words of Benedict Anderson, an 'imagined community', and that, although the mapping of their boundaries by various anthropologists from the 19th century to the 20th century has been inconsistent, this community's relationship with their land is still demonstrable and verifiable. Hagen argues that 'a map no matter how questionably drawn has a certain seductiveness about it. Here is something concrete in a situation of ambiguity'. He concludes that 'once lines have been drawn on a map they attain a false concreteness that stands out from the complexities and ambiguities of reality. Boundaries between Indigenous groups are rarely so hard and fast'.¹¹

Mapping Indigenous people across the whole continent of Australia has been riddled with difficulties, as Hagen has indicated. The three maps that have set out to do this for the whole of Australia in the late 20th century – the Norman Tindale, Stephen Davis, and David Horton maps – have been contentious.¹² The flaws present in the process of mapping Aboriginal Australia have been explored in Peter Sutton's edited collection of work on the concepts of boundaries, *Country*. In this work, Elspeth Young observed that 'the definition of Aboriginal territoriality according to non-Aboriginal concepts of boundaries (precise lines on the ground/maps) is fraught with danger. It is generally not appropriate for Aboriginal groups'.¹³

Peter Sutton attributes many of the problems of mapping Aboriginal Australia to confusing two different Aboriginal groups: bands that are the land-using groups, and clans or estate groups that are the land-holding groups.¹⁴ Bands contain a mixture of

⁹ Coe v Commonwealth, 118 *Australian Law Reports*, 1993, 193.

¹⁰ See McDonald 1998.

¹¹ Hagen 2001: 225.

¹² Horton 1994 and 2000; Tindale 1974: 157; Davis and Prescott 1992; Davis 1993.

¹³ Young 1995: 88.

¹⁴ Sutton 1995: 40; and Peterson and Long 1986.

individuals from different clans who together forage parts of the land owned by clans or estate groups. Historically there has been confusion over which Aboriginal group owned the land. Sutton comments that even 'scholars such as Tindale and Birdsell promoted the view that tribes and clans were simultaneously both descent-based categories and physical occupiers of defined land areas which were their territories'. However, it was Nicolas Peterson who was 'perhaps the first to point out this represented a collapsing together of two very different kinds of things: a population and a typological unit (the language group or "formal tribe")'.¹⁵

Sutton has noted that 'tribes tend to be among the by-products of the colonial frontier in various parts of the world'. Tribes, as the North American anthropologist Milton Fried has argued, were creations of the European colonisers wanting to order and delineate the colonised population.¹⁶ Tindale and many others saw the language group as a tribe, which they also believed owned the land. Sutton writes that 'one of the consequences of the impact of the colonial period in Aboriginal Australia has been the rapid rise in the political importance of the language groups.' He added that 'in certain areas, this has become the main collective label under which people maintain a local Aboriginal identity and a communal land-owning group identity.' This was because 'these areas tended to be heavily impacted by the colonial era' to the extent that 'there has usually been a decline, often a complete extinction, of finer-grained forms of classical Aboriginal land-holding such as clans and their estates. The pre-existing category of language group has often become the dominant form of traditional land affiliation'. Sutton observes that 'some of these language groups, or at least sets of people affiliated with them, have become legally incorporated in order to act as fund-receiving bodies'.¹⁷

Much of the mapping of Aboriginal societies in the 19th and early 20th centuries, according to Young, was an integral part of the colonisation process, 'carried out principally through the alienation of their land and the relocation of Aboriginal groups to government and mission administered reserve communities'.¹⁸ The process of delineating Indigenous nations and identifying their boundaries occurs in considerable detail in the Australian context during the early 19th century. However, maps of boundaries were a rarity. Evangelicals on the Australian frontier, in particular GA Robinson and Edward Parker, used the pre-modern notion of a nation as a cultural rather than a political entity to describe Aboriginal groups in Tasmania and Victoria. During his travels among the Aboriginal people of Tasmania from 1829 into the early 1830s – designed to collect them together so they could be placed on a reserve – Robinson described Aboriginal bands of 50–80 people as nations. When he became Protector of the Port Phillip Protectorate, which was to allocate land for Indigenous people during the colonisation of the area, Robinson continued to use the term, but applied it to a mixture of language groups and clans. Robinson's Assistant Protectors, such as Edward Parker, probably encouraged by Robinson, also adopted the term to describe Aboriginal groups.¹⁹

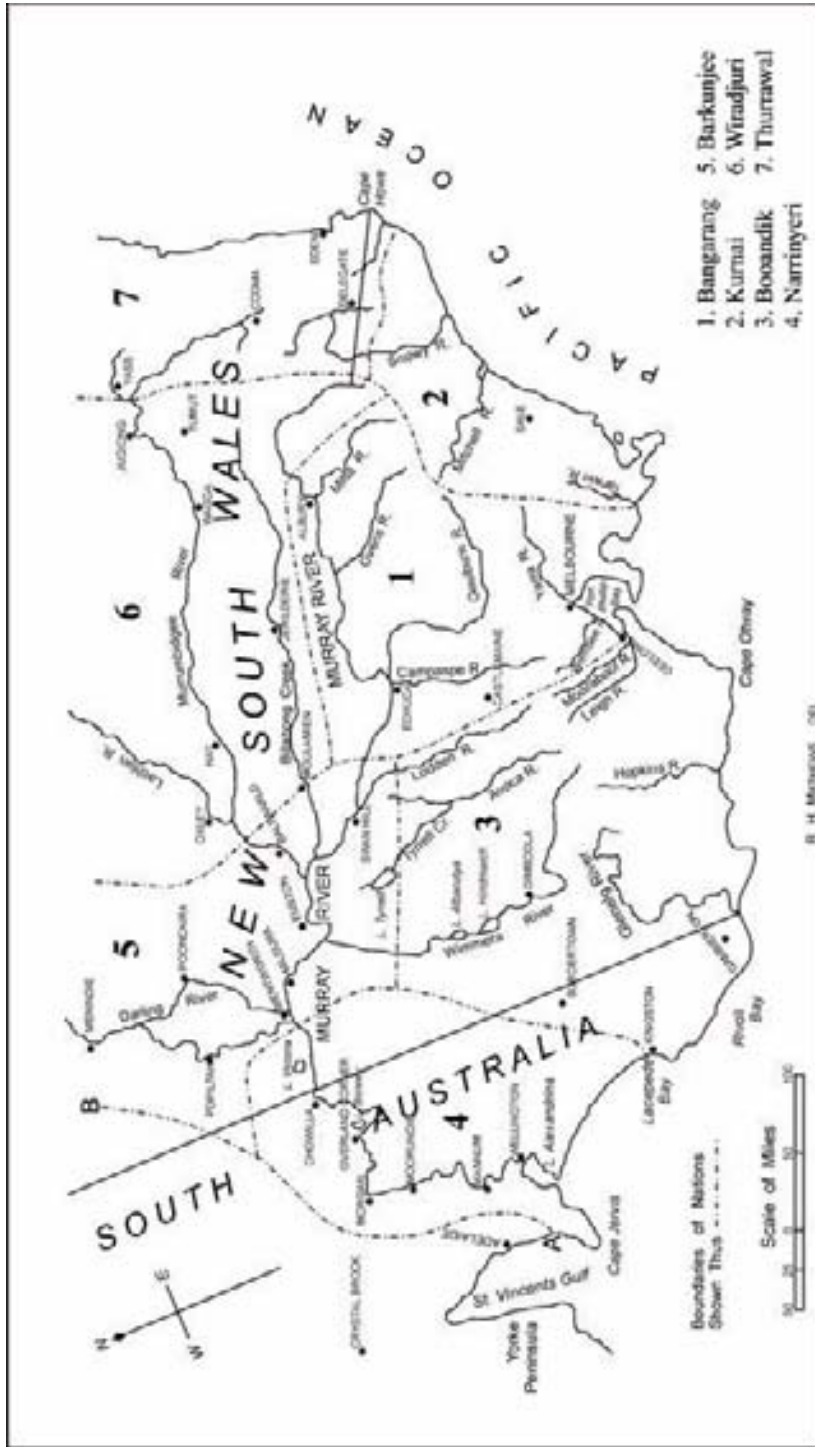
15. Sutton 1995: 40.

16. Fried 1975: 101.

17. Sutton 1995: 47.

18. Young 1995: 88.

19. Blackburn 2002.



R.H. Mathews' Map of his Victorian Nations (1898)

These Evangelicals of the early 19th century used the Biblical notion of a nation as cultural group of common descent, pre-dating 19th century ideas of the nation as a sovereign people. The Evangelicals drew their idea of a nation from that found in the King James version of the Bible: that God had divided humanity up equally, not into races, but into nations, and that people of all nations were capable of receiving God's grace. From Genesis to the Gospels, the King James Version of the Bible refers to many groups of people as nations, eg Genesis 10:32 'the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these nations divided the earth after the flood', and Mathew 28:19: 'Go and teach the Nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'.

Although Robinson and his Assistant Protectors regularly used the term nation, they never produced any maps of their Aboriginal nations, despite going to considerable effort to identify their territories. While describing the Aboriginal people of Australia as nations was common among the Evangelicals on the Australian frontier, they never offered a precise definition of what constituted an Aboriginal nation. Only a handful of the Evangelicals of the early 19th century, such as Robinson and his Assistant Protectors, identified particular Aboriginal groups as nations. Despite this, many Evangelicals still described Aboriginal Australia as comprising 'uncivilised' or 'heathen' nations. The existence of the old use of the term nation on the frontier illustrates that the word was indeed undergoing a transformation in meaning, as scholars such as Greenfeld, Snyder, and Hobsbawm have indicated.²⁰

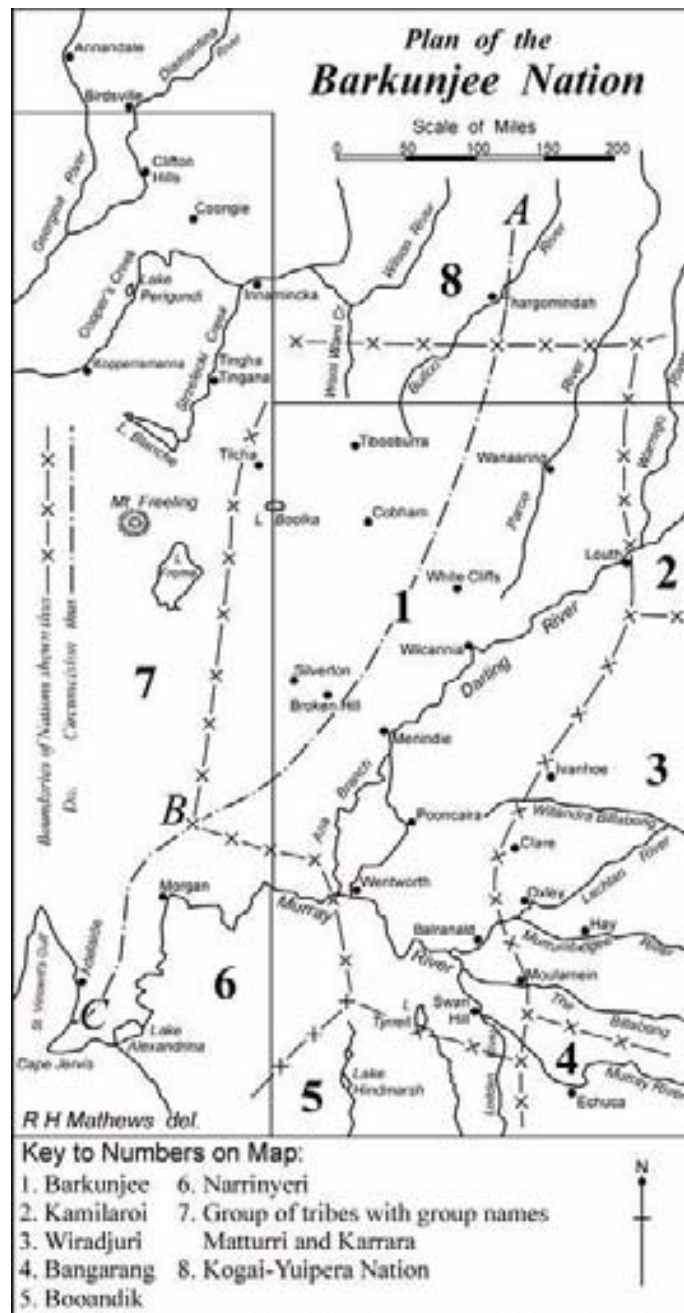
AW Howitt and his Aboriginal nations

Perhaps the first of the pioneer anthropologists in Australia to attempt to provide a rough definition of what constituted an Australian Aboriginal nation in the academic journals of the newly emerging discipline of anthropology was AW Howitt (1830–1908), a bushman and explorer. Interestingly, Howitt was from an Evangelical background. His father was William Howitt, who had produced the well-known Evangelical text on the relationship between colonisation and Indigenous people, *Colonisation and Christianity*, in 1838. This text influenced the thinking of many Evangelicals throughout the British Empire. In the text, the elder Howitt morally condemned the process of colonisation practised by nations which he believed could not claim to be Christian because they were engaged in destroying many of what he described as God's 'uncivilised nations'. The younger Howitt appears not to have accepted everything his father believed, because after arriving in Australia and working in the bush he initially adopted a condescending view of Aboriginal people.²¹ However, it is hard not to come to the conclusion, given the unequivocal nature of his father's beliefs, that they did not have at least some impact on AW Howitt. The younger Howitt may have accepted the Biblical notion of a nation when seeing Aboriginal communities because of his father's insistence that they were nations as described in the Bible.

AW Howitt was educated at University College School, London, but spent many of his early years in the Australian outback becoming an experienced and knowledgeable bushman. Howitt found King of the failed Burke and Wills expedition, and returned

²⁰. Blackburn 2002.

²¹. Mulvaney 1971: 287–8.



R. H. Mathews' Map of the Barkunjee Nation (1898)

to bring back the remains of Burke and Wills, as well as to explore the Barcoo region. His many years in Australia as a bushman, naturalist, explorer and then travelling magistrate brought him into close contact with Aboriginal people in isolated rural areas. In his spare time he read the anthropological works of Charles Darwin, John Lubbock, Francis Galton, and EB Tylor. In the 1870s, he was introduced to the anthropological theories of Lewis Morgan by Lorimer Fison, whom Howitt had met when he responded to Fison's public appeal for help in studying Australian Aboriginal kinship systems.²²

Howitt's belief that Aboriginal Australia was comprised of nations, although probably initially drawn from Evangelical thinking, developed into a more sophisticated concept under the influence of the ideas of Lewis Morgan. The impact of Morgan on Howitt explains how both he, and later RH Mathews, argued that Aboriginal people sharing the same moieties, sections, or class systems comprised nations. These kinship groupings were usually represented by a totem, such as an animal. In his 1877 work, *Ancient society*, Morgan described how in ancient Athens and Rome, as well as among the Iroquois Indians, tribes having shared moieties or sections (he called them phratries and gentes [sing. gens]) formed into nations. Morgan explained how 'several tribes coalesced into a nation' so that the 'aggregate was simply a more complex duplicate' of the tribes. In his study of the Iroquois nation, Morgan concluded that the 'confederacy rested upon the tribes ostensibly, but primarily upon common gentes'. He argued that 'all the members of the same gens, whether, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, or Senecas, were brothers and sisters to each other ... Three of the gentes, namely the Wolf, Bear, and Turtle, were common to all five tribes; and these and three others were common to three tribes'. He stated that 'if either of the five tribes had seceded from the confederacy it would have severed the bond of kin, although but slightly'. If war between the tribes had occurred 'it would have turned the gens of the Wolf against their gentile kindred, Bear against Bear, in a word brother against brother'.²³ Morgan's classic 1851 study of the Iroquois made repeated use of the term nation when describing how they were organised.²⁴ The impact of Morgan's ideas upon Howitt has long been acknowledged in the history of anthropology as significant. He regularly corresponded with both Fison and Howitt, discussing moieties and class systems. In 1877, Morgan sent Howitt a copy of this book. Howitt wrote back replying that he was in complete agreement with Morgan's volume.²⁵ Morgan also wrote the preface to Fison's and Howitt's 1880 book, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, which applied Morgan's classificatory system of kinship to Australia.²⁶

The definition of the term nation along the lines outlined by Morgan makes its first appearance in the work of the early Australian anthropologists in a paper by Howitt, read to the Anthropological Institute in Britain by the eminent British anthropologist EB Tylor on 11 December 1883. In this paper Howitt very tentatively noted that there existed 'certain tribes of North-Eastern Victoria, as to which I, at present, know little, except that they belong to that "nation" (if I may use the term) which applied the

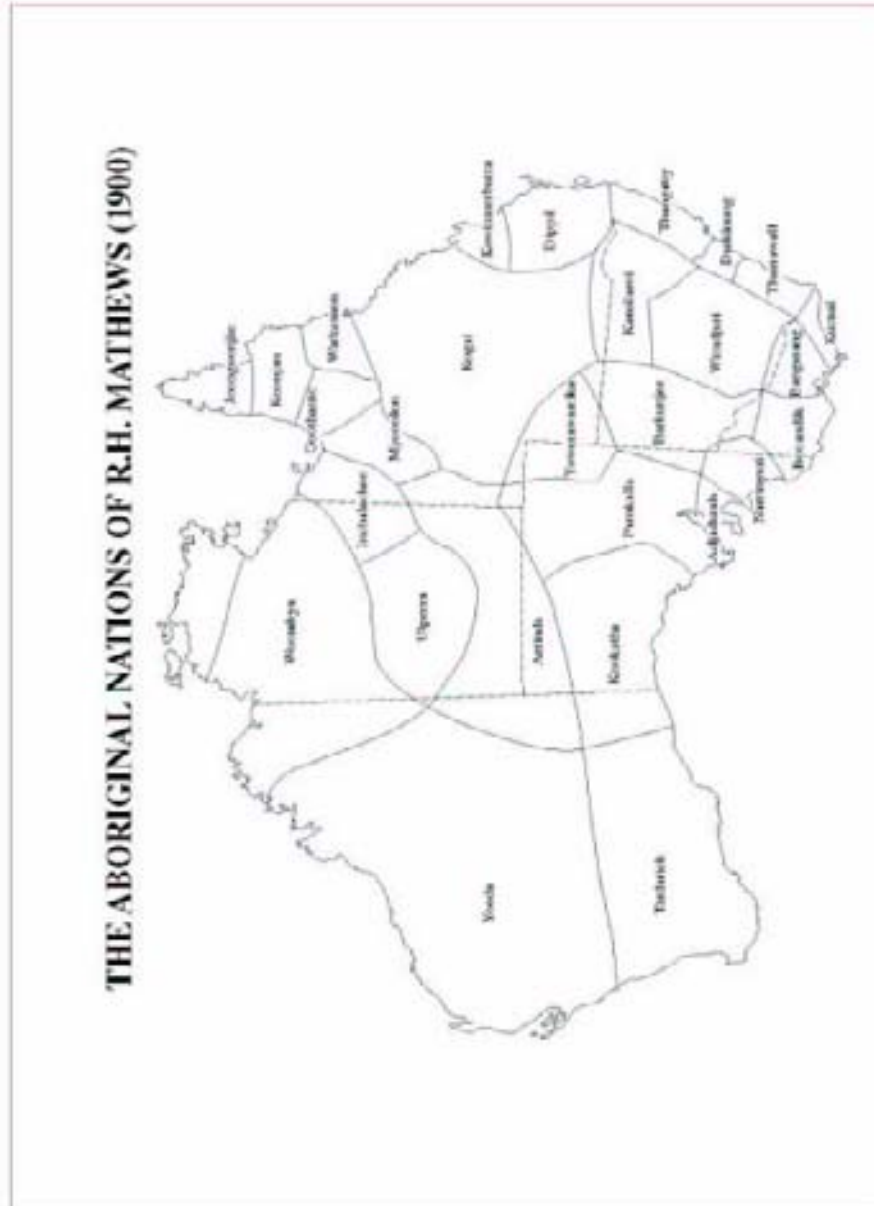
22. Stanner, 1996 and Walker 1971.

23. Morgan 1877: 62-3, 136-7, 248-54, and 266-7.

24. Morgan 1962.

25. Stern 1930.

26. Mulvaney 1971: 291 and Kuper 1988: 92-8.



word "Kulin" to its own men...' He defined Aboriginal nations as 'tribal groups' which 'represent a social aggregate, namely a community bound together, despite a diversity of class system, by ceremonies of initiation, which, although they vary slightly in different localities, are yet substantially the same, and are common to all'.²⁷

Howitt's uncertainty about using the 'nation' concept, conveyed in the 1883 paper, was evident in his own field notebooks. In his notes, dated 1 February 1884, Howitt discussed Aboriginal groups west of the Darling River in terms of nations. He wrote that in his fieldwork he was 'much in want of a name which can be applied to all these allied tribes. They all in some aspects may be regarded as forming a great tribal aggregate for which the word "nation" might be appropriate'. He determined that just as in Victoria, where Aboriginal groups or 'tribes' who use the word 'Kulin' for man 'may be termed the "Kulin nation"', a similar phenomenon could be found along the Darling River in Western New South Wales. Howitt wrote that he had 'found that the word for "Mau = blackfellow" is common to all component tribes', and these 'Darling tribes are known to the aborigines in the South and South East as the "Barkinji"'. Howitt thus delineated a 'Barkinji nation'.²⁸

Around the same time, Howitt reported in his letters to his colleague, Lorimer Fison, that he had 'unearthed some important information which has enabled me to correct boundaries of Mara ... Kulin ...' nations. ²⁹ The Mara nation was formed from several tribes on the western boundary of the Kulin. Howitt believed that these tribes 'belonged to a nation calling themselves Mara, "men"', which extended along the sea from Mount Gambier in the west to 'east of Colac, where was the boundary of one tribe of the Kulin nation'.³⁰ As for 'the Kulin nation', it 'consisted of a number of Tribes and fell into several subgroups named from the language'.³¹ Howitt listed sixteen tribes that made up what he called the Kulin nation. He noted that 'this nation occupied the country from Colac to Mount Baw Baw, and from Wangaratta and Murchison on the north to Port Phillip and Western Port on the South'.³²

Throughout the 1880s, Howitt attempted to arrive at a clear definition of the 'nation' concept when he described Aboriginal groups. He tried to define the boundaries of Aboriginal nations according to kinship organisation of moieties and class systems. Writing again in the journal of the Anthropological Institute for 1889, Howitt argued 'that the boundaries of any one class system are usually wider than those of a single tribe, and that the boundaries of a "type" of system have a still wider extent, and include aggregates of tribes which may well be termed nations for they are bound together by a community of classes which indicates a community of descent, and which is usually accompanied by more or less frequent intermarriage'. ³³ He again used the

27. Howitt 1884: 433.

28. Notes on the Itchumundi/Karamundi/Barkinji nations, pp. 19-20 in the AW Howitt Papers, Box 1050/7(a).

29. Covering Letter from AW Howitt to Lorimer Fison (undated) in the AW Howitt Papers, Box 1050/7(a).

30. Howitt 1904: 69-70.

31. Covering Letter from AW Howitt to Lorimer Fison (undated) in the AW Howitt Papers, Box 1050/7(a).

32. Howitt 1904: 70.

33. Howitt 1889: 35.

term nation to describe Aboriginal societies in an address before the Royal Society of Victoria on 12 December 1889. This paper stated that 'a large group of kindred tribes inhabited an extent of country to the north, south, and west of Melbourne, to which, collectively, the name of the "Kulin nation" may be applied, from the word which in some form of dialect variation was used by them as meaning one of their men'. Howitt claimed, 'my information is derived from Berak, the sole survivor of the tribe, an intelligent and trustworthy old man, who was a boy when Batman first founded Melbourne'.³⁴ 'Berak', or Barak, seemed to be telling Howitt that he perceived himself as a member of a Kulin nation. From the exchanges between Barak and Howitt, it appears that the Kulin were in the words of Benedict Anderson an 'imagined community'. They saw themselves as a Kulin nation. However, sovereignty did not lie with the Kulin nation but with smaller groups within that nation. Thus, the Kulin people were a nation according to the pre-modern definition of the word as a cultural group of common descent, not according to its modern sense as a sovereign people.

In the 1880s Howitt also emphasised that sharing similar languages bound Aboriginal nations together. In a paper in the journal of the Anthropological Institute for 1886, he wrote that 'great aggregates of tribes are frequently marked by the use of a common word meaning 'man' which is restricted in use to their own males'. He added that 'a very large group of tribes having the Kamilaroi organisation might be spoken of as the "Murri Nation" ... [while] similarly, a great group of tribes occupying the country surrounding Lake Eyre, in South Australia, might collectively be spoken of as the "Kurna Nation" [sic]'. Howitt added that 'in Eastern Victoria there would be found a large "Kulin Nation", and a smaller in the south-west of the colony to which the term "Mara" might be applied'. He stressed that different Aboriginal words meaning man also helped distinguish the various Aboriginal nations. Howitt declared that there was no word in Aboriginal languages that meant Aboriginal man. He concluded: 'there is no word in the native languages having that meaning. Such words as Murri, Kulin, Kurnai, Mara, have a strictly local meaning. A male aborigine of Victoria is no more a "Murri" than a Scot is a Welshman'.³⁵

At times Howitt's definition of what constituted a nation was very simple. During 1904, in his major publication, *The native tribes of south-east Australia*, Howitt gave a very brief definition when he wrote that 'a nation is used to signify a group of tribes'. Howitt's later published work reflected his earlier thinking in his notes, which indicated that language was a key component of his definition. He noted that 'there are numerous cases in which the word for "man" is common to the languages of a considerable number of more or less nearly related tribes indicating a larger aggregate, for which in default of a better term I use the word "nation"'. Howitt believed that common initiation ceremonies, at which most of the tribes of an Aboriginal nation would gather, helped bind the people together. He described how 'the alliance of tribes forming the nation comes into view on the occasion of one of the great ceremonies being held; all the tribes which form the nation may attend the ceremonies and take part in them, a bond which holds the hordes or clans of a tribe together'.³⁶

³⁴. Howitt 1889a: 109.

³⁵. Howitt 1886: 411-412.

³⁶. Howitt 1904: 41-4.

Howitt used tribe and nation interchangeably even in his major published work of 1904. In the same sentence, Howitt used both tribe and nation to describe the Wiradjuri. He wrote that the Wiradjuri were 'a very large tribe or nation of tribes [which] occupy a vast extent of country in Central New South Wales, and distinguished by a common language in dialect forms, the name being derived for Wira, "no"'.³⁷ On one page of his 1904 text, he referred to the Kamilaroi as a nation of tribes, and then on the next he used the term tribe.³⁸ The Barkinji are also described as a nation on one page, and then called a tribe on the next.³⁹ In an 1885 article with Lorimer Fison, Howitt had used the term nation and tribe interchangeably when they wrote that, 'an entire community - nation, tribe, or whatever else it may be called - of Australian blacks is divided socially into two principal exogamous intermarrying sections'.⁴⁰ Howitt did not use a strict definition when searching for Aboriginal nations. He usually argued that sharing the same moieties, classes, divisions, or sections bound Aboriginal tribes into nations. However Howitt sometimes saw several nations as having the same classes. In his discussion of the Barkinji and Itchumundi nations along the west of the Darling River, he noted that 'all tribes forming the above-mentioned nations are bound together over an enormous district by the same two class system having the same names for the classes'.⁴¹

Howitt did not believe that Aboriginal nations were any more than cultural entities; they were not political units. He described how the tribes that comprised the Aboriginal nations, and which were ruled by headmen, were the sovereign political units of Aboriginal Australia. He made no reference to how a nation was governed, only to how tribes were governed. After describing his Aboriginal nations, Howitt was careful to add a footnote in which he wrote that 'the term nation which I now use must be understood as meaning no more than an aggregate of kindred tribes without implying any kind of confederacy between them'.⁴² He used the Kulin nation as an example, noting that the Wurunjerrri tribe 'serve as an example of the practice of the tribes which formed the Kulin nation'. He explained that 'the old men governed the tribe and among them were men called Ngurungaeta'. Howitt's Aboriginal informant, William Barak, explained that 'if a man was sensible and, as Barak put it, "spoke straight", and did harm to no one, people would listen to him and obey him'. Barak told Howitt that 'such a man would certainly become a Ngurungaeta, if his father was one before him'. Howitt learnt from Barak that it was a Ngurungaeta, 'who called the people together for the great tribal meetings, sent out messengers, and according to his degree of authority, gave orders which were obeyed'.⁴³

The definition of a tribe given by Howitt overlapped with his explanation of the 'nation' concept. Tribe meant 'a number of people who occupy a definite tract of country, who recognise a common relationship have a common speech, or dialects'. He used a similar definition of tribe as he had done for nation when he added that 'the tribes-people recognise some common bond which distinguishes them from other tribes, usu-

37. Howitt 1904: 56.

38. Howitt 1904: 103-104.

39. Howitt 1904: 50-1.

40. Howitt and Fison 1885: 143.

41. Howitt, 1904: 51.

42. Howitt 1886: 412.

43. Howitt 1904: 307.

ally a tribal name, which may be their word for 'man', that is an aboriginal of Australia'.⁴⁴ Howitt's tribes appear to have been at some times dialect groups or clans, and bands at other times in his work. Peter Sutton's comment on the existing confusion over whether bands and clans possessed the territory seems to explain Howitt's own ill-defined concept of a tribe.

After examining Howitt's printed works and his unpublished journals, the conclusion to be drawn from evaluating his use of the terms nation and tribe is similar to that reached by Diane Barwick, who made an extensive study of the Victorian nations. Barwick suggested that Howitt did not have a clear idea of what he called an Aboriginal nation because he often referred to the same Aboriginal group as a tribe or a nation.⁴⁵ Peter Sutton's and Elspeth Young's opinion that the colonisers arranged the Indigenous people into tribes of people who shared a common language to impose a colonial order upon them seems to apply to the arranging of Aboriginal people into nations. Howitt, too, was engaged in colonisation. As a member of Victoria's Aborigines Board of Protection, Howitt quite happily approved of the process of assigning Aboriginal people to reserves controlled by white administrators.⁴⁶ In this respect, Howitt's ordering Aboriginal people into nations appears similar to anthropologists who wished to describe them as tribes.

RH Mathews' Aboriginal nations

In the late 19th century, Howitt was not alone in identifying and mapping Aboriginal nations. Howitt and his bitter rival RH Mathews (1841–1918) disagreed on many aspects of anthropology, but both agreed that Aboriginal nations existed and could be mapped. Mathews perhaps derived the 'nation' concept from the work of Morgan and Howitt, but did not acknowledge it. He frequently used the work of Howitt and other early Australian anthropologists without acknowledgment. In the academic journals of early anthropology, Mathews developed the clearest definition an Aboriginal nation in the 19th century and boldly produced maps that clearly showed the boundaries of his Indigenous nations. Mathews was a government surveyor, whose work travelling throughout southeast Australia gave him many opportunities for collecting data from Aboriginal informants. He had grown up as the son of a pastoralist at Mutbilly near Breadalbane, southwest of Goulburn in New South Wales. Many of his playmates were Aboriginal children, and he also knew their parents well. Retiring from surveying in the early 1890s, Mathews devoted himself full-time to anthropological work. From 1894 to 1912, Mathews published over 170 articles in learned journals in Australia, Europe, and America.⁴⁷ Mathews, like Howitt, also came from a strong Evangelical background. According to Isabel McBryde, Mathews was 'a member of the Presbyterian Church and versed in biblical literature', but he was not interested in evangelising, only studying Aboriginal beliefs and ceremonies.⁴⁸ Perhaps Mathews, like Howitt, Robinson, and Parker, drew his inspiration for describing Aboriginal people as nations from the study of the Bible in his own Evangelical background.

⁴⁴. Howitt 1904: 41.

⁴⁵. Barwick 1998: 10.

⁴⁶. Walker 1971: 214–215.

⁴⁷. Elkin 1975: 126.

⁴⁸. McBryde 1996.

On 16 November 1894, before the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia in Brisbane, Mathews first attempted to outline his concept of an Aboriginal nation. From his study of the Kamilaroi in central northern New South Wales, he noticed that there were 'communities' of tribes. Mathews believed that 'when a number of these tribes are bound together by having the same, or nearly the same, class of laws, participating in similar initiation ceremonies, and among whom intermarriage is more or less frequent, they form communities'. Mathews proposed that 'aggregates of these communities may be called nations'. However, for Mathews, it was not the nation but the tribe that was the political unit of Aboriginal society. He described how 'an Australian tribe is an organised society, governed by strict customary laws, which are administered by headmen or rulers of the various sections of the community, who exercise authority after consultation among themselves'. Mathews' idea of an Aboriginal nation was similar to what Benedict Anderson called an 'imagined community', and the Aboriginal nations identified by Mathews seem akin to Howitt's nations. They appeared to have been 'imagined communities' in that their members believed they belonged, but these 'imagined nations' were not a sovereign people. Sovereignty seems to have been possessed by smaller groups within the nation, which Mathews called 'tribes'. Mathews' idea of a tribe seems to have been similar to Howitt's confusion of dialect groups with clans and bands.

Mathews initially seemed uncertain about suggesting nation as a description. In his early papers he used the term community in preference to nation. He thus wrote about the 'Kamilaroi community' as a group of tribes 'within which the Kamilaroi language was spoken'. Mathews noted that the 'native tribes speaking this language occupied a large tract of rich and well-watered country, extending from the Hunter River in New South Wales to the Maranoa River in Queensland, and constituted a community which was foremost in strength and importance among those of Australia'. Besides the Kamilaroi, there were other groups that Mathews would later call nations but were in this early address designated as 'communities'. He noted that next to the Kamilaroi 'on the south they were joined by the Wiradjuri community'.⁴⁹

In 1898, Mathews returned to the question of delineating Aboriginal nations. He felt confident enough about using the term nation to map what he thought Aboriginal Victoria had been like before the white invasion. He set out what he called 'a short treatise defining the approximate boundaries of the different nations, if they may be termed so, into which the colony was originally divided'. He regretted that 'this work should have been done a half a century ago, while the natives were yet sufficiently numerous to supply the necessary information, but I think it is possible to do something in this direction'. Mathews reiterated his thoughts from 1894: 'I have stated before that when the same several tribes are bound together by affinity of speech, have the same divisional (or class) names, and similar initiation ceremonies, they form communities, and aggregates of these communities may be designated nations'.⁵⁰ In his later work Mathews regularly referred back to his 1894 definition of Aboriginal nations, repeating it

⁴⁹. Mathews 1895: 18–21.

⁵⁰. Mathews 1898: 325.

word for word.⁵¹ His explanation of what an Aboriginal nation constituted appears to have been a thesis, which he tried to test in different areas of Aboriginal Australia.

Mathews sought to arrive at a systematic method of defining an Aboriginal nation. He argued that the first step of any attempt to 'define the boundaries of the nations into which the aborigines were divided' was 'to study the languages and dialects of the population, grouping together those which have an evident affinity'.⁵² For what he called the Kurnai nation of Victoria, he noted that Aboriginal people themselves distinguished speakers who used the word Kurnai (or Kunnai) meaning 'man' as belonging to a Kurnai nation. In New South Wales, the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations were named after the word for 'no' that they used. 'Wira' meant 'no' for all the people who regarded themselves as Wiradjuri; and 'Kamil' was 'no' for all the people who regarded themselves as Kamilaroi.⁵³ Mathews was not alone in using these distinctions to separate Aboriginal groups. However many other 19th century observers of Aboriginal people called these units tribes, not nations.

Apart from language, there were shared customs that bound Aboriginal people living in different tribes together into a nation. Mathews believed that the members of the various tribes of a nation were welded into a nation through similar initiation ceremonies, or even a common initiation ceremony at which all the tribes gathered to initiate their young men. In 1894, Mathews depicted the Aboriginal initiation ceremony called a Bora as a 'national rite', where male youths would come from several tribes of the nation to be initiated. Mathews described a Bora of the northern Kamilaroi near Gundabloui, ten miles south of where the Moonie River crosses the Queensland-New South Wales border, in terms of it being an assembly of representatives of an Aboriginal nation: 'The youths who are initiated, are carefully instructed by the old men in their traditions - their moral and religious codes - and the laws of consanguinity and inter-marriage', he wrote. 'This national rite partakes partly of a civil, and partly of a religious character, and this is the great educational system by which the exact observance of the laws is inculcated'. Mathews noted that before the Bora was held there were 'messengers sent out to muster the tribes'. For some Aboriginal tribes the journey to the Bora ground was over 150 kilometres. At the ceremony, 'each tribe occupied that side of the main camp which faced the direction of their own *tauri*, or country'. Even the 23 boys of the three tribes who were to be initiated 'sat in that part of the circle which faced their respective districts'. Over 200 Aboriginal people from the three tribes assembled to witness this 'national rite'.⁵⁴

Mathews argued that these mass gatherings at common initiation ceremonies were integral to the unity of Aboriginal nations because they promoted shared customs and a common culture. He examined in detail their role in the Wiradjuri, the largest Aboriginal nation in New South Wales. Mathews described the Wiradjuri as being like the Iroquois League in North America, 'a vast confederacy' of tribes or 'independent groups', and 'each of which has its recognized hunting grounds'. These tribes 'could be still further divided into smaller groups, consisting, for example, of an old man with his

51. Mathews 1898: 67.

52. Mathews 1902: 71.

53. Mathews 1906: 939.

54. Mathews 1894: 98-129.

wives, his sons and their wives, and the families of the latter'.⁵⁵ He described how a Wiradjuri initiation ceremony, or Burbung, strengthened ties between the tribes of the nation: 'the novices of the Hay tribe, for example, would be invested in the garb of manhood by the Narrandara men: the Narrandera boys by the Gundagai men; the Gundagai novices would be dressed by the Hillston men; and the Hillston boys by the Hay men'. Mathews observed that 'novices belonging to one tribe are always dressed in the regalia of a man by the men of one of the other tribes present at the general Burbung gathering'.⁵⁶

According to Mathews, another characteristic that united Aboriginal tribes into a nation was sharing divisional and sectional names, or having the same moieties. Mathews grouped into nations several neighbouring Aboriginal tribes that were divided into the same two moieties. He noted that a number of tribes could be divided into two social divisions known as moieties, usually signified by a totem, such as an animal or object. Membership of these moieties might be derived from the individual's mother or father, depending on custom, and laws generally prohibited an individual from marrying a person of the same moiety. Tribes comprising a nation might also share a section system, which enlarged the number of social divisions from two moieties to four sections or even eight subsections. When Mathews mapped the Kamilaroi nation he remarked that all of the members of the nation across various tribes were once segregated into two moieties, the Dilbi and Kapathin, which were then increased over time to four sections. He observed that 'as every man, woman and child bore the name of an animal, or some other natural object, one moiety of the community comprising various totems, were grouped together under the collective name of Dilbi; and a corresponding variety of totems adopted the distinguishing name of Kupathin'.⁵⁷ Mathews thus seems to have drawn up the definitions of an Aboriginal nation offered by Morgan and his Australian follower Howitt, but he was more rigorous in his approach.

Although Mathews attempted to arrive at a systematic method of defining an Aboriginal nation, his definition of a nation – like all attempts to define what constitutes a nation – was faced with exceptions and anomalies. Some tribes of the Wiradjuri had sections that were identical with those of the neighbouring Kamilaroi; and sections found in the Kamilaroi extended into tribes that spoke different languages. Mathews had problems testing his thesis because of the destruction wreaked on the Aboriginal nations by the European invaders. He regretted that defining Aboriginal nations was made difficult 'owing to the gradual disappearance of the aborigines before the white population and the consequent extinction of many of the totems'. By the 1890s this had produced circumstances in New South Wales in which 'it is now difficult to find a native who can remember all the totem names, and he will be rather doubtful in regard to those with which he has never had any connection'.⁵⁸ Mathews also admitted that he included in some Aboriginal nations several tribes that did not all speak the same language.⁵⁹ Although Mathews tried to map his Aboriginal nations by giving them

55. Mathews 1906: 941.

56. Mathews 1897a: 129–30.

57. Mathews 1897b: 157.

58. Mathews 1897b: 168, 171, and 176.

59. Mathews 1898b: 334.

definite borders, he realised that fixed boundaries did not exist. When he first tentatively suggested that Aboriginal groups could be defined in terms of nations, Mathews had recognised that 'there are no clearly defined boundaries between tribes, or their greater aggregates, the nations - they seem to melt into each other'.⁶⁰ He commented that 'there is generally a narrow strip of "no man's land" between them, which is sometimes occupied by one people and sometimes by the other'. He noted that these boundaries were 'not infrequently defined by hills, watercourses, belts of scrub, stretches of plain, or other remarkable features'.⁶¹

However, despite methodical problems, Mathews held to his idea that Aboriginal nations existed. His 'nation' concept entailed that Indigenous people could be grouped into large national units, although these were not necessarily politically united units. For Mathews, an Aboriginal nation was divided into many sovereign groups. In the case of an Aboriginal nation, he called these sovereign units within it 'tribes'. In the 1890s and 1900s Mathews was consistent in not seeing Aboriginal nations as possessing sovereignty. There were Aboriginal political units that did possess sovereignty, according to Mathews, but these were the tribes that made up a particular Aboriginal nation. Mathews noted that 'a tribe of Australian Aborigines may be described as an aggregation of a number of families or groups, which may, for convenience of reference, be termed subtribes, who speak the same tongue and whose territory is situated within specified geographic limits'. He added that 'these families groups, subtribes, or whatever name we may call them by, find it to their mutual advantage to keep on friendly terms with each other, so that they may be all the better to defend themselves against a common foe, or to make raids upon outsiders'. These tribes had governments: 'There is no kingly rule or arbitrary chieftainship, in one acceptance of these terms, but matters of tribal interest are managed by a sort of informal council composed of the leading men of each local group', Mathews wrote.⁶²

Mathews, in an 1898 article written for the journal *American Anthropologist*, identified and mapped three large Aboriginal nations covering most of the colony of Victoria, with four other nations mainly based in New South Wales and South Australia having boundaries that protruded into the colony. There was a 'Bangarang nation', which occupied much of the land of modern Melbourne and extended north to the New South Wales border. The 'tribes comprising this nation occupied a tract of country in central Victoria which may be approximately defined as being bounded on the north by a line some miles beyond the river Murray, and on the south by the seacoast from Port Philip to the Tarwin river'.⁶³ There was also a 'Boonadik nation'. He wrote that 'the geographic limits of this aggregate of tribes' were the seacoast from Lacedpede Bay in South Australia to Geelong, in Victoria. The third Victorian nation was the Kurnai of Gippsland. Other nations identified by Mathews were mainly based in New South Wales and South Australia, but overlapped into Victoria. These included the Narrinyeri of the Lower Murray River, the Barkunjee at the junction of the Darling and Murray

60. Mathews 1895: 21.

61. Mathews 1906: 941.

62. Mathews 1906: 941 and 943.

63. Mathews 1898a: 326.

Rivers, the Wiradjuri from the Murray River into central New South Wales, and the Thurrwall along the south east coast of New South Wales.

In the process of identifying the Aboriginal nations of Victoria, Mathews relied heavily upon his methodology of grouping together tribes that possessed common initiation ceremonies and shared divisional names. However his work on Aboriginal territorial divisions of Victoria cannot be taken at face value. Diane Barwick has demonstrated that Mathews' descriptions of Aboriginal territorial organisation in Victoria were often inaccurate and should be treated with caution because Mathews spent very little time in Victoria and mainly relied upon second-hand accounts.⁶⁴

The method that Mathews used to map Aboriginal nations was indeed flawed. In several instances, he just took the name of one tribe and referred to a whole block of tribes by that name. Mathews admitted that he had done this in his maps of a number of Aboriginal nations. In a paper that Mathews read before the Royal Society of New South Wales on 7 December 1898, he described how 'an aggregate of aboriginal tribes, with a social organisation and inaugural rites sufficiently distinct from their neighbours to justify their being ranked as a separate nation, occupy an extensive territory in the western portion of New South Wales'. He added that 'the most widely spread of these tribes is the Barkunjee, and I propose adopting this term for the entire nation'.⁶⁵ In Queensland, Mathews identified several Aboriginal nations in areas where little was known of the Aboriginal people, so he made up names to refer to whole blocks of these tribes. The names for these nations were usually taken from the name of one tribe in the area. In 1898, when referring to a group of tribes in the north west Queensland, he wrote, 'I have named this aggregate of tribes the Goothanto nation after the tribe of that name occupying the country around the junction of the Gilbert and Einasleigh Rivers'.⁶⁶

In 1900 Mathews eventually published a map of Australia with 28 Aboriginal nations drawn on it. He affirmed in his article that on his map of the Aboriginal nations of Australia 'aggregates of tribes holding the same divisional names may, for convenience of reference, be called communities or nations'.⁶⁷ Many of the Aboriginal nations described were those that he had identified in his earlier research. The size of these nations was defined by the extent of their different moieties and class divisions. For example, the Booandik nation extended as far as its Krokitch and Kamatch moieties. East of it lay the Bangarang nation with its Boonjil and Wah moieties. To the north was the Barjunkee nation with its Muckwarra and Keelparra moieties. For some reason Arnhem Land was completely blank on Mathews' map, perhaps reflecting the lack of knowledge about Arnhem Land at this time. AP Elkin, in his biographical work on Mathews, defended Mathews' inaccurate and very tentative descriptions of Aboriginal territorial organisation and social divisions on the grounds that at Mathews' time very little was known about many Aboriginal groups outside southeast Australia.⁶⁸ However, some of the liberties that Mathews took with the meagre amount of data available

64. Barwick 1984: 100-104.

65. Mathews 1898c: 241.

66. Mathews 1899: 109.

67. Mathews 1900: 575.

68. Elkin 1976: 221-4.

to him on Aboriginal groups in Western Australia seem to suggest that Mathews was outlining merely a tentative map of Aboriginal nations. His most notable indiscretion was highlighted by Tindale, the criticism concerning Mathews' habit of naming a whole block of tribes after one tribe in the group. Tindale scathingly remarked that in the cases of two Western Australian nations, Mathews 'was without a tribal name therefore had to adopt for one a station or ranch name on the Fitzroy River, namely Yeeda, and for the other in the southwest of Western Australia a family name, Tardarick'.⁶⁹

Mathews' motivation to describe Aboriginal people as nations appears to have initially stemmed from his Evangelical background. However, it seems to have been spurred on by his reading of Morgan and Howitt and his desire to establish his own reputation in early anthropology. His definition of an Aboriginal nation displayed a greater theoretical complexity than the nations described in much of the previous writing on Aboriginal societies. Despite this, Mathews, like Howitt, had little respect for Aboriginal sovereignty. He saw Aboriginal people as objects of 'scientific curiosity' which should be taken up by someone such as himself who knew Aboriginal groups well, and not as people who possessed rights.

Aboriginal nations of Cameron, Mathew and Ridley

There appear to have been other pioneer anthropologists in Australia during the late 19th century who also embraced the 'nation' concept, although not as extensively as Mathews and Howitt had done. ALP Cameron, one of Howitt's informants who lived at Mulurulu, New South Wales, wrote an article in the journal of the Anthropological Institute that gave a definition of the 'nation' concept.⁷⁰ In the 1885 volume of the journal Cameron gave an account of what constituted an Aboriginal nation when he distinguished the word tribe from nation. Cameron argued that the word tribe 'refers to a whole community of people, whose language, laws, institutions, ceremonies, and customs are the same, and who call themselves a certain name'. He added, 'the word "nation" will be applied to a group of kindred tribes who are on friendly terms, and whose language and laws are somewhat but not altogether similar.' He thought 'it probable that there were not more than five or six nations in New South Wales, each nation consisting of from five to twenty tribes ...' ⁷¹ Among the Aboriginal nations of New South Wales that Cameron identified were the 'Wiradjeri', the Kamilaroi, and the Barkinji. Cameron was uncertain about the names of the other nations of New South Wales. He described the Wiradjeri as 'a powerful nation, and may have been one of the largest in New South Wales'. He wrote that 'its country extended from Mudgee to Hay, and for a long distance down the course of the Lachlan River'. The Kamilaroi, according to Cameron, 'constituted a nation which was foremost in strength and importance among those of New South Wales'. Cameron was undoubtedly influenced by his friend Howitt's use of the 'nation' concept.

William Ridley (1819–1878), a Presbyterian Minister, also used the 'nation' concept in his early anthropological work of the 1870s. He did not offer a definition of an Aboriginal nation, and used the term more in passing than as a tool for analysis. It is

⁶⁹. Tindale 1974: 136.

⁷⁰. Howitt 1883: 505.

⁷¹. Cameron 1885: 345.

likely that in using the 'nation' concept, Ridley was drawing upon an idea that came from his Evangelical background. In an 1873 research paper, Ridley described a kinship class called the 'Murri' around the Namoi and Barwon Rivers in northern New South Wales. Ridley noted that the 'Murri bear a name almost identical with that of the nation, Murri', and that the 'title "Murri", seems allied to "murra", great or good'. Ridley concluded that the 'resemblance of the class name to that of the nation, and to the word signifying great and also good, supports the assertion made by a half-caste of great intelligence who had been brought up with the blacks that the Murri are the first of four classes'.⁷² Ridley's idea of an Aboriginal nation thus seems close to that of Howitt, Mathews, and Cameron, who also saw nations stretching across Aboriginal people with the same kinship divisions and classes.

The influence of Mathews and Howitt on other pioneer anthropologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries explains why some of their contemporaries applied the 'nation' concept. Tindale identified the Reverend John Mathew (1848–1929) as the last of the pioneer anthropologists to use the 'nation' concept to describe Aboriginal groups in Australia.⁷³ Mathew was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and his Evangelical background perhaps exercised some influence over his desire to use the 'nation' concept. He had grown up in the Wide Bay area around Maryborough in Queensland. As a young manager of pastoralist properties in the area he had learnt the Aboriginal languages of the surrounding Indigenous people before going onto to become a teacher and then to study languages at university.⁷⁴ His use of the 'nation' concept was not as extensive as in Mathews' and Howitt's works, but he seems to have drawn upon their work in his use of the term. Only when Mathew wrote on the organisation of Aborigines in Victoria, which both Howitt and Mathews had written extensively on, did he use the 'nation' concept. In his original work on the Wakka and Kabi people in the Wide Bay area of south east Queensland, where he resided for much of his early life and had a detailed knowledge of the local Aboriginal languages, Mathew never used the 'nation' concept, preferring the term tribes to describe them.⁷⁵ The 'nation' concept is also absent in his early writings on Aboriginal people when he discusses Aboriginal groups across Australia.⁷⁶

In 1910 Mathew, drawing upon the work of Howitt, delineated the Mara and Kulin nations. He stated that 'we observe that the terms which were used as the equivalents of the English word man have been found convenient to divide them into several nations, distinguishable from each other by differences in language, and, to a less extent, in social organization'. Mathew claimed that he was drawing the 'division of the people, first into nations, and then into tribes'.⁷⁷ In his manuscript notes on Victorian nations, Mathew quoted Howitt's definition of an Aboriginal nation and indicated how his idea of an Aboriginal nation was slightly different. 'Dr. Howitt may be quoted', Mathew wrote: 'he says (p 137): "I may note that boundaries of a class system are usu-

⁷². Ridley 1873: 264.

⁷³. Tindale 1974: 156.

⁷⁴. Prentis 1998.

⁷⁵. Mathew 1880: 312–316.

⁷⁶. Mathew 1889.

⁷⁷. Mathew 1911: 83–5.

ally wider than a tribe, and that the boundaries of any one type of system have a still wider range and include those aggregates of tribes which I have termed nations.” Mathew modified Howitt’s definition: ‘I would just add that my use of the term nations has a much wider range than Dr. Howitt so as to include within it several class-systems’. Despite his insistence that his definition was different from that of Howitt, Mathew’s use of the ‘nation’ concept demonstrates no appreciable deviation from the work of Howitt. Mathew, like Howitt, claimed that ‘a broad principle among the Australian Aborigines that should not be overlooked is presented by what might be called difference of nationality ... The national name is that for man of men.’⁷⁸

The use of the term nation by Mathews, Howitt, and their colleagues was not unusual at the time. In 19th century anthropology, the term nation was regularly used as a vague description of a group of people who shared similar customs and were of common descent. However, few in anthropology sought to define nation as Morgan had done in North America, and Mathews and Howitt had attempted in Australia. Anthropologists of the 19th century used the term nation in the general sense that Hodder M Westropp did when writing in first volume of the journal of the Anthropological Institute in 1872. He saw all the people of the world as comprising nations. Westropp believed that anthropology ‘affords one of the most interesting proofs of the intellectual unity of mankind to trace the analogies and unconnected coincidences among the nations’. He wrote that anthropology would reveal ‘the same feelings suggested to individuals of the most cultivated nations, and those of the most barbarous’. He quoted Alexander Von Humboldt, the early 19th century naturalist: ‘In every nation on earth superstitious ideas assume the same form...’⁷⁹ References to North and South American, African, and Australian Indigenous nations occur regularly in the early issues of the journal of the Anthropological Institute.⁸⁰ JS Slotkin’s collection of readings in early anthropology also contains many references to Indigenous people being classified as nations.⁸¹ George W Stocking’s work on Victorian anthropology suggests that the term had common currency at least until the end of the 19th century.⁸²

By the 20th century the word nation had mostly passed away as a term to describe so-called ‘primitive’ people. Lucy Mair, an anthropologist of the mid-20th century, noted in her observations of Africa that ‘certain large populations which call themselves by one name and speak one language, but do not recognize one common chief or other type of government ... could be called nations’, but instead were known as tribes. Mair noted that the word tribe ‘has come to be used by people who consider that they are civilized, as a way of describing societies which they do not regard as civilized’.⁸³ William Sturtevant, a North American anthropologist, has traced the passing of the term nation and its replacement with the word tribe in the 19th century. Sturtevant noted that the terms nation and tribe had been used interchangeably to refer to the

⁷⁸. Section (A) (d) The Aborigines of Victoria in John Mathew Papers MS 950.

⁷⁹. Westropp 1872: 221–3.

⁸⁰. For North and South America see for example Distant 1878: 543–7 and Harper 1877: 324. For Africa see for example Frere 1882: 332 and Mann 1887: 59–64. For Australia see for example MacKenzie 1874: 264.

⁸¹. Slotkin 1965: 189, 375, 407–409, 428, 433, and 439.

⁸². Stocking 1987: 32–3.

⁸³. Mair 1962: 14–15.

North American Indians in the late eighteenth and early 19th centuries, but by the end of the 19th century tribe had become the only term used. As the word nation started to be increasingly defined as a sovereign people rather than as only a people who had shared customs and were of common descent, Europeans grew increasingly reluctant to describe Indigenous people they were colonising as nations.⁸⁴

Milton Fried, another North American anthropologist, has also noted this shift in terms. Fried attributed it to the rapid spread of European colonisation of the globe in the 19th century and the desire of Europeans to categorise many colonised Indigenous people as not like themselves, living in nations, but as different.⁸⁵ While this transition process was underway in the 19th century, there were anthropologists who used nation interchangeably with the term tribe, although few attempted to be systematic and methodical in the use of the terms. In her history of anthropology Henrika Kuklick suggests that, as anthropology in the early 20th century became more 'scientific' and was increasingly used as a tool for controlling colonised people, Indigenous people became more 'primitive' in the eyes of the Europeans.⁸⁶ Tindale has written that 'with the development of the new interest in field studies on Australian aborigines after World War I, less was heard of the "nations" concept'.⁸⁷ In the early 20th century, the fieldwork of anthropologists such as Baldwin Spencer led away from looking for conglomerations of tribes and focused the discipline on small groups for detailed study.⁸⁸

Writing in the mid-20th century, Tindale and Elkin suggested that seeing Indigenous people as nations was merely an oddity resulting from the undeveloped nature of anthropology in Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the opinions of Tindale and Elkin did not reflect the range of views in 20th century anthropology on whether tribes were really small nations; there was a diversity of opinion. AL Kroeber, an eminent American anthropologist of the mid-20th century, took a different view on the 'nation' concept from that of Tindale and Elkin. Kroeber suggested that 'what are generally denominated tribes really are small nationalities, possessing essentially uniform speech and customs and therefore an accompanying sense of likeness and likemindedness'. He noted, however, that 'the genuinely political units were smaller units - corresponding rather to what is customary to loosely call "bands" and "villages". These were defacto self-governing, and it was they that each owned a particular territory, rather than that nationality owned the over-all territory'. Kroeber added that 'ordinarily, the nationality, miscalled tribe, was only an aggregate of miniature sovereign states normally friendly to one another'. There was no distinction, for Kroeber, between Indian nations and Europeans nations. He wrote that 'comparing small things to great ones, an Indian so-called "tribe" was therefore likely to be much in the condition of the pre-1871 Germans who undoubtedly constituted a nationality in view of their common speech, culture, and ideology, but remained divided into 26 sovereign states'. Indian nations, like their European counterparts,

⁸⁴. Sturtevant 1983: 9.

⁸⁵. Fried 1975: 101.

⁸⁶. Kuklick 1991.

⁸⁷. Tindale 1974: 157.

⁸⁸. Mulvaney and Calaby 1985.

could be transformed into nation-states just as 'the events of history in 1871 converted this German nationality into a German nation and state - as corresponding events produced about the same time an Italian national state'.⁸⁹

Perhaps Aboriginal nations in Australia can be seen the way Kroeber viewed those of the Indigenous people of North America. Kroeber provides an answer to the question, if the Aboriginal nations of the late 19th century do not form nations in the modern sense of a nation-state, what do they form? The Wiradjuri were identified as a nation by several anthropologists of the late 19th century: Howitt, Cameron, Mathews, and Mathew. From the information they collected from Aboriginal informants it appears that the people were what Benedict Anderson has called an 'imagined community', whose members living in smaller sovereign groups imagined themselves belonging to a larger entity. Kroeber may have been right when he concluded that many Indigenous nations were like Germany before political unification in 1871. They were not sovereign nations, but cultural entities made up of smaller sovereign groups whose members thought of themselves as a people beyond these small sovereign groups. Barak's description of a Kulin nation that he gave to Howitt, which many Aboriginal people of the area of greater Melbourne felt they belonged to, appears to have been also a similar 'imagined community', although it too did not possess national sovereignty because it was composed of smaller sovereign groups. This interpretation of what constituted an Aboriginal nation confirms Henry Reynolds' work on there being recognition by some Europeans in the 19th century that the smaller groups of Aboriginal society, which they labelled as 'tribes', did possess sovereignty.⁹⁰ However most Europeans in Australia, including the anthropologists using the 'nation' concept, were reluctant to believe that a whole block of what they called 'tribes' could constitute a sovereign nation.⁹¹ Peter Sutton has observed that the 'finer-grained' territorial groups of parts of Aboriginal Australia, such as clans, have declined due to the onslaught of colonisation, and given way to larger Aboriginal communities who now are organised according to language groups. Today, some of these language and culturally based conglomerations of the smaller 'finer-grained' groups that formed Aboriginal nations, such as the Wiradjuri and the Yorta Yorta/Bangerang, are claiming recognition of the ownership of their territory. The mapping of these cultural nations as identified by anthropologists in the late 19th century has also been problematic and prone to error for the reasons that Hagen, Sutton, and Young have suggested. However, these factors do not negate the existence of Aboriginal nations or reduce the validity of their claims to Native Title and land rights today.

While there were problems with their definitions of an Aboriginal nation and mapping the territory of various Aboriginal nations, anthropologists of the late 19th century who used the 'nation' concept did observe significant aggregates of 'tribes' bound together through initiation ceremonies and marriage. These Aboriginal nations were 'imagined communities' according to Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation. However, they did not form sovereign nations in the modern sense of the term, yet they were nations in the old usage of the word nation, as cultural groups of common

⁸⁹. Kroeber 1955: 303.

⁹⁰. Reynolds 1996: 24-33.

⁹¹. Blackburn 1999.

descent. The prevalence of this use of the word nation on the frontier confirms the point made by Greenfeld, Snyder, and Hobsbawm: that the meaning of the term was undergoing a gradual transformation to the notion that a nation comprised a sovereign people. The old sense of the word nation still lingered in 19th century political thinking. Nonetheless, the Aboriginal nations, such as the Wiradjuri and the Kulin, were, according to Kroeber, entitled to be considered like Germany before 1871: nations awaiting political unification and national sovereignty.

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The McLean Report: legitimising Victoria's new assimilationism

Corinne Manning

In 1955, the newly elected Victorian Premier, Henry Bolte, appointed retired stipendiary magistrate, Charles McLean, to conduct an inquiry into the operation of Victoria's *Aborigines Act* 1928.¹ The Liberal government expected McLean's findings to reflect the assimilationist trend which was being advocated by other Australian States and Territories. Subsequently, the inquiry's five terms of reference ensured that McLean broadened Victoria's definition of Aboriginality to include large numbers of 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people, and that he formulated methods by which Aboriginal people could be assimilated into Anglo-Australian society. In general, government directives controlled the scope of the McLean Inquiry and meant that in many respects McLean served as a puppet for the Victorian government. However, the manner in which McLean sometimes deviated from these directives indicates that he was not merely a government mouthpiece.

In order to understand the establishment of the McLean Inquiry, it is necessary to consider the national and international pressures exerted on both Labor and Liberal governments in Victoria in relation to Aboriginal welfare policies. Assimilation first emerged in the Aboriginal policy of Victoria in 1886, although northern colonial governments continued to follow the path of segregation for decades. ² According to

1. Since the introduction of the *Aborigines Act* 1886, Victoria's Aboriginal welfare policies had been a mixture of assimilationist and segregationist ideals. The 1886 Act deemed that government reserves were to be retained for Aborigines who were 'full bloods', 'half-castes' over 34 and their 'half-caste' wives and children. The newly created Board for the Protection of Aborigines, was able to grant licences to 'half-castes' under the age of 34 to reside at the reserves. The Governor also retained the right to regulate for the care and management of 'half-castes', the apprenticeship of children and the removal of orphans to institutions. The *Aborigines Act* 1928 was similar to its predecessor, but with a broader definition of Aboriginality. The new categorisation included 'half-castes' who lived or associated with 'full blooded' Aborigines; 'half-caste' children of those deemed to be Aboriginal, or unable to earn a living, or who held a special licence from the Board to reside on its reserves. It also included 'half-castes' who were 34 when the 1886 Act was implemented. This definition of Aboriginality excluded the majority of Aboriginal Victorians who were classified as 'mixed-descent'. These people were forced to live in the general community with little or no access to government support. Both the 1886 and 1928 Acts reinforced the widely held idea that the only 'real' Aborigines were the 'full bloods'. See Broome 1995:139-140; Rowley 1971: 43-44.

2. Christie 1979: 200-201.

Richard Broome, the *Aborigines Act* 1886 was a blend of segregationist and assimilationist thinking. Under this Act, protectionist ideals were applied to the treatment of 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes' over the age of 34 and their wives and children. People who belonged to these categories were eligible to be supported by government funding and were allowed to reside at Aboriginal mission stations. 'Half-castes' under the age of 34, except for those licensed to remain at the Aboriginal missions, were required to assimilate into the general community, with limited support from the Aborigines Protection Board.³ This combination of protectionist and assimilationist idealism dominated Victoria's Aboriginal welfare policies from 1886.

Prior to World War II, Aboriginal welfare policies were often based on notions of Social Darwinism which many people, such as Herbert Spencer, applied to the development of human societies.⁴ In simplified terms, Social Darwinism used 'survival of the fittest' to explain the dominance of European colonisers over the 'weaker' black races.⁵ After the outbreak of World War II, when the Nazi régime became Australia's enemy, 'race' became a dirty word and Australia devised a new policy for Aboriginal Australians based on the equality of races.⁶ According to sociologist Colin Tatz, assimilation was a policy that considered all men and women to be born equal in their natural and human rights.⁷ This philosophy appeared to be the antithesis to Nazism and, in theory, it placed Aboriginal Australians on equal terms with Anglo-Australians.

Assimilation was adopted as policy by the Federal government in the 1937 Native Welfare Conference. However its implementation was delayed by the outbreak of World War II and was not revived until Paul Hasluck was appointed as the Federal Minister for Territories in May 1951. In September 1951, Hasluck urged government delegates at the Australian Native Welfare Conference to revitalise the 1937 decision to develop and implement assimilation-style Aboriginal welfare policies.⁸ All conference participants agreed with Hasluck's proposal and assimilation became the key element of many Aboriginal welfare policies in the 1950s and 1960s. Hasluck's vision of assimilation differed from the more restrictive 1937 definition in that it included 'all persons of aboriginal blood or mixed-blood'.⁹ This definition assumed that all Aboriginal people were willing to forego their heritage and adopt the living standards and culture of Anglo-Australian society. Hasluck was a humanitarian person, genuinely concerned with improving the lives of Aboriginal Australians. However, his model of assimilation was racist, as Aboriginal people were expected to shun their Aboriginal culture in return for the better material living conditions of the dominant community.

The unanimous endorsement received from participants of the 1951 Native Welfare Conference may have been due to increased political concerns about Australia's human rights image overseas. The historian Susan Taffe states that in the 1950s and 1960s Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal people was scrutinised by members of the

3. Broome 1995: 139.

4. See Cowlshaw 1999; McGregor 1997; Markus 1990.

5. Broome 1994: 92.

6. Hasluck 1988: 6.

7. Tatz 1990: 247.

8. At this time Aboriginal welfare was the responsibility of State governments with the federal government having jurisdiction only over the Northern Territory.

9. Hasluck 1953: 56-57.

United Nations during its investigations of issues concerning colonialism and its negative effects on indigenous cultures.¹⁰ In June 1950, Hasluck stated in federal parliament: 'When we enter international discussions today in defence of human rights, our very words are mocked by the thousands of degraded and depressed people on rubbish heaps throughout the continent'.¹¹ In 1951, during a House of Representatives debate on Aboriginal affairs, Labor MP Tom Burke supported this notion: 'We must not only satisfy our conscience in this respect [improving the living conditions of Australian Aboriginal people] but also remember that the eyes of the world will watch critically the work that we do for the welfare of native peoples'.¹² The national Native Welfare Conferences provided a forum in which human rights issues were addressed and provisions made to improve Australia's international reputation.

In the early 1950s, the Victorian government's official policy precluded the State's Aboriginal residents from taking part in the revitalised assimilation program because it considered the issue solved. Although assimilation had been evident in many of Victoria's Acts concerning Aboriginal welfare, official thinking in Victoria determined that 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people who lived in association with people of European descent, or in the manner of Europeans, were not in fact 'Aborigines'. This definition of 'Aborigine' excluded the vast majority of Aboriginal people who lived in Victoria at this time, because they were of so-called 'mixed descent' and resided near or within European communities. Accordingly, the Victorian government did not have a minister for Aboriginal affairs, nor a department concerned solely with Aboriginal welfare. The 1937 and 1951 assimilationist doctrines were primarily focused upon the assimilation of 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people into the dominant community. The Victorian government's unwillingness to broaden its definition of Aboriginality beyond genealogically determined 'full' or 'half-caste' classificatory status meant that Victoria was not a participant in the assimilationist movement of this time.

The Victorian government's decision not to participate in the Native Welfare Conferences and the assimilation program was criticised by some Victorian parliamentarians and community groups. In September 1951, Ernest Morton, a State Labor parliamentarian, demanded an official explanation as to the government's non-attendance at the Native Welfare Conference. He stated that the living conditions of many Victorian Aboriginal people were a disgrace to Christianity and that political action was necessary to rectify this situation.¹³ Community organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Group, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Apex supported Morton's viewpoint. The Chairman of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (Victoria) and Chief Secretary of the Labor Party, Keith Dodgshun, replied that the situation of Victorian Aboriginal people was different from that of other States. He claimed that successive State governments had done more for the native inhabitants than had any other State, which resulted in Victorian Aboriginal people being 'civilised' and considered by Anglo-Australians as equal citizens. Dodgshun believed that the key motive for Victoria's invitation to the conference was the procure-

¹⁰. Taffe 1995: 154–157.

¹¹. *Argus*, 9 June 1950.

¹². *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, vol. 213 (1951): 172.

¹³. *Victorian Parliamentary Debates (VPD)*, vol. 236 (1950–1951): 4281.

ment of money for the other States' Aboriginal programs. ¹⁴ When the second Native Welfare Conference was held in 1952, Victoria again declined to send any delegates. Dodgshun reiterated the government's position and interpreted Aboriginality more narrowly than formerly by arguing that only nine 'full-blooded Aborigines' resided in Victoria and that they were 'well housed' and 'looked after' on the Lake Tyers mission.¹⁵ Morton challenged this remark by referring to the appalling conditions under which many fringe-dwelling, 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people lived on the Goulburn River at Shepparton. Dodgshun responded, 'They are not aborigines ... There are only nine full blooded aborigines in Victoria; the others are quadroons, half-castes and so forth'.¹⁶ This statement reinforced the government's narrow definition of Aboriginality and indicated that the Victorian government used selective biological criteria to determine Aboriginality.

During the 1940s and 1950s, public fear increased amongst Victoria's non-Aboriginal residents concerning growing numbers of Aboriginal people living as fringe-dwellers. Economic prosperity in the 1950s led to an increased standard of living for most Australians, creating a stark contrast between the prosperity of many Anglo-Australians and the slum conditions in which many fringe-dwellers lived.¹⁷ Phillip Boas, a welfare officer employed by the Victorian government in the 1960s, states that fringe-dwelling in the 1940s and 50s was perceived by Anglo-Australians to be an affront to 'decent standards' and a possible threat to law and order. ¹⁸ This was evident in many newspaper articles of this period. For example, in 1954 the *Argus* published an article which referred to Aboriginal fringe camps as a 'social cancer'. It argued that local residents considered the fringe camps to be 'wicked' and demanded government intervention to remedy the situation. ¹⁹ Public pressure was one factor which contributed to the government's decision to hold an inquiry.

Growing discontent in the Victorian community about the management of Aboriginal affairs by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines led to Victoria's re-evaluation of its Aboriginal welfare policy. In his study of Victorian Aboriginal policies, Mark Harris argues that internal conflict and division amongst the Board's members resulted in government and public concern about its operation. ²⁰ In 1952, the Board's Aboriginal representative, Shadrach James, stated, 'The administrative work of the Aborigines' Protection Board had finished, and it should now cease functioning'. ²¹ He argued that the Board had been established to protect the interest of Victoria's 'full-blooded' Aboriginal people, but only three 'full-bloods' resided in the State, therefore the Board administered to approximately one hundred and twenty 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people in order to ensure its continued operation.²² Harris believes that constant press reports detailing the harsh living conditions of most of Victoria's Aboriginal

14. *VPD* vol. 236 (1950-1951): 4282.

15. *VPD* vol. 236 (1950-1951): 4282; *VPD* vol. 240 (1951-1952): 2212.

16. *VPD* vol. 240 (1951-1952): 2212.

17. Brown 1995: 101.

18. Boas 1972: 52.

19. *Argus*, 21 August 1954.

20. Harris 1988: 40.

21. *Argus*, 28 May 1952.

22. *Argus*, 28 May 1952.

people were perceived by the general public to reflect a failure of the Board to care effectively for those in its charge.²³ In December 1955, Arthur Rylah, Chief Secretary and Chairman of the Board, announced to a meeting that:

On his recommendation, Cabinet had decided to appoint a Board of Inquiry to make a factual survey of the conditions under which aboriginal people are living in the state, investigate the policy being followed in respect of the Lake Tyers station and advise the Government as to any changes in system of administration considered to be necessary or desirable for the better care of people of Aboriginal blood.²⁴

Premier Bolte appointed Charles McLean to undertake this review and to recommend legislative reform.²⁵ McLean was an experienced investigator, and had completed inquiries for the West Australian and Victorian governments. These inquiries were concerned with the sport of trotting, gambling, and the escape of five prisoners from Pentridge prison.²⁶

McLean's reputation in the public sphere as a conservative Anglophile led to his appointment as chief investigator. He was born into a middle class, Anglo-Saxon family in 1889. His father was a head teacher who encouraged McLean to utilise his intellectual abilities to advance his social position.²⁷ Consequently, McLean received a private school education at Grenville College, an independent, Protestant school situated near Ballarat. The school, also attended by future Prime Minister Robert Menzies, insisted on high academic standards and encouraged its students to identify their privileged position in society with their school. The school's philosophy stressed that personal excellence was the result of hard work, discipline, and loyalty to British social traditions.²⁸ McLean embraced these ideals and they were foremost in his professional life as a public servant.

McLean's conscientious career in the public service culminated in his appointment as a magistrate in 1930. According to a colleague, William Cuthill, McLean was renowned for his relentless work ethic and unwavering dedication to the law.²⁹ On his retirement in 1954, many public officials praised him for being conscientious, noble and merciful.³⁰ However, not everybody agreed with this image. A report written by Darrell Symmons in the *Sun News Pictorial* berated McLean for his stern nature. He wrote, 'Mr McLean's term of office has been marked by a sense of duty so stern that I was mentally stunned when I first began to attend the City Court ... His magistracy was a strict adherence to the letter of the law ... This was most oppressive, in my opinion, in cases of vagrancy.'³¹ McLean was aware of his harsh reputation. He stated to Cuthill, '[I was] a bastard in the office ... I felt that I had a mission there.'³²

23. Harris 1988: 40.

24. Minutes of Board for the Protection of Aborigines, 14 December 1955, NAA: B314, 1955/8.

25. Lyons 1983: 61.

26. Cuthill n.d.: 6-8.

27. Cuthill n.d.: 1.

28. Bate 1978: 236.

29. Cuthill n.d.: 4-6.

30. *Herald*, 9 April 1954 and *Argus*, 10 April 1954.

31. *Sun News Pictorial*, 8 April 1954.

32. Cuthill n.d.: 5.

In many respects, McLean was a self-made man who succeeded in his chosen career through adhering to the dominant models of social behaviour, which included hard work and dedication to his employer. Vagrants, on the other hand, were categorised by the law as idle, disorderly, nomadic people who 'sponged' off society and failed to make a positive contribution to the dominant community. Aboriginal fringe camps and fringe-dwellers were often associated with vagrancy, due to the predominantly seasonal employment available to Aboriginal people, and the lack of adequate permanent housing for their families. Consequently, vagrants and Aboriginal fringe-dwellers were often considered to be a public 'menace'.

By appointing a Chief Investigator known for his harsh views towards vagrants, the Victorian Government could pre-determine many of McLean's findings. McLean's deference to British-derived law and British-Australian culture promised that his recommendations would adhere to the dominant doctrine of the day: the assimilation of outsiders into the mainstream. The Liberal government relied on the McLean Report to deliver them the justification for the introduction of new assimilationist legislation in the area of Aboriginal welfare.

In setting up the inquiry, the government developed five terms of reference which required McLean to investigate the living standards of Aboriginal people on reserves and in fringe camps, to define Aboriginality and to offer solutions to Victoria's 'Aboriginal problem'. In many respects, the McLean Inquiry was similar to the 1937 New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry into the administration of Aboriginal Affairs in that State. Both investigations were to determine the potential for Aboriginal people to be socially re-engineered to reflect the values and lifestyle of Anglo-Australians.

McLean's first term of reference was to establish the number, distribution and living conditions of people deemed to be at least one-quarter Aboriginal, who were capable of working or who were regularly employed.³³ This definition of Aboriginality differed from previous models which had determined that the only 'real Aborigines' were 'full-bloods' or those 'half-castes' who associated with them.³⁴ In McLean's handwritten notes concerning the definition of Aboriginality that he intended to include in his final report, he listed two definitions of Aboriginality. The first, which had a pencil line struck through it, stated that 'an Aborigine was a person whose parents were both full-blooded Aborigines'. The second definition, which he included in his final report, stated that anyone with an 'admixture' of Aboriginal blood was to be considered an Aborigine.³⁵ McLean used the second broad definition in his investigation of Victoria's Aboriginal population. This indicated McLean's willingness to deviate from the government directive, which only included Aboriginal people who were at least 'quarter-caste', in itself a liberalisation of earlier definitions. In his report McLean declared that Victoria had a population of 1346 Aboriginal people. He claimed that 131 Aboriginal people resided at Lake Tyers station, 159 in the metropolitan area and the remainder were scattered throughout regional districts. ³⁶ These statistics were obtained by

³³. Charles McLean, *VPP*: 3, Paper no. 18, 1957, vol. 2, 'Report upon the operation of the *Aborigines Act* 1928 and the Regulations and orders made thereunder', hereafter referred to as the McLean Report.

³⁴. *VPD*, vol. 240 (1951-1952): 2212.

³⁵. McLean Notes, NAA: B408, 1956/3.

collating population information forwarded by the police and 'other sources', such as the Board for the Protection of Aborigines. McLean's data negated the earlier claim by the government that Victoria only had nine Aboriginal people. However, he was aware that insufficient population records meant that his calculations were also inaccurate. He stated:

these figures, though as accurate as can be expected, are not statistically exact ... The principal inaccuracy arises from the difficulty of assessing the percentage of aboriginal blood in many cases. Over the succeeding generations ... there has been such a high degree of miscegenation, and of sexual promiscuity on the part of aboriginal women and white men (and some coloured men of other nationalities), that such an assessment could, at best, be only approximate. Personal observation on my visits to aboriginal communities indicated that, included in the figures given, were some who were fairly obviously of less than one-fourth aboriginal blood ... Though the figures given are subject to that qualification, this is perhaps not important, since they present the same problem, and are equally relevant to the purpose of this inquiry.³⁷

McLean's comments indicate the degree to which Aboriginality was often defined by physical characteristics, particularly in terms of colour. As the anthropologist Myrna Tonkinson has argued, this form of categorisation reflected racist notions that biological factors determined cultural characteristics.³⁸

The McLean Report reiterated claims that Aboriginal fringe camps were a danger to Australian society. McLean visited many Aboriginal fringe communities, over a one year period, accompanied by local police and welfare officers. The fringe camps he visited included those located at Mooroopna, Framlingham, Dimboola, Antwerp, and in the Orbost district.³⁹ The image of camp life was sometimes distorted by local efforts to 'clean up' for McLean's impending visit. This was evident when McLean visited Shepparton and Mooroopna in April 1956. The official report compiled from his visit stated that rubbish was bulldozed away from the Daish's paddock camp⁴⁰ and that 1200 wine bottles had been removed in preparation for McLean's investigations.⁴¹ McLean spoke with very few fringe-dwelling residents and inspections were often planned for weekdays and during the early afternoon, which meant that many of the Aboriginal people were absent due to work commitments. In addition, it was noted in the official visitation report that many Aboriginal people 'were away, word having got around that "the man was coming"'.⁴² The reluctance of many fringe-dwellers to contribute to McLean's Inquiry reflected the prevailing fear of government authorities, a legacy of decades of Protection Board surveillance and removal of children. Unfortunately, this non-appearance may have also contributed to the omission from McLean's final report of Aboriginal opinions, particularly concerning the positive aspects of fringe

^{36.} McLean Report: 6.

^{37.} McLean Report: 6.

^{38.} Tonkinson 1990: 201-202.

^{39.} McLean Report: 3.

^{40.} 'Daish's paddock' was the named used to refer to an Aboriginal fringe camp situated next to the town rubbish tip in Mooroopna.

^{41.} Official Report of the McLean Inquiry's visits to Shepparton and Mooroopna, 12-13 April 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/1.

^{42.} McLean Inquiry's visits to Shepparton and Mooroopna, 12-13 April 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/1.

communities. Instead, the local police, community organisations and government welfare authorities provided most of the information concerning the fringe camps.

In his report, McLean described a typical fringe camp:

'humpies' are mostly constructed of old timber, flattened kerosene tins, and hessian, usually with some kind of partition to separate bedroom from living room. They are not weatherproof, have earthen floors, very primitive cooking arrangements, and no laundry or bathing facilities except the river, from which all water is drawn by buckets, and carted for distances up to half a mile. There are few sanitary conveniences, with all kinds of containers used as pans. The contents are buried close handy in shallow holes, or sometimes just tipped on the ground.⁴³

McLean believed that Aboriginal fringe camps were a social threat and a source of shame for Australian people. He stated that fringe camps were 'a grave danger to health, both from water pollution and from general infection.' McLean reported that most of the huts were overcrowded and 'very dirty'. He also claimed that although some of the fringe-dwellers were 'decent-living people', excessive drinking often led to violence, immorality and gambling. McLean referred to the Aboriginal children as dirty, undernourished and neglected. He argued that the majority of Victoria's Aboriginal people lived in these harsh environments and the abolition of these conditions was imperative if assimilation was to occur.⁴⁴ McLean's contempt for the fringe-dwelling lifestyle meant that he failed to acknowledge that, in spite of the harsh living conditions, fringe camps often empowered their residents. Many historians and anthropologists, such as Charles Rowley and Jeff Collmann, have argued that Aboriginal people preferred to live in fringe camps because they offered a means of escaping government authorities, whilst enabling residents to maintain traditional kinship ties in a community of like-minded people.⁴⁵ McLean presented a view from the outside, looking at conditions from a conservative and materialist perspective. He did not recognise or value the cultural and kinship customs being practised, as his main focus was on assimilation, which assumed that the Indigenous culture would be sublimated to the dominant settler culture.

The second term of reference of the McLean Inquiry was to ascertain the capacity of Aboriginal people to live and maintain themselves and their families according to the general standards of the Victorian community.⁴⁶ McLean considered both the physical and mental abilities of Aboriginal people. In terms of physical qualifications, McLean believed that Aboriginal people had 'proved' themselves to be equal to their Anglo-Australian counterparts. He supported this claim by referring to the success of Aboriginal people in the sporting arena, particularly in football and boxing.⁴⁷ McLean's assertions correlated with later studies concerning Aboriginal people's accomplishments in the sporting field. In his study of Aboriginal boxers between 1930 and 1979, Richard Broome argues that one of the main attractions of sport was the opportunity for Aboriginal people to escape the racism inherent in the general community.⁴⁸ He states:

43. McLean Report: 6.

44. McLean Report: 6-7 & 17-18.

45. See Bropho 1980; Collmann 1988; Rowley 1971: 233-240; Samson 1980; Strehlow 1964.

46. McLean Report: 3.

47. McLean Report: 8.

48. Broome 1980: 48-71.

'In the ring, or on the football ground and tennis court, black and white had equal opportunities to reveal their capabilities.'⁴⁹ Indeed, the Aboriginal one per cent of the population produced fifteen per cent of national professional boxing champions over fifty years. The sporting arena provided some Aboriginal people with the opportunity to compete as equals against their Anglo-Australian counterparts. However, in mainstream Australian society Aboriginal people were often treated as second class citizens.

McLean noted that many Aboriginal people were considered to be excellent physical labourers within industries such as fruit and vegetable picking.⁵⁰ From the 1930s to the 1950s the expansion of the fruit growing industries along the Murray ensured that Aboriginal people were supplied with regular seasonal employment.⁵¹ A strong work ethic displayed by some Aboriginal people contributed to their positive reputation amongst some of the rural employers as reliable and hard-working seasonal labourers. Donald Howe, a Mooroopna farmer, stated that local farmers often considered Aboriginal people to be more reliable workers than their Anglo-Australian counterparts. He argued that most Aboriginal labourers were committed to working throughout the entire fruit and vegetable picking season, whereas many other employees often worked until they earned enough money to move on.⁵²

McLean's acknowledgment of Aboriginal physical abilities served to reinforce the assimilationist idea that Aboriginal people were physically capable of living like Anglo-Australians. When highlighting the propensity for many Aboriginal people to suffer from respiratory and other specific physical disorders, he stated that these illnesses were a product of poor living conditions and could be easily remedied through the provision of better standards of housing and education.⁵³

In order to provide a better standard of living, the government wished to investigate the degree to which Aboriginal people were 'mentally capable' of living as Anglo-Australians. In his report, McLean stated that 'most authorities now agree that there is no innate racial inferiority of intelligence in the aborigine.'⁵⁴ In an effort to make his own evaluation, he sought information from Health, Mental Hygiene and Education Departmental officers, school inspectors and head teachers who taught in schools with Aboriginal pupils. His findings argued that:

the great majority of the people of aboriginal blood do attain maturity in age without having acquired the mental equipment which accompanies the ordinary standard of education. I think the view must be accepted that this is rather the product of existing conditions than of any strictly biological disability, and that, basically, they have the capacity to live and maintain themselves and their families according to the general standards of the Victorian community.⁵⁵

49. Broome 1994: 157.

50. McLean Report: 8.

51. Rowley 1971: 179-180.

52. McLean Inquiry's visits to Shepparton and Mooroopna, 12-13 April 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/1.

53. McLean Report: 8.

54. McLean Report: 8.

55. McLean Report: 9.

McLean rejected the viewpoint of many people that Aboriginal children, although able to process simple tasks, were unable to progress beyond the fourth or fifth grades. McLean argued that the scholastic backwardness of many Aboriginal children was due to insufficient encouragement to learn from parents and teachers, and irregular school attendance caused by their parents' seasonal employment, rather than any inherent mental deficiency.⁵⁶ McLean's focus was narrow in determining the reasons as to why many Aboriginal children failed to reach the same education levels as their Anglo counterparts. McLean could have added that many Aboriginal children in fringe camps had difficulty accessing school, experienced racism whilst there, and thus found it more congenial to enter the workforce at an early age. However, his opinions concerning 'mental capacity' served to 'officially' negate Darwinian beliefs that Aboriginal people were innately intellectually inferior to other Australians.

Although McLean dismissed biology as a determining factor of mental capacity, his comments on the 'blood' composition of Victoria's Aboriginal people euphemistically reflected the dominant racial and class discourses. He stated:

As to their [Aboriginal people's] mental capacity, most authorities now agree that there is no innate racial inferiority of intelligence in the aborigine. In any case, there is a preponderance of white blood among those in Victoria, though some degree of degeneration from the general average of the white race might perhaps be expected from the fact that much of the white parentage has had its origin in the association of 'sub-standard' whites, in an atmosphere of drink and degradation, with aboriginal women in their camps.⁵⁷

In an effort to publicly denounce racial ideas, McLean paradoxically exposed his belief in the effect of biology on people's mental capacities.

Racism was still rife throughout Australia during the 1950s and Darwinist ideals infiltrated the new rhetoric of assimilation. Historian Andrew Markus states that in the 1930s many important administrators and politicians concerned with Aboriginal welfare and policy, such as AP Elkin and AO Neville, used Darwinist language and ideals in their discussions related to assimilation.⁵⁸ For example, Neville believed that the biological assimilation of mixed-descent Aboriginal people was possible due to the fact that they partly 'sprang from the same stock as we did ourselves'.⁵⁹ This type of language was evident when McLean claimed that 'a positive endeavour by some [Anglo-Australian] supervisory authority [needed to be made] to counteract the disadvantages, *inherent* and other, which seem peculiar to them [Aboriginal people]'.⁶⁰

The ethnocentric language of his report indicated McLean's struggle to replace his old racial ideology with the new assimilation doctrine. For example, McLean argued that many Aboriginal people were unable to fend for themselves in the dominant Australian community because of factors emanating from a 'racial origin'.⁶¹ McLean's rhetoric was often concerned with a discussion of the differences between the 'two

^{56.} McLean Report: 9.

^{57.} McLean Report: 8.

^{58.} Markus 1982: 85–102.

^{59.} Markus 1982: 97.

^{60.} McLean Report: 15, my emphasis.

^{61.} McLean Report: 8.

racess': black and white Australians. He repeatedly referred to the negative aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture and used the term the 'black race', which he considered hindered the progression of many Aboriginal people in the dominant community. He stated: 'Some of the characteristics militating against [Aboriginal people's] economic progress ... have a racial or a traditional origin.'⁶² McLean also criticised 'sub-standard white people' for their 'immoral' role in parenting 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people.

McLean's negative assumptions about Aboriginal culture may also indicate that he subscribed to certain notions of primitivism. According to Nicholas Brown, during the 1950s many Anglo-Australians espoused the view that Aboriginal people's transition from primitivism to modernity would result in an improvement in their standard of living and their subsequent acceptance as equal citizens.⁶³ Assimilation was put forward by many politicians, community welfare groups and Aboriginal activists as the method by which equality would be achieved. McLean appeared to support this idea. He stated that Victorian Aboriginal people needed to forego their 'primitive habits' and conform to the social standards inherent in modern Australia.⁶⁴ McLean believed that Aboriginal beliefs pertaining to property ownership were indicative of their 'backwardness' and a throwback to their 'tribal days'. He claimed that Aboriginal principles associated with property ownership and 'walkabout' resulted in the degraded living standards of many Aboriginal families.⁶⁵ Rather than adhering to *laissez-faire* notions concerning the right of an individual to own and preside over a particular piece of property, Aboriginal people believed in the communal use of land with no individual property rights. McLean criticised this practice. He argued that this system of 'sharing' resulted in 'immorality' and hardship for many Aboriginal people. To support his claim he cited the case of a widow in Mooroopna, who received £2000 compensation for the death of her husband. He stated that due to her kinship responsibilities, the money was spent over three months, with the assistance of Aboriginal kin, on 'frivolous' items such as alcohol and taxi fares. He argued that the result of her adherence to Aboriginal values was the removal of her ten children by the Children's Welfare Department.⁶⁶ McLean wanted to put an end to these 'primitive' customs which he believed militated against Aboriginal people's absorption into the modern Australian community.

McLean believed that Aboriginal children were victims of their parents' adherence to traditional practices and their current lifestyle as fringe-dwellers. He wrote that children were 'infected' during their formative years by the negative influences of Aboriginal adults which led to their poor education and resistance to participating in Australian society.⁶⁷ In order to rectify this situation, he proposed greater surveillance by welfare authorities and improved education standards. However Euphemia Mullett, an Aboriginal woman who lived at a fringe camp known as Jackson's Track during this era, countered McLean's argument. She stated that all of her children regularly attended the local school and were considered to be good students.⁶⁸ Mullett believed

⁶². McLean Report: 10.

⁶³. Brown 1995: 53-55.

⁶⁴. McLean Report: 9-10.

⁶⁵. McLean Report: 10.

⁶⁶. McLean Report: 9-10.

⁶⁷. McLean Report: 10-11.

⁶⁸. Jackomos and Fowell 1991: 18; Landon and Tonkin 1999: 64-70.

that her children benefited from a combination of Aboriginal and European styles of education.⁶⁹ McLean failed to explore the positive aspects of Aboriginal education and culture. Instead, he espoused the government's viewpoint that assimilation was necessary in order to eradicate destructive Aboriginal social systems, particularly fringe camps.

McLean claimed that the only barrier to assimilation was that posed by Anglo-Australians: their belief in their superiority over Aboriginal people. However, he insisted that racial prejudice was primarily related to employment issues and rarely existed in the general community.⁷⁰ This statement disclosed his unwillingness to acknowledge the colour bar which existed in many Australian communities. At the launch of Apex's 1956 Aboriginal sponsorship scheme, Arthur Holden, the director of the new program, challenged the audience to 'take a look around you, if you do not believe that the colour bar exists here in Australia'.⁷¹ Written submissions made to the McLean Inquiry blamed racism for the current social situation of Aboriginal people. One of these submissions was a letter written by Margaret and Percy Holmes, two concerned private citizens from Seymour. They wrote:

The real problem of the Aborigines is the prejudice in the minds of white people against the mixed bloods, in the widespread belief that moral and cultural background and poor educational ability is a product of biological inheritance, when in truth the social inheritance which we whites could so very easily change for them is [so] overwhelming that few of us would be likely to overcome it ourselves if we had such a really unfavourable start in life.⁷²

For many years the media had reported on the social prejudice of settlers towards Aboriginal people. In July 1956, the *Herald* wrote that Aboriginal people were subjected to racial prejudice by their Anglo neighbours, with remarks such as 'Abos! Bloomin' no hoppers ... They'll never be any real good'.⁷³

Police reports submitted to the Inquiry also noted the existence of racism. Senior Constable Haag, of Mooroopna, wrote in his report that the local Aboriginal people were made 'to feel their position racially' and that Aboriginal people were often exploited by local employers.⁷⁴ During the same period, Police Superintendent Donnelly, in charge of the Shepparton-Mooroopna area, stated that 'white people do not, except in the case of degenerates, associate with colored people. Any whites associating with colored people are generally regarded as being of poor class and are ostracised by other whites ... [Aboriginal people] are constantly made to feel their inferiority'.⁷⁵ McLean did not display a comprehension of, or choose to highlight the harmful effect of racism on Aboriginal people and their ability to blend into the dominant community.

⁶⁹. Jackomos and Fowell 1991: 18.

⁷⁰. McLean Report: 11.

⁷¹. *The Age*, 14 April 1956.

⁷². Margaret and Percy Holmes, letter submitted to the McLean Inquiry, 23 February 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/9.

⁷³. *Herald*, 5 July 1956.

⁷⁴. Senior Constable Haag, Police Report submitted to the McLean Inquiry, 23 March 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/4.

⁷⁵. Police Superintendent Donnelly, Police Report submitted to the McLean Inquiry, 27 March 1956, NAA: B408, 1956/4.

McLean's reluctance to apportion blame to Anglo-Australians' prejudice reinforced the idea that Aboriginal people were the cause of social discord in Australian society. Therefore assimilationists believed that efforts to socially re-engineer Aboriginal people to reflect their Anglo-Australian counterparts, through assimilation programs, would result in the appeasement of racial tension.

McLean's recommendation to sell large sections of the Lake Tyers Aboriginal station, on 4000 acres near Lakes Entrance, intensified the arguments for the Victorian government to officially adopt assimilation. McLean was directed to investigate whether Victoria's last remaining Aboriginal reserve, Lake Tyers, should continue to operate and if so, under what system of management. In June 1956 McLean visited the reserve and spoke with past and present management officials, Major Ronald Glen and Mr Len Rule respectively. He deemed their information 'specially informative'.⁷⁶ McLean described the reserve as an 'unsatisfactory' institution which largely catered for an 'indolent' group of Aboriginal people. He exonerated the reserve management for the sub-standard living conditions, blaming a lack of government funding and Aboriginal people's innate indolence for the conditions.⁷⁷ McLean's notes indicate that he inspected local fringe camps and spoke to Aboriginal fringe-dwellers, but no evidence exists that he interviewed any of the Lake Tyers residents. His findings on Lake Tyers appear to be based on information given by Glen and Rule. Although the Bolte government had only been in power for a few months, McLean's criticism of past Labor and Liberal governments indicated that he was not merely a puppet for this regime. If he had wished to simply pander to the Victorian government he could have omitted this statement or blamed the previous Labor administration for failing to adequately care for disadvantaged Victorians.

From the 1940s, the Lake Tyers community had publicly criticised its management. In March 1947 the *Age* reported that people were leaving Lake Tyers because the standard of living was 'atrocious'.⁷⁸ An article in the *Herald* emphasised this discontent, stating that many Aboriginal people preferred to live in squalid humpies than return to the oppressive management and life on the government station.⁷⁹ At a public meeting held in Box Hill Town Hall, in February 1948, the Anglo-Australian philanthropist Cora Gilsenan, declared that many Aboriginal people refused to return to Lake Tyers because they were terrified of the management.⁸⁰ McLean did not acknowledge these complaints made by Aboriginal people and campaigners about Lake Tyers. Instead he looked at the reserve in economic terms. He recommended that 3800 acres of the settlement be sold and the remnant of the reserve land be used for the care of sick, aged or infirm Aboriginal people. The remaining Aboriginal people should be encouraged to settle in the mainstream community where their assimilation could be facilitated.⁸¹

McLean's final term of reference was to determine whether a system of administration for Aboriginal people should be maintained. McLean was directed to classify

76. McLean Report: 4.

77. McLean Report: 13-14.

78. *The Age*, 1 March 1947.

79. *Herald*, 6 March 1947.

80. *Sun*, 19 February 1948.

81. McLean Report: 14-15.

which people should be considered as Aboriginal; to determine the principles upon which the system should be based and to decide upon requisite legislative and administrative provisions which would enable a system to operate in the 'best interests of both the public and aboriginal people.'⁸² In making his decision, McLean relied on information gathered from annual reports written by authorities charged with the responsibility of Aboriginal welfare in all mainland states, excluding New South Wales. In regard to New South Wales, he sent the Secretary of the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Mr N Garnet, to investigate the administration system used by that State's Welfare Board.⁸³ McLean also interviewed the Chairman of the New South Wales Board, Mr Buttsworth, to gauge his views on the operation of the State's new assimilationist administration.⁸⁴

McLean concluded that if assimilation was to be achieved, a new system of administration was imperative. The proposed Victorian model of administration closely reflected its New South Wales counterpart. He recommended that an Aborigines Welfare Board be established and that it should be a body corporate, with all land set aside for Aboriginal purposes to be vested in it.⁸⁵ He considered that the Board should consist of at least nine members, including the Superintendent of Aboriginal Welfare; nominees of the Ministers responsible for Housing, Education and Health; a specialist in the field of anthropology and/or sociology and one Aborigine. All members, except for the Chairman, were to be appointed by the Governor-in-Council.⁸⁶ In order to maximise the Board's effectiveness, McLean insisted that legislation be introduced to enable the Board to bring under its control any person with an 'admixture' of Aboriginal blood. This action served to broaden State control and surveillance of all Aboriginal people in Victoria, rather than the few residents at Lake Tyers. McLean argued that legislative reform was imperative for the enforcement of assimilation programs and that an Aborigines Welfare Act needed to be passed to replace the existing 1928 Act.⁸⁷ The recommendations proposed by McLean were by no means revolutionary. In the 1940s and 1950s, the federal and some state governments established Aboriginal Welfare authorities. These were responsible for the implementation of programs designed to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream Australian society. McLean appeared to follow the national trend.

The McLean Report's positive reception, in both government and press circles, illustrated the desire of the politicians and the general public for the introduction of an assimilation policy in Victoria. Most press accounts praised McLean for compiling a 'first-class report'.⁸⁸ The Labor member for Albert Park, Patrick Sutton, described the report as 'the most valuable documentary ever compiled in Victoria on the broad social,

⁸². McLean Report: 14-15.

⁸³. McLean Report: 16. The 'Aboriginal problem' in New South Wales was similar to that in Victoria in that 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people comprised the majority of the State's Aboriginal population. This fact attributed to the greater value which McLean gave to the information gained from New South Wales sources.

⁸⁴. McLean Report: 16.

⁸⁵. McLean Report: 15-21.

⁸⁶. McLean Report: 16 & 19.

⁸⁷. McLean Report: 19-20.

⁸⁸. *Bulletin*, 13 February 1957.

cultural, anthropological and economic aspects of the lives of a segment of the population whose treatment by white people forms a murky chapter in the history of Victorian and Australian colonization'.⁸⁹ Sentiments such as this revealed the aspirations of many people to redress the harsh social conditions under which many Aboriginal people lived. Twenty-four hours after its presentation to parliament, the Victorian government announced that the recommendations proposed by McLean would be embodied in new legislation.⁹⁰ This swift announcement seems to indicate that the Victorian government was confident about the outcomes of the inquiry.

Although widespread support existed for the assimilation philosophy of McLean's report, some parliamentarians criticised the detail. Sutton expressed some of the major concerns during the second reading stage of the parliamentary debates. He emphasised the exclusion of an exact definition of Aboriginality; the sale of vast tracts of land associated with the Lake Tyers Reserve; too many responsibilities associated with the Under Secretary's position on the new Board; too few Aboriginal representatives on the Board and the need for an Advisory Council to be attached to the Board.⁹¹ The main issue which dominated parliamentary debates was the fact that there was insufficient Aboriginal representation on the Aborigines Welfare Board. The Labor Party proposed that at least three Aboriginal people should be elected as members. Sutton stated that more Aboriginal representation would ensure that obstacles which hindered assimilation would be identified early.⁹² However, the government was steadfast in recommending that only one Aboriginal person be appointed. Most of the amendments proposed by the Labor opposition were not acted upon and the *Aborigines Act* 1957 was quickly passed. The only proposal in McLean's report not included in the new legislation was the sale of land at Lake Tyers. Both the government and opposition members agreed that any sale was unwise given the uncertainty of successful assimilation. McLean may have thought that this proposal would be popular amongst the Liberal Party members as the sale would have contributed to government revenue and would have minimised expenditure at the reserve.

Many campaigners for Aboriginal rights and welfare publicly criticised McLean's findings. Anna Vroland, an Anglo-Australian activist, was one of the first people to denounce the McLean report. Vroland had been an ardent campaigner for Aboriginal rights for over two decades. The main criticisms she levelled at the Inquiry were that it had been carried out by one person, that public evidence was not able to be given by interested parties, and that expert opinion from an anthropologist and/or sociologist was not obtained.⁹³ She also denounced McLean for failing to consult with Aboriginal people. Although he claimed to have consulted with Aboriginal leaders – Pastor Doug Nicholls and Shadrach James – there is no evidence or acknowledgment of their influence on his findings. Detailed submissions were made to the Inquiry by Aboriginal activist groups such as the Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR), Victorian Aboriginal Group, and the Aborigines Advancement League. These submissions are amongst

^{89.} *VPD*, vol. 252 (1956–57–58): 1109.

^{90.} *The Age*, 1 February 1957.

^{91.} *VPD*, vol. 252 (1956–57–58): 1108–1011.

^{92.} *VPD*, vol. 252 (1956–57–58): 1108.

^{93.} Harris 1988: 52–53.

McLean's archival notes, with letters of acknowledgment, as well as requests for further information. Yet their contribution to McLean's Inquiry appears to be non-existent in his final report. CAR also condemned McLean for regarding Aboriginal people as a race and for his assertion that Aboriginal people were incapable of independently managing Lake Tyers.⁹⁴ During the parliamentary debates over the proposed Aborigines Bill, Sutton raised the concerns of the protesters. He stated that comments made by these people were interesting, however he considered them to be somewhat erratic.⁹⁵ Mr Mitchell, a Country Party member, was more severe when he branded all critics as 'communists'.⁹⁶ Although some critics, particularly some members of CAR, were supporters of communism,⁹⁷ the majority of protests were voiced through non-partisan organisations. Even though opposition to McLean's report existed, it was largely futile, as public support for assimilation was so intense.

The McLean Inquiry could be regarded as a 'rubber stamp' for reformist legislation which the Liberal government wanted to introduce in the area of Aboriginal welfare in the late 1950s. In some respects, McLean's reputation as a conservative Anglophile ensured that the outcomes of the Inquiry could be pre-determined by the government. McLean's attitude was evident in the manner in which he denigrated Aboriginal culture and celebrated assimilation as the 'solution' to Victoria's 'Aboriginal problem'. However, McLean was not entirely manipulated by government influences. This was shown by his willingness to deviate from the government's definition of Aboriginality and his recommendation to sell land at Lake Tyers. Despite the narrow focus of the McLean Inquiry and the pre-emptive nature of his findings, the final report provided formal documentation concerning Aboriginal people in Victoria. Even though some of McLean's information was common knowledge amongst many Aboriginal welfare and political organisations, this was the first comprehensive, 'official' government study outlining the situation of Victorian Aboriginal people in the 1950s. McLean both legitimised assimilation and contributed original ideas to Victoria's assimilationism.

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⁹⁴. Council for Aboriginal Rights, *Bulletin*, no. 10 (April 1957).

⁹⁵. *VPD*, vol. 252 (1956-57-58): 1008.

⁹⁶. *VPD*, vol. 252 (1956-57-58): 1013.

⁹⁷. See Hulme 1992.

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The Dhudhuroa language of northeastern Victoria: a description based on historical sources

Barry J Blake and Julie Reid

1. Introduction

Dhudhuroa was a language of northeastern Victoria. The first experience Aboriginal people in this area had of Europeans was when some of them witnessed the Hume and Hovell expedition pass through in 1824 on their way from Lake George in New South Wales to Port Phillip. Their next experience was in 1830 when smallpox spread south ahead of white settlement in New South Wales. It must have killed a considerable number of people in Victoria. The first squatters crossed the Murray from New South Wales in 1835, the same year that Melbourne was founded. In 1838 a party of would-be settlers and their stock led by George Faithfull were attacked by Aborigines near Benalla and seven of them killed in what became known as the 'Faithfull Massacre'. A larger number of Aboriginal people were killed in retaliation. Squatters had taken up virtually all of northeastern Victoria by the mid 1840s. There are no reports of other large scale killings, but the area is mountainous and was remote from large towns, and the number of squatters was small. In 1852 gold was discovered at Beechworth and Omeo, and the following year in the Ovens valley and later at other places including Rutherford and on the Mitta-Mitta. The discovery of gold brought thousands of newcomers to the area.

By the 1860s only scores of Aboriginal people remained, perhaps fewer (see the quote from Howitt below). TW Mitchell describes Black Mag (pictured), who died in 1883, as 'the last of the Jaimathang'¹ (see below). This is not accurate, since there are still people today who trace their ancestry to the Dhudhuroa and other people of north-eastern Victoria, but designating individual Aboriginal people as 'the last of the tribe' has been common and reflects a certain perception.

We have material on the Dhudhuroa language collected by RH Mathews from Neddy Wheeler² (pictured in Wesson's *An historical atlas of the Aborigines of eastern Victoria and far-eastern New South Wales*³). This material consists of RH Mathews' notes and

¹ Mitchell 1981: 28.

² Waywurru and Dhudhuroa language and culture are presently being researched in the Way Wurru and Dhudhuroa Language Program at the Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation.



Black Mag, Towong, Victoria 1883. (One of the last speakers of Dhudhuroa).
Photograph provided by Rotary, Corryong.

a paper he published from these notes. There is also some vocabulary entitled 'Barwidgee', collected by JFH Mitchell. One short version was published by J Mathew in *Eaglehawk and crow* 1899 and a slightly different manuscript version has come to light, together with some additional vocabulary. Mathews' published paper contains only a small proportion of the material in his notes. It does contain vocabulary not in the notes. We have a manuscript version of this vocabulary interpolated in an offprint of another paper (see 1.1 below). The present paper is an attempt to produce a consolidated account that includes Mathews' field notes, drafts and manuscript vocabulary, as well as his published grammatical sketch, along with Mitchell's brief Barwidgee word list. Within the text all words are transcribed into a broad phonetic form in accordance with current conventions and given in bold, but original spellings are given in italics wherever any doubt about the interpretation might arise.

According to Mathews (1909: 278):

The Dhudhuroa [sic] was spoken by the Dyingningmiddhang tribe ⁴ on the Mitta Mitta and Kiewa rivers, and along the Murray valley from Albury to Jingellic. Minyambuta, a dialect of the Dhudhuroa, was the speech of the tribes occupying the Buffalo, King, Ovens, and Broken rivers, with the tributaries of all these streams. From Jingellic eastward was the country of the Walgalu tribe, whose speech resembled partly the Dhudhuroa and partly the Dyrirringan, a tongue spoken from about Nimmitabel to Bega.⁵

Dhudhuroa appears to consist of the first syllable of the word for 'no' reduplicated. The word for 'no' is **dhubalga**. It is common in southeastern Australia to base language names on the word for 'no'. The name almost certainly contains a reduced form of **wurru**, which means 'mouth' or 'language' in a number of Victorian languages.⁶ The final syllable is probably **-wa**, which is found on quite a few other words. Thus we probably have **Dhu-dhu-(wu)rru-wa**.

Howitt mentions a *Theddora-mittung*.⁷ Theddora is sufficiently similar to Dhudhuroa for us to be able to equate them, assuming stress on the first syllable as in most Australian languages. The location Howitt ascribes to Theddora tends to confirm this. The form *-mittung* is used for a number of tribe or clan names in the area. Here is the relevant passage from Howitt:

The Ya-itma-thang,⁸ commonly called the Omeo tribe, was divided into two sections – (a) the Theddora-mittung, occupying the sources of the Mitta-Mitta River

3. Wesson 2000: 67.

4. Smyth's map shows this as *Ginning-motong*.

5. Mathews 1909: 278.

6. Massola (1962: 324) gives this etymology.

7. We adopt the convention of representing original notations in italics and phonetic transcriptions in bold.

8. Howitt (1904: 77), following Bulmer (see Wesson 2000: 77), suggests the name may come from *ya-yau* 'yes' and *thang* 'speech' or 'tongue', the latter also appearing in Muk-Thang 'excellent speech', a name for the Gippsland language. But it is likely that *Yaitmathang* contains the element *midhang* (also other spellings) found in many of the tribe or language names in the area. David Nash has pointed out to us that O'Grady and Hale recorded **midhany** 'tongue' in the Western Australian language Karlamayi (WA) (O'Grady 2001:293, 299). Nash also notes that *midhain* 'tongue' appears in Daisy Bates' papers (365/47/2 (XII 2 C,1); 365/47/59-84 (C,4); 365/8.308). This Western Australian form is likely to be cognate with *midhang*.

and its tributaries down to about the Gibbo Mountain, the Upper Kiewa River and the Ovens River to the Buffalo Mountain, thus being the neighbours of the Mogulum-bitch, the furthest out of the Kulin tribes. (b) The Kandangora-mittung, who lived on the Omeo plains, the Limestone River down to its junction with the Indi River, and the Tambo River to Tongiomungie. On the latter river they were in contact with the Kurnai. It is worth noting that the old road from Omeo to Bruthen follows the trail by which the Gippsland and Omeo blacks made hostile incursions into each other's countries.

The first mentioned, the now extinct Ya-itma-thang, occupied the mountain country in which rise the rivers Mitta-Mitta and Tambo, and some of the sources of the Ovens, and extended north at least as far as the Upper Yackandanda River, called by them Yakonda. I have been able to learn but little of the local organisation of the Theddora. Their country was discovered and occupied about the year 1838. In 1852 gold was discovered at Livingstone Creek, one of the confluents of the Mitta-Mitta, and a great rush of miners set into the Omeo diggings. In 1862 there only remained four or five of this once numerous tribe.

The eastern boundary of the Ya-itma-thang was about the Cobbora Mountains, and thence down the Indi River to Tom Groggin's Run, their neighbours on that side being the Wolgal and Ngarigo tribes.⁹

If we compare the locations, we see that Mathews' Dhudhuroa extends further to the north than Howitt's Theddora. Smyth (1878) contains a map showing *Thara-Mirtong* in the area around the Kiewa River.¹⁰ This would appear to be another version of Dhudhuroa plus a version of the -mittang/-middang suffix found on a number of tribe or clan names in the area.

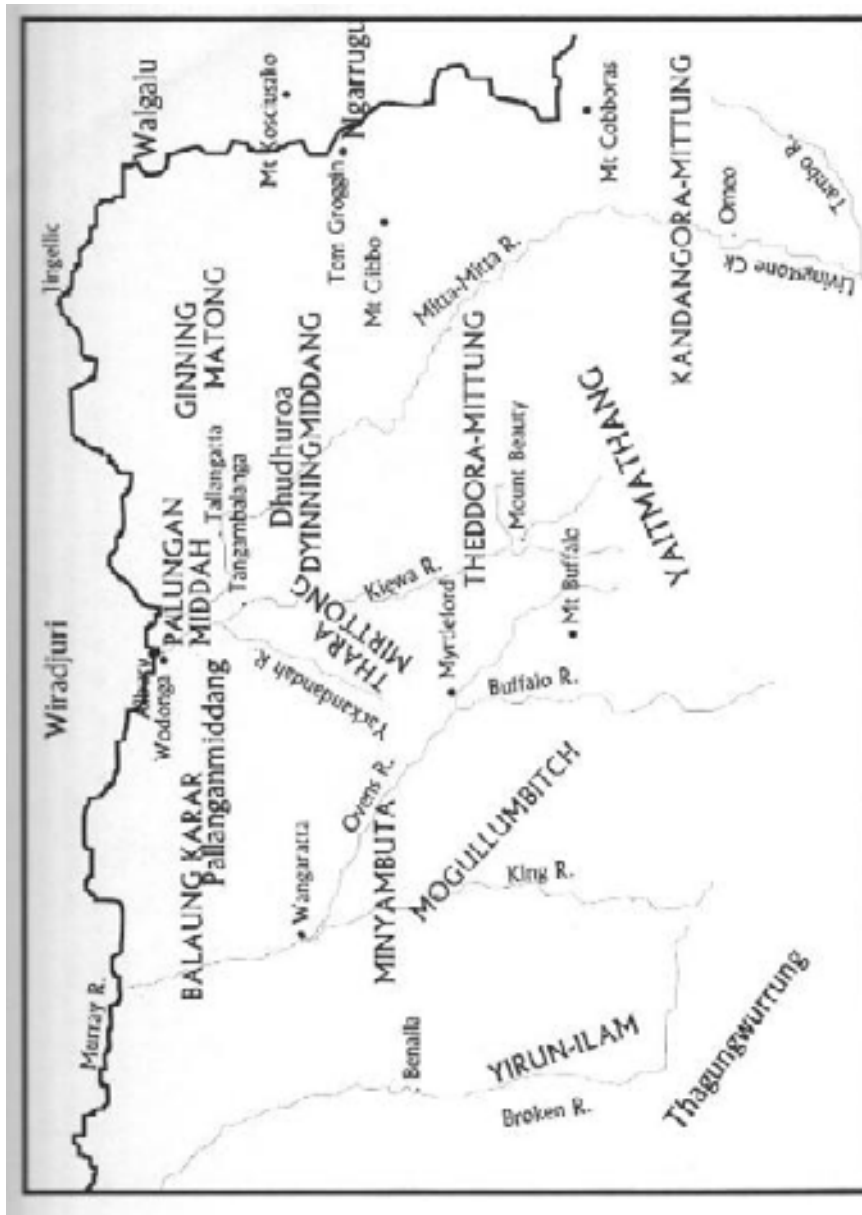
There are sources available for Pallanganmiddang. Smyth's map shows *Pallungan Middah* to the southeast of Wodonga, and one of the sources for this language comes from Thomas Mitchell, Tangambalanga. This is a town about twenty kilometres south-east of Wodonga. A century ago it was a government run camp at which survivors of European incursions congregated from various districts. Howitt includes a *Balaung Karar* on his map of the area south west of Wodonga.¹¹ It is likely that *Balaung* equates with Pallang, so it may be that Pallanganmiddang also extended to the southwest of Wodonga. It seems that this language was the western neighbour of Dhudhuroa.

There is vocabulary for *Barwidgee* collected by JFH Mitchell (see above). The location is given as 'Upper Murray' and Barwidgee is a property situated just to the northeast of Myrtleford. This vocabulary shares 62% (54.5/88) with Dhudhuroa and 30% (25/84) with Pallanganmiddang. Almost all of the words that are not Dhudhuroa are Pallanganmiddang or are words that were spread by Europeans such as *budjeri* 'good', *brolga* 'brolga', *gibba* 'stone', *gunya* 'camp' and *baal* 'no'. On the figures and allowing for the intrusion of non-local words one could assume Barwidgee was a dialect spoken by the Dyinningmiddang, probably a western dialect bordering the territory of the Pallanganmiddang. This fits the location (see map). There is, of course, the possibility that the informant mixed two distinct languages, not an impossibility given that some non-local words are included. The Barwidgee vocabulary has been

⁹. Howitt 1904: 77.

¹⁰. Smyth 1878: end of volume 2.

¹¹. Howitt 1904:827.



Northeastern Victoria showing language and 'tribal' names. Names from old sources are shown in capitals (including variants such as DYINNINGMIDDANG and GINNINGMATONG) and spellings adopted in the current work are shown in lower case.

incorporated in the Dhudhuroa word list at the end of this paper, each Barwidgee word being marked 'b'.

Tindale devotes a paragraph of his encyclopaedic work *Aboriginal tribes of Australia* to the *Djilamatang*¹² and mentions that they were exterminated by other Aboriginal groups 'in post-European times'.¹³ He places them in the north east corner of Victoria 'west of Mount Kosciusko on the upper headwaters of the Murray River', but the words he quotes as belonging to this group are in fact Pallanganmiddang. The words are, as Tindale gives them, *waananga* 'no' and *djere* 'man'.

A more extensive collection of sources for the area and an interpretation of them are contained in Wesson's *Historical atlas*.

1.1 Sources

Practically all the available material is from RH Mathews and consists of notes, drafts of a sketch grammar and a very short published grammatical sketch. It is important to note that the published sketch contains only a fraction of the material in the notes and drafts.

Notes

Mathews' notebook contains grammatical information and some stories in English (p35-38).¹⁴ Page 40 is headed 'Neddy Wheeler, Dyingningmiddha or -buttha Tribe, native of Mitta Mitta River. Dhuthuro'-wa- Pronouns'. It contains the following note: 'Neddy Wheeler is a native of Mitta Mitta River, where his father also belonged - His tribe was Dyingning middhang [the -ng is underlined and followed by a question mark] Ned's mother belonged to the Walgalu tribe and Language, about Walaragang junction of J[?]ooma river or Tamberamba Creek up the Murray'.

Other pages are headed 'Dhudhuroa'.

Notebook 7 contains grammatical information and some vocabulary.

Page 40 is headed 'Neddy Wheeler of Jinningmiddha tribe, native of Mitta-Mitta - his father belonged to there - his mother belonged to Walgaloo tribe Walaragang. Dhoo'-dhoo-ro'-wa Language'.¹⁵

As mentioned above, we have a manuscript version of the published vocabulary written alongside *Kurnu* (= Kurnai) vocabulary in an offprint of Mathews' 1902 article 'Languages of some native tribes of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria'¹⁶ This annotated offprint is to be found in the collection of Mathews' papers in the National Library.¹⁷ The spelling differs in places from that in the published source and it clarifies some obscurities in the printed diacritics.

Drafts

Folder/document L: 'The Dhudhuroa Language' (5pp).

12. Other spellings include *Gilla matong* and *Gelematong*.

13. Tindale 1974: 203f.

14. Mathews (n.d.) notebook 6: 30-40.

15. Mathews (n.d.) notebook 7: 40-45.

16. *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 36: 135-90.

17. MS 8006, Box 11. We are indebted to Stephen Morey for supplying us with a copy of this.

This is headed, 'The Dhudhuroa Language/ This language is spoken on the Mitta Mitta and J[?]ooma rivers and Upper Murray river into which they flow/ Minyambuta dialect of the D was spoken on the Ovens, King, ?? , Buffalo and Broken Rivers'.

Folder/document AJ 'The Dhudhuroa Language' (4pp).

Published paper

Mathews, RH 1909, 'The Dhudhuroa language of Victoria', *American Anthropologist* XI: 278–284.

There is also the vocabulary of Barwidjee discussed above.

Mitchell, JFH 1899, 'Barwidjee vocabulary', in J Mathew *Eaglehawk and Crow*: 208–272.

1.2 Neighbouring languages

Dhudhuroa speakers were probably bordered on the north by the Wiradjuri, who lived across the Murray. To the northeast lay the Walgalu, to the east the Ngarrugu. To the south in the Omeo area was Howitt's Kandangora-mittung, which was probably closely related. To the south again was the territory of the Gippsland tribes. To the west lay the territory of the Thagungwurrung, who spoke a dialect of the Central Victorian Language, which is a Kulin language closely related to the other Kulin languages of western Victoria. However, the sources for the area between Dhudhuroa territory and Thagungwurrung territory are not good and there may have been other dialects of Dhudhuroa or of the Central Victorian language spoken between the Ovens and the Broken Rivers. Pallanganmiddang was probably spoken to the northwest of Dhudhuroa territory.

Percentages of common vocabulary between Dhudhuroa and its neighbours are as follows:

language	percentage	source
Pallanganmiddang	10.7% (12.5/117)	Blake and Reid 1999
Ngarrugu	10% (10/100)	Mathews 1908
	3% (2/73)	Hercus <i>Southern Ngarigu</i> 1986
	19% (14/75)	Curr's <i>Omeo</i> list (also Southern Ngarrugu) (vol 3: 558–9).
Wiradjuri	16% (8/50)	Curr's <i>Albury</i> list (vol 3: 400–1)
	15% (4/27)	Smyth's <i>Emu Mudjug</i> list (1878: 68)
Thagungwurrung	13% (13/100)	Blake 1991
Yota-Yota	11% (11/100)	Bowe et al. (1997, 1999)
Gippsland	10% (10/100)	Mathews 1902
	13% (6.5/50)	Fesl 1985

These figures are all quite low and do not suggest a close relationship between Dhudhuroa and any neighbour. They partly reflect widespread roots such as **djina** 'foot', and partly a few words shared between Dhudhuroa and individual neighbours. These locally shared items are mostly fauna terms, a category that figures prominently in borrowing.

2. Phonology

We assume that the set of phonemes used in Dhudhuroa was similar to that found in other languages of southeastern Australia and Australia in general. The consonants given below shows all the 'sounds' distinguished by Mathews.

Consonants

	labial	dental	alveolar	retroflex	palatal	velar
stop	b	dh	d	rd?	dj	g
nasal	m	nh	n	rn?	ny	ng
lateral			l			
rhotic			rr			
glide					y	w

Some Australian languages do not distinguish dentals and palatals phonemically, but Dhudhuroa appears to, at least with stops, as evidenced by the following contrasts in initial and intervocalic position, and between a nasal and a vowel:

knee	dhiminba	<i>dhimminba</i>
foot	djinu	<i>dyinnu</i>
eat	dhana	<i>dhunna</i>
apron	djabeng	<i>dyabeng</i>
snake	djudjuwa	<i>dyudyua, dyu-dyu-a</i>
no	dhubalga	<i>dubulga, dhubulga</i>
smell	badhi	<i>badhe</i>
arm	gadjinba	<i>kuttyinba</i>
bandicoot	buladha	<i>bulladha</i>
yamstick	djudja	<i>jooja, juja, tyu-tya</i>
mosquito	girridhu	<i>kirridhu</i>
neck, throat	bilidjuwa	<i>billi'dyua</i>
lean (thin)	dhamindhanu	<i>dhummindhunnu</i>
eye	wundjaba	<i>wundjaba</i>
fall down	wendhurri	<i>wen'dhure</i>
tree, she oak	wundju	<i>wundyu</i>

With other languages there are often multiple sources and therefore multiple tokens for many words. This often shows fluctuation between dental and palatal notation and suggests no phonemic distinction. In the case of Dhudhuroa there is only Mathews and the Barwidgee list. All we can say is that in the dozen or so instances

where there are multiple tokens, there is no fluctuation. However, Mathews gives *gundha* for ‘fresh water’, which looks suspiciously like a variant of *gundya* ‘good’.

With nasals the position is not quite so clear, although Mathews, alone among the early recordists, was able to pick dental nasals from alveolar nasals, at least some of the time. There are contrasts intervocalically before **a** and **u**:

heat	meninha	<i>meninha</i>
dance	nganyarri	<i>ngunyare</i>
louse	munhuwa	<i>munhuwa</i>
black cockatoo	niyanyu	<i>neanyo b</i>

In initial position **ny** occurs before **a** (**nyanda** ‘many’) and before **i** (**nyinyanga** ‘today’). There is only one example of initial **nh** in Mathews and that is in **nheh** ‘I don’t know’ (See section 3.7), but on comparative grounds one would expect that *nagai* ‘look’, ‘see’ should have an initial **nh**, and we have taken the liberty of transcribing the root as **nhaga-**. There may have been dental laterals, but there is no evidence for them.

Presumably there were two rhotics, but Mathews does not distinguish them. We transcribe all rhotics as **rr**. We expect that there were retroflex consonants, but there is no clear evidence for them.

We would expect that there would not have been any distinction between voiced and voiceless stops and this is confirmed by fluctuation between *t* and *d*, and *k* and *g* in Mathews and Mitchell. Mathews did not use *p* but Mitchell did. Since *b*, *d*, and *g* predominate in Mathews, we have regularised *p* to **b**, *t* to **d** and *k* to **g**, except in syllable-final position where voiceless notations predominate, a feature also found in the notation of other Australian languages.

Vowels

Mathews uses all five vowel letters in his notation, but many Australian languages have only three vowel phonemes (**i**, **a** and **u**). In some instances we have interpreted Mathews’ *e* as **i** and his *o* as **u**.

Phonotactics

A feature of Dhudhuroa is that almost all words ended in a vowel. The only words with a final consonant are the following:

apron	djabeng
brother, elder	marrogayn
by and by	mayangan
evening	djebayn
full	gundja-yebang
quick	werrayn
strong	dha-ang
	madong [Wir <i>metong</i> , Warr martong ‘big’, Bung martong ‘good’]
tired	ngamanang
wrong	ngabun
man, old	djirribang [Wir djirribang , Pall. djirri ‘man’]

It is likely that Dhudhuroa allowed only vowel-final words and that the words listed above could be explained away if we had more data. This interpretation is strengthened when one considers that there are a number of words with a final syllable **-ba** following a consonant. It looks as if Dhudhuroa may have employed the strategy of adding **-ba** to produce vowel-final words. This strategy is attested elsewhere in Australia. The following list shows correspondences between Dhudhuroa forms with **-ba** and forms in neighbouring languages, mostly Ngarrugu, without **-ba**.

badjerri-djirritba	'wagtail'	djirri-djirri (Central Victoria)
birrangamba	'brolga'	berrangga (Pall), burralgang (Wir)
bulit-bulitba	'lyre bird'	bulit-bulit (Ngarrugu)
bulutjba	'ironbark'	bulutj 'native cherry' (Kulin; though glosses do not match, possibly through misidentification)
dhalaynba	'tongue'	dhalayn (Ngarrugu; widespread root)
gadjinba	'arm'	gadjinda (Djirrigayn (south coast NSW))
galang-galangba	'locust'	galang-galang (Ngarrugu)
garrgatba	'cold'	karrit (Omeo), karratha (Ngarrugu)
gawandikba	'old woman'	gawanditj (Ngarrugu), gawandil (Omeo)
gurranba	'elbow'	gurran (Thagungwurrung)
mayangamba	'fly'	mayangan (Omeo)
naginba	'penis'	nagin (Yota-Yota)
wayatba	'rock wallaby'	wayat (Ngarrugu)
yarraynba	'beard'	yarrayn (Ngarrugu; widespread root)

Stress

In the vast majority of Australian languages stress falls on the first syllable, but we cannot assume that this is always the case. Hercus reports stress on various syllables in Mathi-Mathi.¹⁸ Mathews marks stress on some words, mainly on a non-initial syllable, and mainly on the vowel **a**. There is not enough information for us to be able to say much about stress, and we must bear in mind that Mathews may have been hearing the relative sonority of the open vowel **a** over the close vowels as evidence of non-initial stress.

3. Morpho-syntax

3.1 Nouns

Case

Two case suffixes can be found in Mathews' material:

ergative-instrumental	-ngu
genitive	-la

¹⁸. Hercus 1986: 115f.

The form of the ergative-instrumental is interesting. In many Pama-Nyungan languages one of the forms representing the ergative is - **nggu**. Since Mathews writes *ngu*, the question arises of whether this is another example of - **nggu** or whether it is - **ngu**, which could, of course, be a reflex of -**nggu**. Because Mathews writes sequences such as *ngga* in some words, we assume *ng* represents a velar nasal (**ng**) and *ngg* a velar nasal followed by a velar stop (**ngg**). Mathews occasionally puts an apostrophe or a dash between the *ng* and the following vowel. This notation certainly represents a velar nasal. Fortunately one such notation is used for the ergative, which confirms that the form is -**ngu**.

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| (1) | <i>Burrau-e-kang-o</i> | <i>dyudyua</i> | <i>dugge.</i> |
| | Barrawiga-ngu | djudjuwa | dagi. |
| | few-ERG | snake | kill.PAST |
- ‘Some people killed a snake’.

There also appears to be a locative **nga**. Mathews does not explicitly mention this, but a number of adverbs of place end in - **nga**: **barrinbanga** ‘in front’, **birrinbanga** ‘in front’ (**birri(wa)** ‘breast’) and **banhu-nga** ‘at the back’ (**banhu** ‘back’). We have notations *barrin-bung’a* and *birrinbung’a* to confirm that the suffix is - **nga** and not -**ngga**. Since the widespread ergative -**nggu** is often paralleled by a locative -**ngga**, it looks as if Dhudhuroa has reflexes of both those forms, but without the **g**.

The ergative-instrumental marked the agent of a transitive verb as in (1) and (2) and the instrument as in (2). The object of the verb seems to have been unmarked, at least with nouns, as was the subject of an intransitive verb. In (2) **yerriyadha-** probably means ‘to hit with a missile’. There was probably more than one possible word order. The order of words in Mathews’ published grammar is agent-patient-instrument-verb.¹⁹

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| (2) | Djaba-ngu | yerriadha-ni | wan.gewa-ngu | wagarra |
| | man-ERG | hit-PAST | boomerang-ERG | crow |
- ‘The man hit a crow with a boomerang’.

The genitive marks the possessor:

djaba-la wan.gewa	(<i>jabala wungewa</i>)	man’s boomerang
mala-la djudja		woman’s yamstick

Mathews records a paradigm of genitive pronouns. Some of these end in -**la**. They are given in section 3.2.

¹⁹. In the published version the word for ‘boomerang’ is given as *wungewangu* with a macron over the *u* indicating that the first vowel is [u], but in numerous other tokens it is *isu* indicating [a].

Adjectives showed concord for case.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| (3) | Djaba-ngu
man-ERG | murranduwa-ngu
big-ERG | djawa
possum | dagi (<i>dugge</i>)
kill.PAST |
|-----|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|
- 'A big man killed a possum'.

Number

The dual was marked by **-lbu** and the plural by **-lmiya** or **-mangu**.

yawarra (<i>you-a-raw, yauara, yauraw</i>)	kangaroo
yawarralbu (<i>youaralbo, yauaraulbo</i>)	two kangaroos
yawarramangu (<i>you-a-ro-mang'o, yauaramunga</i>)	several kangaroos

In one manuscript version we find the free forms *balatherebo* 'two' and *nyanda* 'mob' as well as the number suffixes.

djawa (<i>jou-waw, jaua</i>)	possum
djawalbu (<i>jou-woulbo</i>)	two possums
wan.gewa	boomerang
wan.gewalbu (<i>wungewolbo</i>)	two boomerangs
wagarra murranduwa	big crow
wagarralbu murranduwalbu	two big crows
wagarralmiya murrandaga ^a	several big crows

a. The significance of the final syllable **-ga** is not clear, nor the unexpected final **-a** in the root.

Plural can also be indicated by the word **nyanda**.

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| (4) | Nhani=ngadha
saw = I | nyanda
mob | djawa (<i>nhaninguddha nyanda joua</i>)
possum |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|
- 'I saw several possums'.

Gender

Mathews reports a masculine and feminine gender in Dhudhuroa, as he does for most languages. It is clear that he is referring to natural gender, in particular, to ways of indicating the sex of animals. He gives the following:

yawarra-djama	male kangaroo
yawarra-djangaana (<i>jungana, dyunggana</i>)	female kangaroo

The form **djama** (*jumma*) is recorded by Mathews as a word for 'cock bird' opposed to **djangaana** (*jungana*) the word for 'hen bird'. In his published grammar Mathews states that, 'Among birds, the cock is denoted by the 'postfix' **bendjana** and the hen bird by **mimindjana**'. Confusingly, he has *bandyanno* 'doe kangaroo' and *mim-mindyana* 'buck kangaroo' as a note in his draft grammar.

3.2 Pronouns

There are pronouns for three persons and three numbers with an inclusive versus exclusive distinction in the first person dual and plural. The inclusive is unmarked and the exclusive marked by **-ndha**. A common nominative form is used with the subject of transitive verbs as well as with intransitive ones.²⁰ Genitive forms are also recorded.

Enclitic pronouns representing the subject are attached to the verb and to certain other words, mostly interrogatives, appearing in the first position in a sentence. Mathews also records what appears to be an enclitic for third person singular direct object, namely **-nye**. Where subject clitics are used, the free pronoun appears to be optional. There are also examples where a free pronoun is used rather than an enclitic.

In both the forms given for nominative and for genitive, there is an apparent confusion between first person plural forms and **nyanda**, a noun meaning 'group' or 'mob', which is shown as a third person plural form. This seems to be part of a larger confusion between initial **ng** and **ny**, which shows up in the first person dual forms, but not in the first person singular forms.

Subject forms

		free	clitic
sing.	1.	ngadha (<i>ngadha, nguttha, nguddha</i>)	= ngadha
	2.	nginda (<i>nginda</i>)	= nda
	3.	magudha ('that one') (<i>magudha, mala-goodha</i>) ^a	
dual	1 inc.	ngala (<i>ngala, ngulla, nyala, nyulla</i>)	=ngal(a)
	1 ex.	ngalandha (<i>ngalandha, ngullandha</i>) ngalindha (<i>ngalindha, also ngunda</i>)	= ngandha (<i>nganda</i>)
	2	bula (<i>bull</i>)	= uba (<i>ooba</i>)
	3	bungga ^b	= ula (<i>oola</i>)
plur.	1 inc.	ngana (<i>nganna, ngana</i>), nganda(ngin(y)a) (also <i>nyandang, nyandanginya, nyandangoo, nyandangobula</i>)	= mana (<i>munna</i>)
	1 ex.	nganindha (<i>nganindha</i>) nganandha (also <i>nyandanganda</i>)	= mangandha (<i>munganda</i>)
	2.	nguda	
	3.	nyanda (<i>nyanda</i>)	

a. There is one token of **wingga** (*wingga*).

b. Other forms in the notes are *nuggoba, malaboonganga* and *mala dhaboongga*.

²⁰ Mathews records an apparent ergative in the first person plural, namely *nyandangoo*, but **nyanda** is the word for 'mob'.

(5) *Ngadha dugginguddhan-ye.*

Ngadha	dagi=ngadha=nye. (Also Dagi-ngadha-nye without the free pronoun)
I	hit.PAST=1SG.SUBJ=3SG.OBJ
'I hit him'.	

(6) *Nyinda duggindanye.*

Nyinda	dagi=nda=nye. (also Dagi-nda-nye without the free pronoun)
you	hit.past=2SG.SUBJ=3SG.OBJ
'You hit him'.	

(7)

Nyanda-ngu	munya	dagi
mob-ERG	that	hit.PAST

'They hit that one' (given as 'We hit him')

This is given as 'We hit him', but **nyanda** occurs several times as 'they'. It is certainly the word for 'mob', 'group' and it is significant that it takes the ergative, which is expected on nouns but not on pronouns.

(8)

Djawa	nhanya-mana
possum	see.past-1PL.INC.SUBJ

'A possum we saw'.

(9) *Nguttha takananguddhanye.*

Ngadha	daga-na-ngadha-nye.
I	hit-PRES-1SG.SUBJ-3SG.OBJ

'I am hitting him'.

Genitive forms

Mathews gives lists showing persons and numbers as possessor of **wan.gewa** 'boomerang'. He gives examples where the possessor is postposed as in **wan.gewa=ngayi-la** 'my boomerang' and where the possessor is preposed or separated by a demonstrative as in **Ngina munya wan.gewa** 'That boomerang is yours'. There do not appear to be special enclitic forms for possessor, as one might expect from what is found in other languages of south-eastern Australia, except for **=dhala** 'his/her/its', which appears only in postposed position and contrasts with the free demonstrative **magagudhala**. It should be noted that the non-singular forms given for the genitive are mostly the same as the nominative forms. The form **bungganga** looks as if it might be a genuine genitive form, and **nyandala** is certainly genuine, but it is not a pronoun, but rather a noun meaning 'group' with the regular genitive inflection for nouns.

sing.	1.	ngayila (<i>ngaila, ngila</i>)
	2.	ngina (<i>nginna</i>)
	3.	magudhala (<i>magudhala, muggoodhala, mugudhala</i>) magagudhala (<i>muggaguddhala, magagoodhala</i>) mugudhala (<i>moogodhala</i>) = dhala (<i>dhala</i>)
dual	1inc.	ngala
	1ex.	ngalandha , (<i>ngalandha, ngullandha</i>), ngalindha (<i>ngalindha</i>)
	2	bula (<i>bullā</i>), bela (<i>bella</i>), magooala (<i>boonganga</i>)
	3	bungga , (<i>boongga, bungga</i>) Bungganga (<i>boonganga, ngagoala boongganga, buladharabula, muggagwala... , magoodhalaboongga</i>) ^a
plur.	1inc.	ngana (<i>ngunna, ngana, nganna</i>), (also <i>nyandanginna, nyandalangananindha</i>)
	1ex.	nganandha (<i>nganandha</i>) nganindha (<i>nganindha, nganindhoo</i>) (also <i>nyandalangandha</i>) ngandala (<i>ngandala</i>)
	2	nguda (<i>ngooda, nguda</i>)
	3	nyandala (<i>nyandala</i>) (nyanda = 'many') (also <i>muggagula ngandala, muggoodhala</i>)

a. There is also an apparent sentence untranslated: *muggagwala dyimbi bungga*.

3.3 Demonstratives

this, here	djimbi (<i>jimbi, jimbee, dyimbi</i>) Djimbi bula ngadha 'Here I am'
that, there	mayigadha (<i>maigadha, maigudha, magudha</i>) malagadha (<i>malagudha, malu(ga)</i>) maga(gu)(dha)la (<i>mugagula, magudhala, magagudhala</i>) munya (<i>munya, moonya</i>)
that (further away)	mamayitgurra (<i>mamaitgura</i>)
that (still further)	madhanbanga (<i>madhanbunga</i>)
that (away yonder)	gayitgurru-u-u (<i>kait-'guru'u-u, kaitguru-o-o'o!</i>)

3.4 Numerals

one	garruwa(nga) (<i>garrawa, karrawa, kurrawunga, kurdawung-a, kurroowunga</i>)
two	buladherrabo (<i>buladherabu/o, boolatherebo</i>)
three, a few	burrawi(gu) (<i>burauigo, burauego, burraue, boorouega</i>)
four ^a	buladhan-buladhan (<i>buladhan-buladhan</i>)
five	buladhan-buladhan-garruwa (<i>buladhan-buladhan-kurrowa</i>)
many	nyanda

a. No gloss is given, but its place in the list and the fact that it is a reduplicated form based on the widespread root for 'two', namely **bula**, suggests that it means 'four'.

3.5 Locational words

barrinbanga	<i>burrin-bung'a</i>	in front
birrinbanga	<i>birrinbung-a</i>	in front
banhu-nga	<i>bunnhonga</i>	behind (banhu 'back')
galagwiyangga	<i>gullagwianangga</i>	around
dumurramanga	<i>tumuramanga</i>	between
gigagu	<i>kikago</i>	inside
gayigudha	<i>kaikudha</i>	outside
wanbayinagadha	<i>wunbainagadha</i>	up (a river)
djikanagadha	<i>dyikanagadha</i>	down (a river)
djimbiyangga	<i>dyimbiyangga</i>	this side (of a stream, etc.) (djimbi 'here')
yirrigama	<i>yirigama</i>	other side (of river, etc.)
ganagadha	<i>gunnagadha</i>	up (on top)

Also **mayuwiga barringganga** (*mioowe-ga burringganga-a*) 'in rear of'

3.6 Interrogatives

who **ngan.ga** (*ngan-ga, nganga*)

Ngan.ga djimbi 'Who is this?'

Ngan bulbul 'Who are those two?'

Nganbandu 'Who is that?'

Nganbangu munya (*Nganbungoo/a munya?*) 'Who did that?'

Nganbangu djimbi? (*Nganboongo jimbi?*) 'Who from this?'

Ngandangu munya? (*Ngandungoo moonya?*) 'Who did that?'

Ngandangu (*ngandungu, ngandungoo*) 'Who is it from?'

whose? **nganbu-la, ngan.ga, ngan.ga-la**

The form **ngan.ga-la** is expected, but **ngan.ga** appears though it would seem to be the nominative. The form **nganbula** is hard to interpret in light of the fact that **bula** also appears in **Djimbi bula ngadha** 'Here I am'.

Ngan.ga djimbi? (*Nganga jimbi?*) 'Whose is this?'

Ngan.ga wan.gewa-lbu? (*Nganga wungewolbo?*) 'Whose are these boomerangs?'

Ngan.ga-la djimbi? (*Ngan-ga-la jimbi*) 'Who is this for?'

where? **dhawuna, wala(m)/walu(m)**

It is interesting to note there are two completely different roots for 'where' in Mathews' notes. The form **dhawuna** is the only one that appears in Mathews' field notes, and three of the pronouns that occur with the other root, **wala(m)/walu(m)**, are consonant-final. Final consonants are not normal in Dhudhuroa. On these grounds the **wala(m)** forms must be regarded with suspicion. Presumably they are genuine, but not for the dialect that Mathews is describing.

Dhawuna=nda	(<i>dhaunenda, dhauninda, dhounanda</i>)	'Where are you (sing.)?'
Dhawunangayala	(<i>dhounangyalla, dhaunaya/u/ella, dhaunanyulla</i>)	'Where are we (du inc)?' Also given as 'Where are you two?'
Dhawunamina	(<i>dhaumina, dhaunamina, dhounaminna</i>)	'Where are we all?' (pl inc)
walangurru?	<i>wallunguru/a</i>	'Where is it?'
walume?	<i>wallume</i>	'Where are you?'
walamblawu	<i>wallumblau</i>	'Where are we two?'
walamngal	<i>wallumngal, wallumngul</i>	'Where are you all?' [sic]
walambulan	<i>wallumbulan</i>	'Where are you two?'
walubula	<i>wallubula</i>	'Where are you two?'
walangurra nhurrel	<i>wallungurra nhurell</i>	'Where are you (plural)?'

where from? **yunandhu**

Yunandhu bayini? (*Yoonundhoo/yunindha bieene?*) 'Where did you come from?'

where to? **wawinini**

Wawini(ni)=nda bayini (*Wawunninda bieene/baiini?*) 'Where are you going?'

how? **yungami**

Yungami=nda dagi?	(<i>Yoonguminda dugge</i>)	'How did you hit it?'
Yungami=nda ngandi?	(<i>Yoonguminda ngunde</i>)	'How did you catch it?'
Yungamini=nda?	(<i>Yungamininda?</i>)	'How was it done?'

what? **minyuwa**

Minyuwa djimbi? What's this?

what for? **minyeini** (*minyeni, minyena, minyeinni, minye-innee*)

how many? **minyamalayn** (*minyamalañ*)

when? **ngadu ganga**

Ngadu ganga=nda	(<i>Ngadoo ganganda</i>)	'When did you see it?'
Ngadu ganga=ndu bayini	(<i>Ngadoo gungundoo bieenee</i>)	'When did you come?'
Ngadu ganga=nda?	(<i>Ngudda ganganda?</i>)	'When was it done?'

If the final **-nda** in the last example is in fact the clitic for second person, then the translation of this example would have to be something like 'When did you do it?' Note there is no verb in this example, nor in the first. The verbal meaning is presumably supplied by the context.

3.7 Negatives

The root **ngala** occurs in the following sentences:

Ngala dagayi		'Do not hit!'
Ngalarra=ngadha.	(<i>Ngalaranguddha</i>).	'No, I haven't got it'

A form **nheh** is given for 'I don't know', but it is probably not a negative. In many Australian languages an interrogative/indefinite form is used to convey this meaning rather like the use of English 'whatever'.

3.8 Verbs

Tense

Mathews gives verb inflections for past, present and future. The forms appear to be as follows, but there are some irregularities.

past		-i, (-ni?)
present		-na
future		-mu
dagi=ngadha		'I was beating'
daga-na=ngadha		'I am beating'
daga-mu=ngadha	(<i>tuggumuggadha</i>)	'I shall beat'
nyinyi=ngadha		'I was sitting'
nyina=ngadha		'I am sitting'
nyin-mu=ngadha	(<i>nyinmugaddha</i>)	'I shall sit'
djeginyi=ngadha	(<i>tyekinyingadha</i>)	'I was standing'
djeginya=ngadha	(<i>tyekinyangaddhe</i>)	'I am standing'
djegin-mu=ngadha	(<i>tyekkinmuggadha</i>)	'I shall stand'
nhani=ngadha		'I saw'
bayini=ngadha		'I walked'
yerriyadhani=ngadha		'I threw'

Here is the complete set of paradigms to be found in Mathews. They are all in the past tense. Since the person markers also appear on interrogatives, they are presumably enclitics, but Mathews treats them as inflection, and indeed there are some irregularities.

	nhani- 'to see'	bayi- 'to walk'	daga' 'to beat'	yerriyadha- 'to throw'
sing				
1	nhani=ngadha	bayini-ngadha	dagi=ngadha	yerriyadhani=ngadha
2	nhanyi=nda	bayile (one token)	dagi=nda	yerriadhani=nda
3	nhanyama	bayini	dagi (<i>dugge</i>)	yerriyadhani
dual				
1 inc	nhanyi=ngala nhani=ngala	bayini=ngala	dagi-ngala daginyella (<i>duggin-yella</i>)	yerriyadhani=ngala
1 ex		bayini=ngandha	dagi-ngandha daginyinda (<i>dugginyinda</i>)	yerriyadhani=ngandha
2		bayiluba		yerriyadhanuba
3		bayinula		yerriyadhanula
plur				
1 inc	nhanya=mana	bayin(i)=mana		yerriyadhani=mana
1 ex		bayini(ma)ngandha	dagi-ngandha	yerriyadhani=mangandha
2				yerriyadhan
3				yerriyadhan

Imperative

Dagayi munyu	'Hit that one!'
Ngala dagayi	'Do not hit!'
Kanyi (<i>kunye</i>)	'Hold on!'

A number of the verb forms in Mathews' glossary end in **-ayi** and may be imperatives. They include: **nginggayi** 'sit', **thurruguayi** 'talk', **thangayi** 'tell', **ngandagayi** 'take', **nanggayi** 'weep', **yagayi** 'laugh' and **nhagayi** 'look'. A few end in **-gu**, which may be a non-singular imperative as in the Central Victorian language. These are **matjgu** 'bring', **yandigu** 'fetch', **dhumagu** 'kiss' and **karramagu** 'steal'. The last of these resembles *karrama*, a word from the Sydney language that was spread in Pidgin.²¹

The verb for 'fight' is **dagayirriba** (*tukkairibba*), which invites comparison with **daga** 'hit' and suggests a reciprocal form.

²¹ H. Koch pers. comm.

Other recurrent word-final sequences are:

-bayi	-gili	-layi	-le	-rri
gatjbayi 'cook'	karrigile 'climb'	binilayi 'run'	badale 'pretend'	ngumarre 'drink'
ngatjbayi 'sing'	bedagile 'jump'	bagulayi 'arise'	mulagale 'dive'	wendhurre 'fall down'
wangumbayi 'pitch'		winggilayi 'whistle'		nganyarre 'dance'
gubayi 'roast'				
marratjbi [<i>mur-ratchbe</i>] 'chastise'				

4. Vocabulary

The remainder of the data from the sources is given below in alphabetical order, though a few glosses have been modernised: *laughing jackass* → *kookaburra*, *native companion* → *broлга* and *belly* → *stomach* and *spear lever* → *woomera*. Words from Mathews are unmarked, except that forms found exclusively in the manuscript are marked ms. Words from the Barwidgee list are marked with b. Where the published version and the manuscript version differ, the published spelling is given first and the manuscript second. The manuscript version often differs only in having an extra 'h'. This is shown in round brackets. Additional vocabulary, which exists only in manuscript form, is labelled bms.

The reconstructed phonetic forms shown in the middle column involve different degrees of confidence. The most problematic forms are marked with a question mark. Abbreviations in the cross references are as follows: Bung Bunganditj, CV Central Victorian Language, Gipps Gippsland, MM Mathi-Mathi, Ng Ngarrugu, Pall Pallanganmidhang, Thag Thagungwurrung, Tjap Tjapwurrung, Wa Wathawurrung, Warr Warrnambool Language, Wir Wiradjuri, WV Western Victorian Language, WW Wemba-Wemba, Yab Yabula-Yabula, YY Yota-Yota. A survey of Victorian languages, which shows the relationship between these languages, appears in Blake and Reid.²²

Stress is indicated by an accent (apostrophe) following the stressed syllable as in Mathews' published vocabulary.

English	Dhudhuroa	Sources	Notes
afraid	warragana	wurragana	
alive	murrbuwa	murboa	WV, CV murrun
angry	wa(rr)ganana	warkamana, warkanana ms	
ant, black	gayirrguwa	gairgoa bms	
apron	djabeng	dyabeng	
arise	bagulayi	bakkulai	

²² Blake & Reid 1998: 4-5.

arm	gadjinba	kuttyinba, kuttyinba ms, kuddyinba ms, karjenba b, carjenbah b	
around (there)	galagwiyangga	gullag-wiangga, gullag- wiangga	
baby	bandjina	bundyina	
back	[ng]ambuganya banhu	umbugunyah b bunno, bunnhonga 'behind'	see 'child' YY banu(th) , Bung. banu
bad	geberri	keberri, baal budgery 'not good' b	Pidgin from Dharuk (Sydney)
bag, net	bigunba	bigoo'nbah bms	
bandicoot	buladha durra	bulladha doorah bms	Pall durra
bark	garrayu	karrayu b	see 'rain'
bat	manmalawuna	munmalauna	
beard	yarraynba	yerranba, yarangba(h) b	yarrayn wide- spread in eastern mainland
beat	marratjbi	murraytybe ms	cf. marra 'hand'
beg	dhungayi	thungai	see 'tell'
behind	banhunga	bunnhonga	see 'back'
between	dumurramanga	tumuramang-a	Yab. dumarr
big, large	murrandu	murandu, murrandu ms, murandoa, murando b	
bite, sting	bulingani	bullingunni, bullingana ms	
black	dhayugilu	dhai-u-gillu	
blind	migi wandjagu	miki wundyagu, mikki wundyagu megeewanjega b, megee- wanjegea b	
blow (with breath)	(y)imbayi	imbai	
blowfly	bambuwa gindulu	bumboa, bumboa ms gindoolo bms	
bone	biyamanhu	biamunnhu	
boomerang	wan.gewa	wun-gay-wa, wun'-ge-wa, wongewa b	widespread root
bottom	tulumu	tooloomoo bms	
bowels	gununawu	goonoonau b, goonoonow b	guna widespread
boy	yuwarru	uaro b	= Pall 'child'
boy, small	magudju	magudya	see 'youth'
bracken	wurumagen	wooroomuggen bms	
bread	dana	dunna b, dunnah bms	Pall danadji
break	gigini	giginni	

bream, black breasts	wanambiyu birriwa	wunnumbeu birriwa, birriwah 'chest' b	Pall, Wir birri , CV birrm
bring brolga	matjgu birrangganba	matchgu, matygu birang'ganba, brolga b	Tjap, Wa mutjaka Pall berrangga , Wir burralgang , but <i>brolga</i> direct from English
brother, elder brother, younger	marrogayn ngulubamini	murro'gañ ngulubaminni	
build	mang(g)i	mungi bms	
bullroarer	madjigani	muddyigany	
bullroarer, small	yirragaminanga	yiragaminanga	
burn		wangari'ngemaini' nge bms	
bury	murrawa	moorawa bms	
bushes	barramayu	barama'yu bms	
buy	n[g]anda	nundah bms	see 'catch', 'take'
by and by	mayangan bawiyarra	maiarngan bahwearrah bms	
camp	ngudjuwa	ngu-tyu-a, ngutyua ms, gunya b	gunya non-local
canoe	mawudha	mautha doothoo(h) b	Pall., YY matha
carry	worrongarra	worrongah'ra b, bms	
catch	ngande, nangda	ngunde, nungdah bms	
centipede	garrerrinba	kur-rerinba, kurrerinba ms	
chastise	marratjbi	murratchbe	see 'beat'
child	bandjina	bundyina	see 'baby'
chin	lendawa	lendawa(h) b	see 'mouth'
chop	danda	danda bms	
clean	naga	nukkah bms	
climb	garrigala?	ku'rrigille', carregala bms	
cloud [rain- cloud?]	garrayu	karareyu b	see 'rain'
club, fighting	gudjerru	gudyera, goojuroo b, good- joroo b	
club, hunting	dananganinba	dunning-unninba	
club, small	gidjudjurrumbulu	gi'dyu-dyurum'bulu	
cockatoo, white	gidawunu	kittau'nu, gadauna b, gad- owno b	Omeo gidano
cockatoo, black	niyanyu	neanyo(h) b	
cod	yambuwa	yu'mboa	see 'fish'
cold (adj)	garrgudang, garr- gutba	kurkutang, kurkutba 'cold- ness', karagutba b, kurkut- nangadda ms	Omeo karrit , Ng karratha
cold morning	yabra djila	yabra jeelah bms	

come	bayini yang(g)abayila	baeenee, baini yangabaila b, yangaba'illa bms	see 'go' see 'walk'
cook	gatjbayi	gutchbai, gudy-bai ms	
coot	bado	bahdo bms	
copulation	munbi	mu'nbi	
cow		millowngow bms	Eng. 'milking cow'
crane	garriyalwa	kurrial'wan, kurrialwa ms	
crane, white necked	marrguwa	murgoa	
crayfish	dhang(g)ambal- ang(g)a	tongambalanga b	Omeo thang(g)ambu- luwa
creek	djerring(g)emo	jeringemor b, bms	
cross	niyumbamina	newm'bahminah bms	
crow	wagarra berrutha	wagara, wagara(h) b berrutha	wa- widespread Pall berrutha
cry	nanggayi	nunggai 'weep'	
curlew	gurrinyalawa	guranyillawa, gooring- nal'lewah bms	
damper	birritba	birreetbah bms	
dance	nganyarri	ngunyare	
darkness	dhogotjba	dho-gotch'-ba, dhogotyba ms, tiyogolo b	see 'night'
dead	mirrigini	mirriginni	
deaf	migi marrambaga	miki murlumbagu, mikki murrumbuga ms, megee murrumbugga(h) b	Wir <i>megotha</i>
die	nginyanga	nginyanga	
dirty	tunggulu	toongoo'loh bms	
dive	maladjale	mulagale, mullejel'le bms	
diver	wong(g)a-wong(g)a	wonga wonga bms	
diver, white breasted	burruwa	booroowah bms	
dog	wingga	wingga, weengga, wehnga b, wehngah bms	
down (a river)	djiganangadha	dyikanangadha	see 'morning'
drag, to	nurra	noora bms	
drink	ngumarri	ngumare	
duck, black	dumu, dulumu	tumu, dooloomoo b	Pall duma , YY dulma , Kulin dulum
duck, teal	bayawu	bai-a'-wu	
duck, wood	nanatba ngarru	nanatba ngaru b, gnaroo b	Wir <i>ngaru</i>
eaglehawk	wanumarru	wannamaro, wunnamuru, wannomurra b	

ear	marrambuwa	murlamboa, murrambo ms, murrumbo b	YY marrmu , Yab. marram , Pall. mar- ramba , Ba mar- ramba(ga)
eat	dhana	dhunna	Gipps dhana , dha- widespread
egg	dhung(g)a	dhunga	
elbow	gurranba	kurunba	Thag gurran
emu	marriyawa	murri-a'-wa, murre-a-wa, murriawa b	see 'head', Pall marriya , Gipps mayawarra
evening	djebayn	dyebañ	
excrement	gunu	gunu [guna widespread]	
eye	wandjaba	wundyaba ms, wunjubba b	
face	warruwa	wahroa b	
fall down	wendhurri	wen'dhure	
far, away			see section 3.3
fat	galanhu, galimbu	kullanhu, kullimbu, kull- inhu ms	Bidawal <i>kullunga</i>
	padarra	pata'rah bms	Pall padarra
	gurri	goori bms	
father	mema, mama	mema	Kulin, Pall. mama
female, doe, hen			see under gender in grammar
fence	dagatba	targat'bah bms	
fern, treefern	djandjamba	janjum'bah bms	
fight	dakarriba bayiba	tukkairibba ms bieba(h) b, bms	
find	nagaunda	nuggaunda bms	
fire	ngiyambanba	ngeambunba, neeambunba b	
fire, make a	bomogo	bohrmo'go bms	
fish	yambo	yumbo b	see 'cod'
five	buladhan- buladhan-garruwa	buladhan-buladhan-kur- rowa	
fleas	minawa	meenowah bms	
fly	mayangamba	mai(y)angamba b, myan- gamba bms	Ngarrugu <i>miangan</i>
fog	ngurr-ngurrgu	ngur-ngurgu	
food	bamaynba darrgi bada	bummainba turrigi b, turghi bms patta b	
foot	djinu	dyinnu, jinno(h) b	djina widespread
forehead	nguluwa	ngulua	Ng ngulangi
frog	wurra-kuk-kuk	woora'kukkuk bms	
front, in	birrinbanga barrinbanga	birrinbung-a burrin-bung'a	see 'breast'

	barrin.ganga	burrin-gunga, barrin.ganga b	
frost	girraya	girraia	
full	gundja-yebang	gundya-yebbung	see 'good'
gang-gang [parrot]	guriyanba	gurian'bah bms	
gap	gayiwa	giewa bms	see 'river'
girl	wigi	weki b	
girl, small	djamaganba	jummaganba	
give	ngibiyu, wuga	ngibbi-u, ngibbui ms, uguh b, uhga bms	<i>ugah</i> may represent yuga
glad	gangwa	gangwa	
go	bayini	bieenee, baiini	also 'come'
goanna, ground	yagamila	yagamilla b, bms	
goanna, tree	wurrurra-djawa	wu'rura-dyaua	
	gurrudha	gurudha, gooroodi b, goorooda(h) b	
good	gundja	gundya, gundya ms budjeri b	see 'water, fresh', <i>budjeri</i> is Pidgin
grass	murru	murru, moorah b	Gipps muthu
grebe	dilimba	deelimbah bms	
greedy	ngalarra	ngullara	see 'not got'
ground	gurratba	guratba	
gun	marrgatba	margutbah bms	probably 'musket'
hail	bedima	bettima	
hair		murriawah b	see 'head'
hand	marra	murra, murra(h) b	widespread
hard	badoyo	budo'io bms	handwriting difficult to decipher
head	marriwa, marriyawa	murrewa, murrera ms, murriawa(h) b	
hear	ngarrinbayi	ngurrinbai	
heat	meninha	meninha, maininah 'warm morning' bms	
heavy	bubulelo	boobolelo b, booboo'beloh b, boobobeloh bms	
heel	munin-djinu	munin-dyinnu	see 'foot'
here	djimbi	dyimbi	see 3.3
hide	(y)inbayi	inbai 'conceal'	
hill	minggawu-ganidha,	minggau-gunnedha, bubura b, bubburah bms	Pall boburra , WV, YY purrp
	dalga	talga 'mountain' bms	
hit, kill	dag-	tukkai	see 'kill'; WV, Pall. dag-
honey	ngarruwa	ngurrua, narroo'ah 'bees' 'nest' & 'honey' bms	

hop bush		tadoiok [?] bms	
horse	yarraman	yaraman bms	NSW word used in Pidgin
hold on	ganyi, gandji	kunye, kunje	
hungry	banganawawu	bungunowo b, banga- nawau b	Pall bangowo
hunt	gorrige	corrigenyella bms	
hurry	wangarrela	wungurella bms	
husband	ningulali	ningullale	
injure by sor- cery	yayarro	yaiaro	
inside	gigago	kikago	
inside	didago	didago	
jump	bedagili	bettagille	
kangaroo	yawarra	yauara, you-a-raw, boodjoo b	Pall budju
kangaroo, female	yawarra djanggana	yauara junggana	
kangaroo, old man	balewa yawarra	pahlelhwahyowerow bms	
kill	gangini	gunginne	
kiss	dhumagu	dhumagu	Pall. dumaguna
knee	dhiminba	dhimminba	
kingfisher	nurrigu	noorigo bms	
koala	bawiyaga	bou-ee-a-gaw, bauiaga	
kookaburra	gugarrangga	kugarungga	
lagoon	baluma	balloomah bms	
laugh	yagayi	yagai	see 'vomit'
lean (thin)	dhamindhanu	dhummindhunnu	
leaves of trees	barramiyu	burramiyu	
leg, calf	marrandho	murrandho	Robinson records murranda 'leg' in Ngarrugu
leg, thigh	garriwa	kurriwa, kurrewa 'whole leg' ms, kurriwa 'thigh' ms, karrewa b, carrewa b	Kulin, Bung, Warr karrip
light	durrung(g)ulu	torongolo b	
light (not heavy)	bawumbadji	baumbaji b, bowmbahjee b, bowmbajee bms	
lightning	narawaanyu	narawahnyo b	Pall narra
lizard, sleepy	mago-mago	muggo-muggo bms	
locust	galanggalangba	gulanggalangba ^a	Ng galang-galang
log	durruga	tooroogah bms	
long	ginyarro	keenyarob	see 'tall'
long ago	nangadhanambu	nungadhanambu	
look			see 'see'
lose	nadelandewa	nadelandewah bms	

louse	munhuwa	munnuhuwa	munya/munhu widespread
low or short	gregadu	gregadoo bms	
lyre-bird	gabalo	kubbalo	
	bulit-bulitba	bullit-bullitba, polly- billeetba bms	CV bulnbuln
magpie, com- mon	gurrin-gingga	gu'rin-gingga	
	gurringyangba	gooringyangbah bms	YY gorngayn
magpie, black male animal/ bird	durriyangba	dooriang'bah bms	see under gender in grammar
man	djaba	dya-ba, jaba, jirri b	djirri = Pall
man, married	nginggulale	nginggullale ms	
man, old	djirribang	jerribong b	Wir, Omeo djirrib- ang , Pall. djirri 'man'
man, initiated	djiboba	dyibboba	
man-making ceremony	wanguwa-wang- guwa	wonggoa, wanggoawang- goawa	see 'youth, initi- ated'
marry	[ng]anda	undangyalla b	ngand- 'catch', 'take'
meat	baminba	barminbah bms	
moon	wurrayu, barrarru	wurraiu, bararoo b	
morning	djigana	dyikana	see 'down the river'
mosquito	girridhu	kirridhu	
moth, Bogong	bangenba	bungenbah bms	
mother	baba	baba	common Vic
mother-in-law	nganang-ganaga	ngunung-gunnag, ngun- nungunnaga ms	
moustache	munda yarraynba	moondayarangbah b	see 'beard'
mouth	lendhewa, niwa	lendhewa	see 'chin'
	niwa	niwa b, neewah b	
navel	bidit-biditba	biddit-bidditba	
neck, throat	bilidjuwa, bilidjewa	billi'dyua, billejewah b	
night	dhogotjba	dho-gotch-ba, dho-gotyba ms	see 'dark'
nits or lice	dangganu	dungganu	
	gadjabinba	cadjabinbah bms	
no	dhubalga	dubulga, dhubulga, oneugaba b, oneuggabah b baal b	Pall wananga , <i>baal</i> is Pidgin
not got [?]	ngalarra	ngalaranguddha 'I have not got it'	see 'greedy'
not know		nheh 'I don't know'	

nose	dhindiwa	dhindiwa, dendewa b, deendeewah b	Madhi tinti
nymphae	nanga-nanginba	nunga-nunginba	
old	burruru	booroo'roo bms	
other side of river	yirrigama	yirigama, yougama	
outside	gayigadha	kai-kudha	
parrot	bawarro	bawaro bms	
path	garriga	karrika b	
pathway	murdaynba	murdhañba	
peewee	dildilwa	dildilwa	
pelican	gulayiguli, gulak- gali	gulaiguli, goolakgable b, goolukgahle b	Gamilaraay guliy- ali
penis	naginba	nugginba	YY nagin
perch (fish)	marruwanba	mur'roanba	
pigeon	waba	wabba bms	
pitch	wangumbayi	wangumbai	
platypus	madjiyanga	madgeangah bms	
pleiades	gundaganba	gundaganba	
plover	pinderranderri	pinderan'derry bms	
porcupine [echidna]	dhemunba, dhemu	dhemunba, demo b	
possum	djawa	jaua, joua, jou-wa, dyau'-u 'gray possum', burra b	Pall = barra
possum, black	gawunga, gawungwa	kaunga, gowngwa bms	
possum, ring- tail	bagarewa	bugahrewah bms	
possum cloak	djindaba	jindabah bms	
pretend	badale	butta'le	
pretty	yurrambo	urum'bo bms	initial <i>u</i> may be yu
pregnant	ngandanya	ngundanya	
quail	burrugulu	booroogooloo bms	
quick	werrayn wongadi	werañ, wungurela b wonga'di bms	
rain	garrayu nuruma	kurraiu noorooma b, nooroomah bms	see 'cloud'
rainbow	gulbiyawa	kulbe'awa, kulbeawa ms	
rat, kangaroo	barra	burra	WV, Bung. Warr. CV parruk
rear of me, in	gima mayuwiya barring- ganga	gimmah bms mioowee-a burringgang-a, maiuwia burringgang-a	
red	ngaya	ngaiar	
ride	ming(g)a	meenga bms	
ridge	durrurrambululu	tooroorumbulo bms	

roast	gubayi	gubai	
right (correct)	nebanda	nebbunda	
river	gayirra	kierah bms	
rum	garrakba	carrak'ba bms	
run	binila	binnilai, pinnela b, pinne'la bms	
sand	mayatba	maiaba, maiatba ms	
sandhill	mudjurru?, mat-jarru?	nudyuru, mudyuru ms	
scorpion	dabingorro	dubingoro bms	
scratch	bingago	bing-ago	
scrotum		see 'testicles'	
scrub	wulgurra	woolgoora bms	
search for	nhagana	naga-nangadha	see 'see'
see	nhaga	nagai 'look', nahga b	nha- widespread, n[h]aka- widespread in Vic.
sell		biingemi bms	
semen	buliwa	bulliwa	
send	yandigu	yandigo	also in Pall; poss. from yan- , widespread root for 'go'
several or many	bayilayingayo nyanda	bailainga'yoh bms nyanda	
shadow	marrayago	murriago, murraiago	
sharpen	yurrugandji	urooganje bms	
shield	birrganbu	birkiambu 'shield for spear', birregambo b, birregam'boh bms	Pall birrganbo , Ng birrbambi
	gurralik marrka	guralic murga 'shield for club', murga b, murgah 'hielamon' bms	widespread word
shine	ngerrambana	ngerumbunna	
shoot	yarriyade	yarrea'deh bms	see 'throw'
short	gablo	koblo b, coblo b	see 'low'
shoulders	bunanba	boornanbah b	
sick	yidjanabi	id-ya-na'bi	
sing	ngatjbayi gatba	ngatchbai, ngutjbai gudba(h) b, gudbah bms	
sister, elder	mandaguni	mandaguni	
sister, younger	burrin.ga	burrin-ga, burrin-ga ms	
sit	nginggayi	nginggai	WW nyengka , MM ngengatha
skin	waano	wahno b, [also 'hide'] bms	

sleep	nyiminye	nyiminye	
sleepy	ngurra-ngurraya	ngurunguraia	Pall ngurrangurra
slow	bagirrimale	bagi'rrimale	
small	banyungadji	banyungadyi, bunyungahai b	
smell	badhi	badhe	
smoke	dhumbaba	thumbaba, toombaba b	YY dhonga , Pall dju , Gipps dhun , Ng dhunbuk
snake	djudjuwa	dyudyua, dyu-dyu-a 'black snake', murray jooyu b	Pall djuyu , <i>murray</i> = Pidgin for 'big'?
snake, brown	giyanggu	ge-ang-gu	Pall kiyang(g)o black snake
snake, carpet	ganggaya	kunggaia	
sorcerer	warrawi	wurra'we, wurrawe ms	
spear, reed	yaga	yaarga(h)	Omeo <i>yarka</i>
spear, wood	manduga	manduga	
	djerramba-ayi	jerrambahai b	Omeo <i>jerrambity</i>
spear, to	warraba	warrabah bms	
spit	burranggale	burunggale	
squirrel, flying [glider]	yirranawuga	yirranhoga, yiranhoga ms, earanawgah bms	
stand	djegin-	tyekin- tyekandyai, tyedyoi ms	see 3.6
star	djimbuwa	dyim-boa, jeembo b	Pall, southern Wirr djimba
steal	garramagu burra?, barra?	kurramago bura bms	
stinking	mirrgu?	mirgu	
sting			see 'bite'
stomach, belly	bandharra	bandhara	Yab. bo(n)dha
stone	durruba	duruba, gibba b	giba is a Dharuk word (Sydney)
strike	dag-	tukkai	see 'hit'
strong	dha-ang madong	dha-ung matong b	Wir <i>metong</i>
suck	ngumbumayi	ngumbumai	
sun	nhawayu	nau-i-u, noweyu b	WV nyawi/nhawi
swallow [bird]	barringba	baringbah bms	
swan	maliwa	mulliwa, mullewa(h) b	Pall mayiwa
swift [bird]	birrigunba	bireegoonbah bms	
swim	banggayi, balgayi	bunggai, bungi bms, bahlgi bms	
tail of animal	djawa	dya-wa	see 'possum'
take	nganda	ngundagai, nunda b, bms	
talk	dhurr(gu)wayi	thurgwai	
tall or long	ginyarro	ginyaro	see 'long'

teeth	niyu	niyu, niyu b, neeyu b	
tell	dhungayi	thungai, thungai ms	see 'beg'
testicles, scrotum	bumbuwa	bumbua	
there			see section 3.3
thin	gabadji	cabarjee bms	
thirsty	djagenawa	jargenauer b, jargenower b	
this side of river	djimbi-yangga	dyimbiangga	
throw	yerriyadha	yerriadhe, yerriadha-, yer-radhee, yerreadhe ms	see 'shoot'
thunder	murri-murriwa	muri-muriwa, murimuriwa ms	
	mandarra	mundera b	Pall mandarra , root widespread
tie	guna?, gana?	guna bms	
tired	ngamanang	ngarmunnung, ngarmunnang-adha ms	
today	nyinyanga	nyinyang-a	
toe		jinno b	see 'foot'
tomahawk	mudiwa	mutiwa, moodewa b	Warr. mutjirr
tomorrow	ngangarra	ngangara	
tongue	dhalaynba	dhallañba, dullingba b	widespread root
top (on top)	gananggana	cunnunggu'nah bms	
track	garriga	carreekha bms	
tree		berwa	see 'cherry'
tree, any bloom	borringba	borringba	
tree, apple	murrinya	murrinya	
	murringgaya	moori'ngyah bms	
tree, blue gum	baneba	buneba	
tree, cherry	berrwa?	berwa	see 'tree'
	mamong	mahmong bms	
tree, currant bush		yerroanba, yerramba	
tree, dead		diuanwe'wah bms	
tree, grass	djandjamba	dyan-dyum-ba	
tree, gray box	dharringgu	tharringgoo, tharringgoa	
tree, green	bagogo	bahgogo bms	
tree, hollow	tulumba	toolombah bms	
tree, (red) gum	gumbarro	gumburro, goomnarah bms	
tree, honey-suckle [banksia]	marrka	murka	see 'shield'
tree, iron bark	bulutjba	bullutchba	see 'white gum'
tree, kurrajong	bibanba	bibbanba	
tree, lightwood	yurrang(g)amba	uranga'mbah bms	

tree, mountain-ash	dhumbudhana	dhumbuddhana	
	dhumbudhutba	toomboothootbah bms	
tree, peppermint	warritba, wurritba	wuritba, wooret'bah bms	
tree, pine	yedonba	yeddonba	
tree, stringy bark	dhadha	dhuddha, tattah bms	Pall thatha
tree, she oak	wundju	wundyu	
tree, ti-tree	ganung-marriyawa	cannungmurriawah bms	
tree, urabbi	buniba	boonne'bah bms	
tree, wattle	wawarru	wawaru, wahwarroh bms	
tree, wattle blossom	badalwa	baddalwa	
tree, white box	dayarringo	tiering'oh bms	
tree, white gum	buluba	bulluba, boolloobah bms	see 'ironbark'
tree, yellow box	bayinuwa	bainaa, bainoa, binoh bms	
turkey, wild	nanggarawa	nungarawa(h) b	
turpentine bush	barrangwangba	barangwangbah bms	
turtle	nangwiya	nangwea bms	
up on top	ganagadha	gunnagadha	
urine	djiwa	dya-wa	
vomit	yagayi	yakai	see 'laugh'
vulva	ngarranguwa	ngurrung-goa	
walk	bayilai	bailai, biela b	see 'come'
wallaby	narrawago	narrawago bms	
wallaby, rock	wayatba	waiatba	Ng wayat
water, fresh	gandha	gundha	see 'good'
water rat	barratgedu	baradgedoo bms	
weak	malambadji	mulumbadji b	
whistle	winggilayi	winggillai	
white	darrangarra	durrunggurra	
wife	buladjerru	bularjeru b, bulargeroo b	Ng bulan 'woman'
willy-wagtail	badjerri-djirritba	badyeri-dyirritba, baddy-eri dyirritba ms	CV djerri-djerri
woman	mala	mulla	Yab. marrayi
	djarri	jari b	
woman, old	gawandikba	kauwantigba b, cowwan-tigbah	Ng gawanditj , Omeo gawandil
woman-making ceremony	nayuwula	niohuler	
wombat	dugura	doogoorah bms	
wood	duga	toorga b	Pall tawa

woomera	bayuga	biuga, womarrua, wom-marua ms	'woomera' is Dharuk (Sydney)
wrong	ngabun	ngabun	
yams, to dog	wung(g)urra bulagambe	woongoora bulargambe bms	
yamstick	djudja	jooja, juja, tyu-tya, tyutya ms	
yes	namayi	namai,	
	wurri	woorri b	Wir. <i>woori</i> 'no'
young	gangwano	gangwahno bms	
youth (12-15)	magudjuwa	magadyua, magoodyoo-a	see 'boy, small'
youth, initiated	wangguwa	wangoa, wanggo ms, wahngo 'young man' bms	see 'man-making ceremony'

- a. Harold Koch points out that *galang-galang* 'tree hopper' is recorded by the early explorer Bennett from the Yass area (Bennett 1834: 237).

Acknowledgements

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Notes and Documents

Address on the occasion of the launch of Ann Jackson-Nakano's book *The Kamberri*

The Honourable Sir William Deane

At the outset I acknowledge the traditional custodians upon whose ancestral land we are privileged to gather. In the context of the book which we are launching this evening, I expressly acknowledge not only the Ngunnawal people but also the Kamberri group.

For me it is a particular pleasure that the launch of Ann Jackson-Nakano's book is taking place here at our National Library. I am particularly reminded of an occasion in November 1997 when I was privileged, in this place, to open an Exhibition which had, and has continued to have, a profound effect on me personally. That Exhibition – 'Captive Lives' – dramatically told the story of a group of nine essentially gentle and trusting Aboriginal people who were enticed from their homes in Palm Island in North Queensland in 1893 and taken by an American entrepreneur to the United States where they were exhibited as 'uncivilised savages' in Barnum and Bailey's Circus and in fair grounds and dime museums. Within four years, six were dead and the other three lost to history, presumably also dead.

There were at least two aspects of that Exhibition which have made it particularly memorable for me personally. The first is that the Exhibition, with its unbearably sad story, dramatically illustrated how important it is that we Australians fully and honestly acknowledge the past. For acknowledgment of the past is the starting point towards true reconciliation. The second is that the Exhibition, attended as it was by Palm Island Elders and climaxing in a joint imprint of hands which became its last exhibit, was of itself a powerful instance of grass roots reconciliation.

Similarly this evening Ann Jackson-Nakano's *The Kamberri* discloses and acknowledges another significant part of our Australian story – the story of the Indigenous group upon whose ancestral lands our National Capital has come into being. The launch of the book, in this gathering of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who stretch out the hand of friendship to one another, is of itself a powerful example of grass roots reconciliation. Would that our nation as a whole could be so reconciled.

Needless to say, the beginnings of the story of *The Kamberri* is shrouded in the distant past – long before the arrival of the first Europeans at Weereewaa – or Lake George as we know it – in 1820. Nonetheless, the book is a scholarly achievement and an historical account of the Kamberri in more recent years. It carefully and convincingly

establishes its thesis, namely, that, far from being an extinct people, present day Kambarri or Kambarri Ngunnawal men, women and children remain living in their traditional country which is now the site of our Australian Capital City.

As its cover indicates, the Kambarri is Volume 1 of Ann Jackson-Nakano's Weereewaa History Series. In subsequent volumes she will trace the history of the four other Aboriginal groups whose traditional country, like that of the Kambarri, included parts of Weereewaa.

Views may differ but it seems to me that the imposed name of 'Lake George' has little to recommend it. Most people would guess that it was named after one or other of the kings bearing that name. Comparatively few would know that it was named by Governor Macquarie in October 1820 and accordingly was named after the then current King George, namely George IV. I venture to suggest that it would be far more appropriate for what Macquarie described as 'this grand and magnificent sheet of water' to revert to its traditional name of Weereewaa. The arguments in favour of that are obvious. Perhaps one argument against it is that Weereewaa is said to mean 'bad water' which is perhaps a trifle unfair to the mysterious and beautiful waters of the Lake – when they are there. That argument, however, loses its force if 'bad water' is understood in the sense of 'dangerous waters'. On that approach, the story of the Lake in modern times with its tragic drownings serves only to underline the appropriateness of the Aboriginal name.

There is much about Ann Jackson-Nakano's book which I would commend. To some extent it tells the story of a living people or group. Equally, it tells the story of individuals of that group, some of whom are personally known to some of us. Significantly, with historical accuracy and impartiality, it recounts one important aspect, a local aspect, of the national tragedy of dispossession, with its now discredited doctrine of *terra nullius*, and introduced disease and discrimination which deface our national history. Thankfully, while one might speculate about unrecorded incidents of personal violence, there seems to have been, in this part of our country, an absence of the kind of barbarous massacre that occurred in some other parts of Australia. Nonetheless, the story is one of injustice and oppression.

In that regard, I am reminded of some comments attributed to Nellie Hamilton, a Ngunnawal woman, at the opening of the Tharwa Bridge in 1895:

I don't think much of your law. You come here and take my land, kill my possum, my kangaroo; leave me to starve. Only give me rotten blanket. If I take a calf or a sheep, you shoot me, or put me in jail. You bring your bad sickness among us.

Equally poignant are the comments of Matilda Williams House, quoted by Ann Jackson-Nakano at p281 of *The Kambarri*, in relation to the effect upon her life of the 1967 Referendum removing the constitutional prohibition against including Aborigines in recounting the numbers of people of the Commonwealth:

I think it was then that I realised that we didn't have to hide anymore. There weren't many Aboriginal people in Canberra or Queanbeyan at that time so the Williams and House families stuck out like sore thumbs. There we were, Aboriginal people in our own country, the country of my grandfather and great-grandfather, and I think we still felt that defeat and shame before white people that our ancestors felt.

Let me conclude by offering my warmest congratulations and admiration to Ann Jackson-Nakano for the achievement of this book. She comments that she would have preferred to have waited until some gaps could be filled. Any such gaps are, however, insignificant in the context of the whole and Ann was correctly persuaded that historical works are, of necessity, works in progress. This is an historical work which positively demanded to be published at this time. This city and all of us are enriched by it.

The Kamberri is also the 8th of the Aboriginal History Monograph series. I sincerely congratulate Aboriginal History Incorporated, its Chairman Dr Read, its Committee of Management and Editorial Board, and everyone else associated with the publication and production of the book.

And now, with great pleasure, I officially launch *The Kamberri – a history of the Aboriginal families in the ACT and surrounds*.

Canberra, Wednesday, 6th February 2002

The Weereewaa History Series Volumes I & II: remarks by Ann Jackson-Nakano

Volume I: *The Kamberri: a history of Aboriginal families in the ACT and surrounds*

Volume II: *The Pajong and Wallabalooa: a history of Aboriginal farming families at Blakney and Pudman Creeks*

Writing personal and community histories and compiling genealogies are tasks that are fraught with emotion. Over the past 11 years, during which time I have been researching and writing about Aboriginal groups who now mostly identify as Ngunnawal, I have copped the whole gamut of emotions, from sobs of joy to lashings of abuse. Family, friends and colleagues say, why do it? Its a good question. Certainly, it's not because I desire any personal recognition or gratitude. For me, it's an issue of social justice.

Aboriginal people have a right to their identity. When I first started this research back in early 1991, it was embedded in the community consciousness in the districts west of Weereewaa (Lake George) that the Aboriginal people of this or that area had all died out at the end of the 19th century. Even in 2001, which celebrated the Centenary of Federation, this historical fiction was still being taught to schoolchildren in the Canberra region. It was based on the idea that only Aboriginal people of full descent were 'real Aborigines', an idea that, to our national shame, was enacted through state legislation. In New South Wales (then incorporating the ACT), the relevant legislation was the *Aborigines Protection Act (NSW) 1909* and its later amendments. Under the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*, the definition of Aboriginality has now been amended. It is defined in three elements in this current Commonwealth legislation: firstly, that a person is of Aboriginal descent; secondly, that s/he identifies as an 'Aborigine' and thirdly, that s/he is accepted as such by the Aboriginal community with which s/he is associated.

Such legislation is far more enlightened than those of its state predecessors but it still creates problems for some people of Aboriginal descent whose Aboriginal ancestors, for one historical reason or another, chose to hide or discard their Aboriginality. For this and other reasons, many people of Aboriginal descent are challenged by others when they identify as Aboriginal and, in some cases, they have difficulties being accepted as Aboriginal even by the modern-day 'communities' with which their ancestors associated.

While I support the establishment of protocols for writing Aboriginal personal or community histories and genealogies, sadly Aboriginal individuals and family lines today often require proof of their identity. Sometimes they find it is their own distant family members who try to cut them off from their rightful position in a modern group that is descended from a common ancestral line. It takes a great deal of tact and diplomacy to right these historical wrongs and I try to do this as best I can in negotiation with all relevant parties. Unfortunately, however, it is usually issues relating to modern politics that stand in the way of descendants of 'lost' generations reclaiming their Aboriginal identity. Various Aboriginal land acts were introduced since the 1960s but the *Native Title Act 1993* in particular has created many divisions in Aboriginal communi-

ties in southeast Australia – the first area of European settlement and therefore the region where Aboriginal people have suffered the worst cases of dispossession.

From the point of view of Aboriginal people who stayed in their traditional country and have managed land issues over the last four decades, it is understandable that strangers who come in and claim to be their long lost relatives are treated with suspicion. It is one thing to embrace a person who can prove that they are a distant relative but quite another to work out how that person now fits into the family and what land and other rights they may be entitled to share. It is dilemmas such as these that affect descendants in particular, people who can prove their continuous ancestral connections to the modern (and prestigious) Australian Capital Territory. Their story is told in volume I of the Weereewaa History Series: *The Kamberri*.

While I was writing volume II, an historical study of the Gundungurra-speaking Pajong or Fish River group and the Ngunnawal-speaking Wallabalooa in the Gunning and Boorowa districts respectively, I realised that a number of Pajong families had been granted land by the NSW government at Pudman Creek in Wallabalooa country. Effectively, this meant that the former had encroached on the country of the latter. To my relief, the historical records revealed that Pajong family members later intermarried with Wallabalooa family members and therefore their descendants could establish a right to be there. On the other hand, these families had more to do with their Fish River compatriots at Blakney Creek than with extended family members in the Boorowa or Yass districts. Over time, they saw themselves as distinct communities that had good relations with the local non-Aboriginal farming families in that district and to some extent they resented the intrusions on their turf by other Wallabalooa families from the 1920s onwards.

Ironically, when the last of the Pudman families left the reserve at Pudman for economic reasons the title to the reserve was passed to the Aboriginal Lands Trust. After the passing of the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, this deed was passed on to the Onerwal (Ngunnawal) Local Aboriginal Land Council at Yass. Families who lived on the Pudman Reserve in the buildings that still remain there consider that place to be sacred to them and to their ancestors. They hold reunions there every year and have scattered the ashes of some of their more recently deceased family members over the land. They also tend the graves of earlier ancestors they know to be buried there. Yet, in their view, other Wallabalooa family members have used this site and abused it: the latter leave discarded bongos in the remains of these heritage houses and dump cars on top of ancestral graves.

There are many issues to consider when researching and writing an Aboriginal history and it will never be possible to please everyone concerned. My approach has been to present to relevant families the information I find in the historical records and, where possible, have them validate or amend or update it. Trying to recreate a true vision of an Aboriginal past is almost impossible given the few fragments available, but these fragments are better than nothing. So much has been taken from Aboriginal people and so many lies have been told. I believe it is time to seek new and amended truths and I see my work on the Kamberri and the Pajong and Wallabalooa families as a starting point in that process. It would have been my preference to wait another 20 years to see if I could have found even more evidence to weave into this historical tapestry but

the majority of people portrayed advised me to stop worrying about the risks and publish!

Descendants who read these histories and feel they have been left out, or those who think the histories are flawed in any way, are invited to speak up. In the future, any errors can be updated and amended. These first volumes are just the beginning in the long and necessary process of restoring, where possible, the histories and identities of the Aboriginal peoples they portray.

Discovering my Aboriginal identity

Grant Austin

I have spent all but the past four or five of my 38 years not having a single clue about my Aboriginal ancestry. No person in my immediate family, living or deceased, ever mentioned we had an Aboriginal background. I will never know why this part of my history was not revealed to me. I trust the decision to hide or deny our Aboriginal identity was made out of love or protection by an earlier generation and was an unfortunate necessity in Australian history.

My grandfather, John Carl Berwick, who fought for Australia in Papua New Guinea in World War II, was born on his ancestral lands at Pudman Creek in Boorowa Shire in the early 20th century. As a young teenager, he moved to Sydney with his family. During the last year of his life, we shared a bedroom at my parents' house when he was ill. Although we spent much time talking together about a variety of things, he never once mentioned his Ngunnawal ancestry.

My mother, Margaret Joy Austin, died suddenly at the age of 45 years in 1982. I have no idea whether she knew she had an Aboriginal past before her spirit moved on. If she did, certainly she never mentioned it to me. Mum did retain contact with her Auntie Phyllis, my grandfather's sister, who spent the last years of her life on the lake-front at Avoca Beach. I spent many school holidays there as a teenager and got to know her sons and my cousins. A few years ago her eldest son, now 60 years old, came to visit me because he and his five brothers and sisters were interested in their mother's history and never knew anything about it. Together, we wondered who we were.

One day, while talking to my Mum's sister, I was told the name of my great grandmother. It was Caroline Bell. Mum's sister thought we might have been Maori because there was some talk of Caroline having 'dark blood' but she knew little else other than that Caroline might have lived in Cowra (New South Wales). I tried contacting libraries and other institutions in Cowra and got nowhere, although one contact suggested I try Boorowa. It was while talking to an archivist at Boorowa that I first heard of Ann Jackson-Nakano's work. The archivist asked: 'Do you think your great grandmother might have been Aboriginal?' I was taken aback. I said I really didn't know. The archivist contacted Ann and Ann contacted me. We talked for hours and then Ann suggested we meet at the Rye Park Methodist Church, near Pudman.

With my family, I drove to Rye Park and met Ann at the cemetery. She had some photographs and showed me one of a handsome Aboriginal woman who looked almost regal. 'This is the woman they called 'Queen Caroline',' Ann said. 'She was Caroline Bell's grandmother and therefore your great-great-great-grandmother.' A shiver went down my spine. Ann then took me over to the cemetery and showed me Queen Caroline's grave. Through her extensive research, Ann was able to give me a complete descent line that led to my grandfather Carl. A few weeks later, Ann arranged for me to join a Pudman reunion organised by our Pudman Elder, Elma Pearsall, who is now 82 years old. We all brought photographs and exclaimed in delight to find each other's relatives featured in them. Elma remembered my great-grandmother, Caroline,

who was named after her own grandmother. She said 'We used to call her Auntie Gissie. She was a lot of fun and always told us stories that made us laugh.'

That day, I stood inside the house where my grandfather Carl was born. I was surrounded by family members who I had never seen before yet looked somehow familiar. It was very emotional. The fact that my immediate ancestors thought it best to deny these wonderful people says a lot about the historical times they lived in. I have a lot to catch up on but now the lid has been lifted on my Aboriginal past. Being aware of my Aboriginal ancestry is a very important and special thing to me. The knowing puts into place many things about myself and allows me to feel more whole, and at peace. Everything in my life now has a meaning: the health problems on Mum's side of the family; why I studied geology (the study of the earth), why I've always liked the company of Aboriginal people and feel at ease when we interact, why I had the urge to learn the didgeridoo when I was about 30, why I love the land and the natural environment and why I enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

Instead of hiding these special things, I can now openly share them with my wife and two young children. This means so much to me because we can now proclaim our Aboriginal connection in public. Perhaps I was not meant to know about my Aboriginality before because I might not have appreciated it. I found out about it at a time when I could cherish it the most. Wherever I am now, I know I am part of a long tradition, a fine family and a place – and that place is Pudman.

Aboriginal Genealogy of Grant Austin

Grant Austin

Mother: Margaret Joy Austin, nee Berwick

Grandfather: Carl Berwick

Great-grandmother: Caroline Berwick, nee Bell

Great-great-grandmother: Lexter Bell, nee Lane

Great-great-great-grandmother: Caroline Lane, nee Chisholm (Pajong group)

Great-great-great-grandfather: Albert Lane ('full descent', Wallabalooa)

Great-great-great-great-grandfather: Andy Lane ('full descent', Wallabalooa)

Great-great-great-great-grandmother: Charlotte (Kitty) Lane ('full descent')

(Provided by Ann Jackson-Nakano, 1997)

Exploring communications services for Indigenous Australian audiences: Abstract

Jilda Simpson

My research looks at how media forms act as cultural tools in Indigenous Australian communications. Questions concerning cultural diversity within Indigenous Australia and the changing roles and forms of communications in Indigenous culture follow an examination of three Indigenous news and information services: *Yundiboo*, a community-based newsletter; the *Koori Mail*, a national newspaper and *Message Stick*, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Indigenous online presence.

These three examples have been used to construct three main conceptual frames within which Indigenous communications have worked, and which they continue to draw upon with the development of new media forms.

Theoretical perspectives on time and space distinctions within media forms, as explored by Innis (1972); the transmission and ritual views of communications as investigated by Carey (1968); and the oral/ literate binary as presented by Ong (1982) have also been applied to examples of Indigenous communications.

Drawing together these concepts leads to the consideration of ways in which a first level of media service can be constructed through new media forms that are effective and relevant to Indigenous Australian audiences.

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Jilda Simpson was granted the 2002 Sally White – Diane Barwick Award by the Board of Aboriginal History. She completed her Bachelor of Arts Honours thesis in November 2002 in the School of Media and Communications, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales.

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Invitation to contribute to an 'Aboriginal historiography' series of articles

In keeping with *Aboriginal History*'s commitment to understanding the historical aspects of the entire inter-disciplinary range of Aboriginal Studies, in subsequent volumes of the journal we propose the publication of a running series of articles on the broad theme of 'Aboriginal historiography'.

Many current and compelling controversies, such as the campaign for recognition of a treaty; Native Title; representations of Indigeneity; or the status of the Stolen Generations have historiographical implications. In recognition of this, the Board of *Aboriginal History* wishes the journal to foster the exploration of the historiography of Aboriginal Studies.

The Editorial Board invites scholars to contribute articles on these themes. A list, which was far from exhaustive, of possible topics for consideration was published in volume 25 (2001) of the journal.

Intending contributors should contact:

Managing Editor (ingereth.macfarlane@anu.edu.au)
or Deputy Editor (ian.willis@ozemail.com.au)

First formal Australian record of a tree kangaroo: Aboriginal, not European

Jeanette Covacevich

The first published account of a tree kangaroo for Australia was by William Hann, leader of an 1872 'northern Expedition' to southern Cape York Peninsula. Tree kangaroos had been reported from New Guinea in 1828 and two species had been described in 1840.¹ However, the further occurrence of the group in northern Australia was not formally recognised by Europeans until Hann's expedition.

William Hann kept very detailed field records; his unpublished diary and two notebooks have been reconstructed² and both an edited version of his diary and an official report of the expedition were published in 1873. ³ There is general agreement between these five accounts.

The Hann expedition is remarkable in many ways. It was dogged by neither heroic or tragic loss of life, nor serious violence towards or from the Aboriginal people whose country it traversed. All participants returned to base in good health, despite some privations. Further, many new discoveries were made: gold, land suitable for grazing, and plants and animals, both fossil and extant. Hann appears to be unusual amongst expedition leaders of his day in recognising and acknowledging, throughout his accounts, the huge contribution made to his successes by the Aboriginal member of his expedition. He singled Jerry out for special praise: 'though all deserve due credit, and my best thanks for that, I would especially refer to the native boy, Jerry, who, unsustained by the same inducements, was faithful and obedient in every difficulty, and staunch in every danger'.⁴

Jerry observed the first tree kangaroo formally recorded in Australia. Hann refers to this on 30 September 1872, in his second notebook, when the expedition was struggling through dense rainforests between the Endeavour and Bloomfield Rivers: 'On our way back Jerry was hunting and saw what he described as a tree kangaroo. He has often spoken of this animal on the journey before'.⁵ An unpublished diary entry for 1 October 1872 reiterates: 'On our way back Jerry saw a new animal which he calls a "kangaroo-lives-in-trees"'.⁶ The tree kangaroo is not mentioned in the official report,⁷ but is well-documented in the published diary entry of 12 October 1872:

Here I may as well mention Jerry told me about an animal found in these scrubs ... He says it is a kangaroo or something like it, and climbs trees, and he was fortunate enough to see one on a day when we were camped among scrubs ... I went

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1. Flannery 1995.
 2. Clarke 1982.
 3. Hann 1873a, b.
 4. Hann 1873b.
 5. Clarke 1982.
 6. Clarke 1982.
 7. Hann 1873b.

the next day with Dr. Tate and Jerry, thinking to see one, but was not fortunate enough in doing so; then Jerry took us to the very tree where he had seen the animal, on the bark of which were two deep scratches, but no other marks by which an animal could assist itself to climb ... To entertain the idea that any kangaroo known to us ... could climb a tree, would be ridiculous; ... but that there is such an animal in these scrubs not known to us, I believe, because I have never found my blackboy to err in his statement or reports; and, more over, he spoke to me about this animal many months previous, when going overland to Melbourne with sheep.⁸

Hann continued with Jerry's observation of the animal's behaviour: 'it chatters ... is very agile in its movements, as it climbs or swings itself among the branches when disappearing'. Bones, possibly from a tree kangaroo, were collected near where Jerry made his observation: 'Some bones were picked up in a native camp near where Jerry had seen his "bunyup", which were collected by Dr Tate; possibly these may throw some light on the mysterious animal found in these scrubs; the bark bearing the two toe marks was also secured'.⁹

That Jerry, the Aboriginal member of the Hann Expedition, made the first recorded sightings of a tree kangaroo in Australia was fully acknowledged by William Hann.¹⁰ However, history has concealed both the name of the man who made the discovery as well as that of the man who first formally reported its presence in Australia. Credit for the discovery of the tree kangaroo has been attributed, instead, to Dr George Tate, 'botanist and naturalist' to the expedition. Tate's role in the discovery of the tree kangaroo in Australia has been lauded by several authors. Cumbrae Stewart erred in detail of the species' Aboriginal name and its date of description, as well as in the name of the species' discoverer: 'Dr Tate was almost certainly the first to observe the bones of the Boongary or Tree Kangaroo, which was only made known to science in 1884'.¹¹ 'Boongarry', *Dendrolagus lumholtzi* Collett, 1884, the other species of tree kangaroo from northeastern Queensland, occurs in rainforest to the south of the Daintree River, which acts as a natural 'barrier' between the two species. 'Viator'¹² repeated Cumbrae Stewart's attribution, as did Pearn: 'Tate discovered the bones of the Tree Kangaroo'.¹³

Jerry's 'kangaroo that lives in trees' was described in the scientific literature 15 years after it had been observed, by the then Director of the Queensland Museum, Charles de Vis.¹⁴ The species, *Dendrolagus bennettianus*, was described from a skin only of a specimen which had died in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens. It had been collected from near the Daintree River, northeastern Queensland, some 80km south of where Jerry first drew the attention of William Hann, and George Tate, to its occurrence.

8. Hann 1873a.

9. Hann 1873b.

10. Hann 1873a, b; Clarke, 1982.

11. Cumbrae Stewart 1914-1919.

12. *Viator* 1934.

13. Pearn 1990.

14. De Vis 1887.

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In keeping with *Aboriginal History*'s commitment to understanding the historical aspects of the entire inter-disciplinary range of Aboriginal Studies, in subsequent volumes of the journal we propose the publication of a running series of articles on the broad theme of 'Aboriginal historiography'.

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Review article

Reality, history and hands-on ethnography: the journals of George Augustus Robinson at Port Phillip 1839–1852

Niel Gunson

The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, edited by Ian D Clark, 6 vols.

Volume one: 1 January 1839–30 September 1840 , Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, pp.ix+378, 2nd ed Clarendon, 2000, pp.xviii+368

Volume two: 1 October 1840–31 August 1841 , Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, pp.viii+393, 2nd ed Clarendon 2000, pp.xvii+390

Volume three: 1 September 1841–31 December 1843 , Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, pp.ix+221, 2nd ed Clarendon 2000, pp.xviii+204

Volume four: 1 January 1844–24 October 1845 , Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, pp.ix+337, 2nd ed Clarendon 2000, pp.xvii+318

Volume five: 25 October 1845–9 June 1849 , Heritage Matters, Clarendon, 2000, pp.viii+336

Volume six: 10 June 1849–30 September 1852 Heritage Matters, Clarendon, 2000, pp.193

At a time when historians and other social scientists appear to be less interested in what really happened in the past and more interested in our present perceptions of what happened, it seems strange that the public at large are craving for real life experiences. While it is deemed not politically correct to dwell on historical facts that may contravene the favoured ideologies and theories, those preoccupied with confrontational experience (even at a distance) are obsessed with detail. Virtual reality in media entertainment is filling a gap exposed by the arbitrary nature of our controlled and selective viewing. Nowhere is this more apparent than within the strictures of historical discourse.

Historians, more than other social scientists, are in the best position to set the record straight, for our main concern should be with primary sources. Of all primary sources, letters and diaries are the most important, providing we know the provenance

of the records and the circumstances in which they were written. Even if we do not understand all the motives of the writer and lack background information, letters and diaries nearly always reveal enough for us to get the measure of the writer.

The journal diary, to use the media metaphor, is the perfect way to experience virtual reality in a controlled time experiment. We read the daily journal entries with a similar expectancy to those who may have read them closer to the time. That we are reading with hindsight is probably irrelevant since the detail is not familiar to us. We are seeing events with the eyes of contemporaries. Our sympathies may not be with the writer even though we are bound to identify with him or her in the short term, disassociating ourselves perhaps on reflection. We shall only quarrel with the big decisions, otherwise being carried along by an almost determinist propulsion.

One of the greatest gifts that one scholar can convey to others is the clean text of what might be termed a hitherto unpublished serial primary source: those magnificent runs of journal diaries and letter journals kept meticulously, particularly by missionaries and travellers, in the Victorian era. Unfortunately the journals that have been published have usually been those of famous people and very often the literary gems and most useful extracts have already appeared in previously published biographies.

Missionaries, and their close kin, the 'protectors of Aborigines', have left extraordinary records, not only of their daily activities but also of their observations on the lives and customs of the people they lived with. Missionary society archives and public libraries contain large collections of such records. Some are obviously more useful than others and those are very often the most extensive runs. While scholars periodically dip into these records they usually know what they are looking for, otherwise balking at closely written text and difficult handwriting.¹

Most of these great collections are crying out for transcription, light editing, and some form of publication. Few scholars can give the time to careful and sustained reading of these journals while in manuscript form. There may be some significance in the fact that often the most detailed journals were kept by diarists with little formal education. Of the early missionaries in the Pacific Islands one of the most prolific diarists in this category was the Wesleyan missionary John Thomas of Tonga, whose unpublished diaries and works of history and mythology run to many volumes.² Similarly, George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, was an equally prolific diarist.

* * *

The manuscript papers of George Augustus Robinson, comprising 72 volumes located in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, constitute one of the most important sources for Aboriginal history and ethnography during the period of pastoral settlement in southeastern Australia. Largely forgotten for more than a hundred years, they were

¹ Clark attributed the illegibility of Robinson's journal to 'a failure to form letters and numerals clearly and the conditions in the field under which the journals were written' (Clark 2000, 1: v).

² The Thomas papers, including 13 private journals and 14 official journals, fill six large archive boxes in the Methodist Missionary Society archives, held in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

nearly lost for ever in 1938 on the death of Robinson's youngest son Arthur in Bath, England, when the timely arrival of estate agents prevented the family housekeeper from destroying the papers.³ Even after their purchase by the Mitchell Library and post-war transferral to Australia in 1948, the papers were largely ignored by scholars, the first real use being made by NJB Plomley in his two monumental volumes covering Robinson's Tasmanian period 1829–1839.⁴

Although from the 1960s onwards some local historians and students of Aboriginal culture dipped into the later volumes, many historians continued to ignore them. While Sir Keith Hancock, or his research assistant, claimed familiarity with the journals in *Discovering Monaro*,⁵ Hancock chose to quote Robinson's 'Report of a journey ... to the tribes of the coast and eastern interior during the year 1844', as edited by George Mackaness,⁶ instead of the originals, and he certainly did not make full use of their potential. Similarly, students of the whaling industry and Ben Boyd have overlooked Robinson. The first substantial use of his diaries was made by Vivienne Rae-Ellis in her biography of Robinson in 1988.

Until 1998 only a few extensive extracts of Robinson's Port Phillip journals had been published, the most significant being by Gary Presland covering the periods January–March 1840, March–May 1841 and May–August 1841 (1977–1980).⁷ For obvious reasons the two excellent volumes on 'Aborigines and Protectors' in Michael Cannon's *Historical records of Victoria* series have very little Robinson material other than what was in the NSW State Archives and the Public Record Office, Victoria.⁸

In 1996 Ian Clark took on the onerous task of transcribing and annotating the Port Phillip journals. The most daunting aspect was the sheer magnitude of the project. This magnificent achievement appeared in two stages: the first four volumes were published in Melbourne in 1998, the remaining two in Ballarat in 2000, all six in large format with yellow card covers. A second edition – more properly a second printing in smaller format with rearranged introductory pages – also appeared in 2000. Scholars should be careful to indicate which edition they are citing for the first four volumes as the pagination does not correspond.⁹

Clark's editorial comments illustrate some of the problems he had and the nature of the manuscript:

Robinson's journals were written mostly in ink, though some pages are in pencil. Generally, transcribing the journals has not been difficult, however some words continue to defy recognition and these instances are shown by [...]. Some pages are water damaged, others have missing segments, thus the narrative for some days is incomplete, and these instances are also shown by [...]. The incomplete-

3. Rae-Ellis 1988: 265.

4. See Plomley 1966 and Plomley 1987.

5. Hancock 1972: 69.

6. Mackaness 1941. The reference given in Hancock 1972: 69 fn.1 is incorrect.

7. These extracts were published in the Records of the Victorian Archaeological Survey series by the Ministry for Conservation, Melbourne.

8. See Cannon 1982 and Cannon 1983.

9. All references cited below are to the 2nd ed.

ness does not diminish the value of the journal as a whole and is little more than a source of irritation.

At times Robinson left blank spaces in his narrative, no doubt intending to return and complete the missing information at a later date; however, he rarely did this, and these instances are represented by [blank].

Robinson's erratic spelling has been allowed to remain, as I have endeavoured to keep editorial changes to a minimum. In the few instances where his spelling does detract the correct word is inserted into the text in square brackets thus, [], for example, when Robinson spells weir as 'were', [weir] is inserted beside it to remove any ambiguity. Robinson rarely punctuated his journal, and at times when adding punctuation it was necessary to add a word or two to remove ambiguity.

Robinson, like many nineteenth century commentators, did not hear Aboriginal languages very well, for example he was deaf to initial 'ng' in Aboriginal words. With few exceptions, Victorian Aboriginal words do not begin with vowels, so when Robinson reproduces words and has them beginning with a vowel, we can be certain he did not hear these words correctly. An example of this is the local name for the eel pots he observed in use in southwest Victoria, which he represented as 'arrabine'; Dawson (1881) more correctly represented them as 'ngarraban', hearing the initial 'ng'.

In his daily entries Robinson employed his own system of abbreviation and shorthand, for example he often represented the word 'native' with 'N-'. Generally, his system of abbreviation has not been retained.¹⁰

The journals themselves are a hotchpotch of entertaining trivia, daily movements and events, character sketches, statistics, detailed observations of Aboriginal life and snippets gleaned from reading such as the self-educated men of the 19th century copied into their 'commonplace books'. Robinson had an eye for a good looking woman and he was fascinated by the names of settlers he encountered such as Teddy the Winkler (who told lies) and Piss Ant Robertson.¹¹ A cast of famous and infamous characters cross the pages: John Pascoe Fawkner, the Henty Brothers, Lieut. Governor La Trobe, Benjamin Boyd, Tahiti Bill, the Imlay brothers, GH Haydon, the Lutheran missionaries at Encounter Bay, and a host of minor characters. Rough black and white sketches illustrating everything from corroboree positions to an image of a 'torodon' or bunyip accompany the entries.¹²

Three regular types of listings recur throughout the diaries: lengthy lists of Aboriginal words and place names, detailed breakdowns of distances travelled, and a census-style listing of all the Aboriginal people encountered recording both Aboriginal and common names with tribal affiliation.

* * *

While it has become customary to judge the Aboriginal Protectorate, like the early Aboriginal missions, as a failure, this is largely the result of a flawed historiography. Just as we should not judge the Protectorate and missions by the criteria for success laid down

¹⁰. Clark 2000, 1: vi–vii.

¹¹. Clark 2000, 4: 276.

¹². Clark 2000, 5: 141. For images see *ibid*: 149, 160.

in the 1830s, so we should also avoid replacing the contextual values of that early period with the ideological values of more recent times. The Protectorate did have positive results. More than anything else it set a humanitarian standard for settler society so that no one could justify acts of oppression as being in the interest of the state. Further, it provided for posterity a great collection of knowledge about the culture and language of the Aboriginal people of southeastern Australia in the contact period.

That the Protectorate was not more effective was partly due to both its personnel and structure. Worthy as the protectors were, in many respects they were not necessarily the best candidates. Both Robinson, the Chief Protector, and Charles Wightman Sievwright (assistant protector) were creatures of patronage: Robinson was fully endorsed by Sir George Arthur for his work in Van Diemen's Land so that his appointment was a forgone conclusion, and Sievwright was literally 'placed' through his aristocratic and military connections. Both men were considered as leadership material but both had serious character flaws and had left England under a cloud.¹³ In fairness to both men, however, they were probably better qualified to stand up for the rights of the people they protected than the three 'missionary' appointments.

The choice of three Wesleyans as the other assistant protectors appears to have been deliberate. Lord Glenelg wrote specifically for recommendations to Dr Jabez Bunting, John Wesley's arch-conservative successor, and his nominees were accepted.¹⁴ Wesleyan missionaries already had a reputation for being less confrontational to government than their Calvinist peers, especially in South Africa and the West Indies, and they were not viewed in the same light as other Dissenters. London Missionary Society missionaries were already in the public eye for stirring: John Smith of Demerara had been sentenced to death for conspiracy during a slave revolt in 1824; John Philip had been found guilty of libel in South Africa in 1829 for exposing the condition of the Hottentots; and Lancelot Threlkeld was a thorn in the side of the New South Wales administration.¹⁵ The three men selected – James Dredge, Edward Stone Parker and William Thomas – proved to be conscientious, but they found their role difficult and frustrating. Also, as Robinson reminded Parker, their 'duty lay with Blacks not Wesleyans'.¹⁶ Dredge, the most conservative of them, early wished he had been a missionary rather than a protector and eventually resigned.¹⁷ Thomas was undoubtedly the best adapted and became the most knowledgeable about the people in his care.

Robinson, who had mostly acted alone in Van Diemen's Land, was not a good leader of men. Obsessed with his own importance, he was undoubtedly one of the models for George Henry Haydon's pompous magistrate 'Robberson'.¹⁸ With much of the insecurity of the upwardly socially mobile he continually played out a game of status testing and rank pulling with those he met. Though he respected Aboriginal people,

13. See Rae-Ellis 1988: 7 and passim; Corris 1968: 91ff; Cannon 1982: 21–23, 33; Cannon 1983: 365, 380–81 and generally.

14. McCallum 1957: 3.

15. Smith's sentence was revoked but he died a 'political martyr' in prison. For Threlkeld see Gunson 1974.

16. Clark 2000, 1: 19.

17. Christie 1979: 95. For Dredge's criticism of his situation see Cannon 1983: 426, 428, 430, 432–33, 711.

18. A character in Haydon's novel *The Australian emigrant*, 1854; see Gunson 1968: 42.

he placed them with servants in his social hierarchy. He believed he was fully in charge, as his bizarre experiments with mesmerism suggested.¹⁹ Among those with better educational qualifications and social standing, but with no authority over him, he tended to be officious and even patronising. With those of similar background, such as the Wesleyan protectors, he was equally overbearing, finding fault at every opportunity. If he was not obsequious to his superiors it was because he saw himself as having become a great man in the colonies, with a marble bust to prove it.²⁰

Both Robinson's journal and the journals of his colleagues display the pettiness and continuous bickering between them. Just how ludicrous the relationships within the 'closed community' of the Protectorate had become is exemplified in the nature of some journal entries. After continually complaining about Robinson, Dredge recorded in his diary on 9 May 1840 that he and Robinson 'lay in the same bed, but in consequence of a monopoly of clothing by my distinguished accomplice, I was cold and uncomfortable'.²¹ Apparently Robinson made the same complaint stating that 'The cloths or covering fell off in the night. It was cold' so on the night of 9 May he 'slept on a stretcher by myself, more congenial to my feelings'.²²

If fellow Protectors were a cause of irritation, Robinson had very little patience for travelling companions who had better social and educational credentials than himself. The talented artist and entrepreneur George Henry Haydon, who travelled into Gippsland with Robinson in 1844, was criticised throughout the journal for being 'lazy' and a 'humbug'. Haydon, for his part, made no secret of his dislike for Robinson and the two men finally parted company.²³

As one would expect, the journals contain a great deal of material relating to the injustices perpetrated against the Aboriginal population. In many of the incidents between shepherds and local tribesmen it is difficult to know what caused the conflict, but Robinson and the other Protectors usually indicate their willingness to believe the Aboriginal accounts, especially if the arguments were over women. In some instances, where the law was obviously preconditioned to the disadvantage of the Aborigines, the Protectors reluctantly had to witness the summary justice administered by the local authorities.²⁴ Dreadful atrocities involving poisoned damper and other cruelties were largely confined to convict shepherds and a particular class of pastoralist untouched by humanitarian values. Surprisingly, the nephews of Robinson's own patron, Governor Arthur, were offenders:

McIntyre [overseer] repeated story of 30 of their men, and Edmund Leeke's, among rest, having connection with two Native women, also that the Arthur's at Mt Shank had taken a Black and chained him to their tent for some time and fed him like a dog. This same man-thing they led in a chain, to shew them the camp of the Natives and they shot eight Natives in their huts, July last. Also, when the sta-

19. Clark 2000, 6: 31ff; Rae-Ellis 1988: 27, 177, 251, 253, 259.

20. Clark 2000, 1: 19; Rae-Ellis 1988: 159.

21. Quoted McCallum 1957: 14-15.

22. Clark 2000, 1: 271, 273.

23. Clark 2000, 4: 38-64; Mackaness 1941/1978: 36-69.

24. See Christie 1979: 110-117 and Clark 2000 generally.

tion was sold to Leek, the man in the chain was delivered to Leek. They gave him large damper and let him go. It is said poison was in the damper.²⁵

Other members of the 'colonial gentry' simply did not wish to recognise that there was an indigenous population. The well known Henty family, for instance, had a reputation for driving the original inhabitants away from their holdings. 'Pretty mean to drive the Natives away from home,' observed Robinson, and he attributed the murder of a white worker on another property to this practice: 'Had the Natives been allowed to have visited the station it would not have happened'.²⁶

The journals also testify to the very many instances of satisfactory relationships and harmonious adjustments. The Imlay brothers at Twofold Bay were justly famed for their employment of Aboriginal seamen in the whaling industry and Aboriginal workers on their pastoral holdings, and they were not alone. Robinson recognised that Aboriginal shepherds were far more satisfactory and less likely to cause trouble than the convict shepherds and recorded in April 1845 that 'two native boys at Fairburn have been, for nine months, shepherding 800 sheep, never lose any'.²⁷ Nor were humanitarian values confined to the Protectors and men of their class. Robinson was impressed to learn that Hamilton Hume of Yass took pride in claiming that 'he never pulled trigger against a Black in his life'²⁸ and that his fellow explorers Charles Sturt and Eyre had also successfully practised kind treatment when faced with apparent threatening behaviour.²⁹

Many of those who spoke with Robinson were pessimistic regarding the survival of the Aboriginal people, anticipating the doctrines of social darwinism. The extreme views of men such as William Hull were that the white races were 'superior' and the order of nature was for them to dominate.³⁰ Others simply accepted the inevitability of hunter-gatherers being eliminated in an unequal struggle for land. Unfortunately two other factors hastened the process: internecine warfare and disease.

Robinson was aware of intertribal fighting in the Port Phillip District, especially the affrays between the Ganai of Gippsland and the Bunurong of Western Port, but it was not until he set out on his remarkable journey to Gippsland and the Monaro that he realised the magnitude of intertribal warfare. On 15 June 1844 he wrote:

Two miles above the crossing place up the stream is the spot where a great slaughter of Gipps Land blacks by the Omeo and the Mokeallumbeets and Tinnermitum, their allies, took place; was shown the spot by ... Charley who was present. Saw the human bones strewd about bleached white. Strange idea occurred to me whilst viewing the scene of the slaughter. I thought it appalling, best forget the whole sale slaughter by Christians.³¹

²⁵. Clark 2000, 4: 265 (29 April 1845).

²⁶. Clark 2000, 4: 257. For Dredge's opinion of the 'barbarity' of 'white gentlemen' see Cannon 1983: 716.

²⁷. Clark 2000, 4: 253. For the Imlays also see Gunson 1974: 69, 167.

²⁸. Clark 2000, 4: 188.

²⁹. Mackaness 1941/1978: 27.

³⁰. Clark 2000, 5: 170.

³¹. Clark 2000, 4: 86.

This was a massacre in which no mercy was shown, all the old women and children being killed. Robinson was to note other feuding parties in his journal.³²

Disease, for its part, was everywhere apparent, especially the venereal. Robinson made numerous entries relating to deaths due to 'Syphilitic and other European Disease'.³³ He was witness to two cases of robust men dying from the effect of rotting penises in the Twofold Bay area.³⁴ In his 1844 Report he wrote:

As a People the Aborigines are rapidly on the decay. They are greatly reduced. They are but Remnant Tribes. Sections are extinct. Their diminution is attributable to several Causes. In their petty feuds and intestine strifes several have been sacrificed but hundreds have fallen victims to the dire effects of European disease. Variola or Small Pox often of a confluent description, Influenza, Febris and Syphilis have extended their baneful influences to the remotest parts of the Interior. The latter is now almost general throughout the Land.

Ophthalmia in some parts is Indemic. Cutaneous effection is peculiar to the Natives and prevalent. Temperance was steadily progressing among the Peasantry and other labouring Classes and but few Cases of Intemperance came under observation. In some places the Spirit dealer had declined taking out Licenses and several houses had been vacated.

Hancock was of the opinion that Monaro was a special case, that 'no evidence at all of physical conflict can be found, either in the diaries and letters of pioneers, or in official records. Monaro, we are bound to conclude, was an exception proving the rule [regarding frontier conflict]'.³⁵ Disease had effectively decimated the Aboriginal population so that it posed no threat. But while it may be salutary to reflect that Monaro had such a violence-free record, it is unlikely that it differed all that much from other remoter areas. Even Hancock admits the grave of a man 'speared by the blacks'³⁶ and as Robinson himself reflected on a 'Black shot by a shepherd' claiming self-defence: 'Who can tell, dead men tell no tales'.³⁷

* * *

Ian Clark has presented his material in a straightforward and objective scientific way. In the standard introduction to each volume he summarises its coverage, explains his editorial methods, and gives a brief résumé of Robinson's career, official headquarters, clerical assistants and private residences. His decision to confine notes largely to identifying people and places and to avoid an interpretative gloss was undoubtedly a wise one given the length of the text and the purpose of the project was to provide a source book. In volume five the text is supplemented by extracts from Robinson's 1846 Report.

Clark's notes are extremely valuable given the obscurity of some of the people and the changing nature of locations. Because of the large number of identifications there are bound to be one or two that are incorrect; one that leaps out of the page is 'Dr Lang'

³². Clark 2000, 4: 39, 180.

³³. See his 1844 Report quoted below; Mackaness 1941/1978: 33.

³⁴. Clark 2000, 4: 154, 157.

³⁵. Hancock 1972: 68.

³⁶. Hancock 1972: 68 fn.

³⁷. Clark 2000, 4: 253.

identified as Dr Thomas Lang.³⁸ As the entry for 13 February 1840 tells us that this Dr Lang went to England with Captain Hepburn and 'wrote his NSW on board', it is quite clearly the celebrated John Dunmore Lang who went to England in the brig *Alice* with Captain Hepburn in 1833 and wrote the whole of his *History of New South Wales* on board, published in two volumes on his arrival in London.³⁹ Despite this, most of the run holders, colonial officials, property names and Aboriginal locations are carefully identified in Clark's notes, though regional specialists may quibble over some of them.

While Clark has had such works as Billis and Kenyon's *Pastoral pioneers of Port Phillip*⁴⁰ and the *Australian dictionary of Biography* to rely on, this may have restricted his vision as he tends not to realise that some characters belong to the larger vista of Robinson's 'commonplace book' entries. Thus Clark fails to identify the Irish revolutionary Lord Edward Fitzgerald and his wife Lady Pamela;⁴¹ and confuses the Astronomer Royal, Sir John Herschel, and the philosopher Sir William Hamilton. Similarly he misses the significance of the Irish patriot Smith O'Brien.⁴² Robinson's reference to 'Countess Huntindon' was to a church, not a person and refers to a family, possibly the Arnolds, first joining the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, and then the Baptists, a natural theological progression.⁴³ Clark is also vague in referring to Missionary societies. Thus Dr Bunting was not of the *Church* Missionary Society but of the Wesleyan Methodist,⁴⁴ and the Mr Smith mentioned in 1852 probably belonged to the Colonial Missionary Society.⁴⁵

At first sight, the critical reader will probably wonder why Clark, an acknowledged authority on tribal lands and languages, has not included an account of these matters in his introduction. The specialist, however, will realise at once that this is a source book to be read in conjunction with other source books, notably Clark's own *Aboriginal languages and clans: an historical atlas of western and central Victoria, 1800-1900* and Sue Wesson's *An historical atlas of the Aborigines of eastern Victoria and far south-eastern New South Wales*. Both these volumes are invaluable in supplying detailed historical references for all Aboriginal groupings and descent groups in the region covered by the volumes. Nevertheless, Clark's introduction would have been improved by a brief coverage of the subject and a map similar to the one provided by Wesson⁴⁶ showing Robinson's itinerations (see Map 1).

My own quibbles concern the Gippsland and Western Port areas which I know best. In old South Gippsland I believe there were two 'tribal' extinctions leading to a

³⁸. Clark 2000, 1: 160.

³⁹. Gilchrist 1951: 188. Lang was one of the first advocates for a Protectorate. See his letter to T.F. Buxton, 10 June 1834. Select Committee 1836/1966: 683.

⁴⁰. Billis and Kenyon 1974, though highly valuable, would benefit from a more detailed use of the Lands Department records.

⁴¹. Clark 2000, 6: 62, 167.

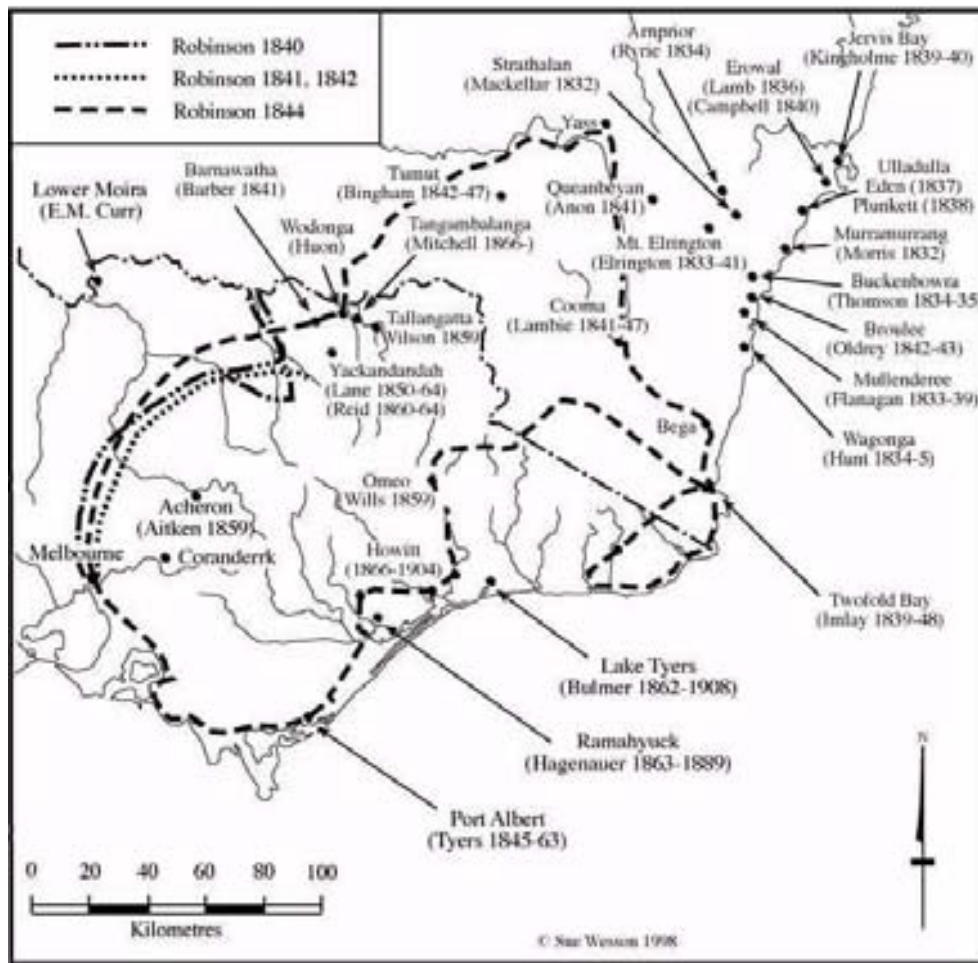
⁴². Clark 2000, 6: 77, 169; Clark 2000, 5: 255, 310.

⁴³. Clark 2000, 6: 58, 171.

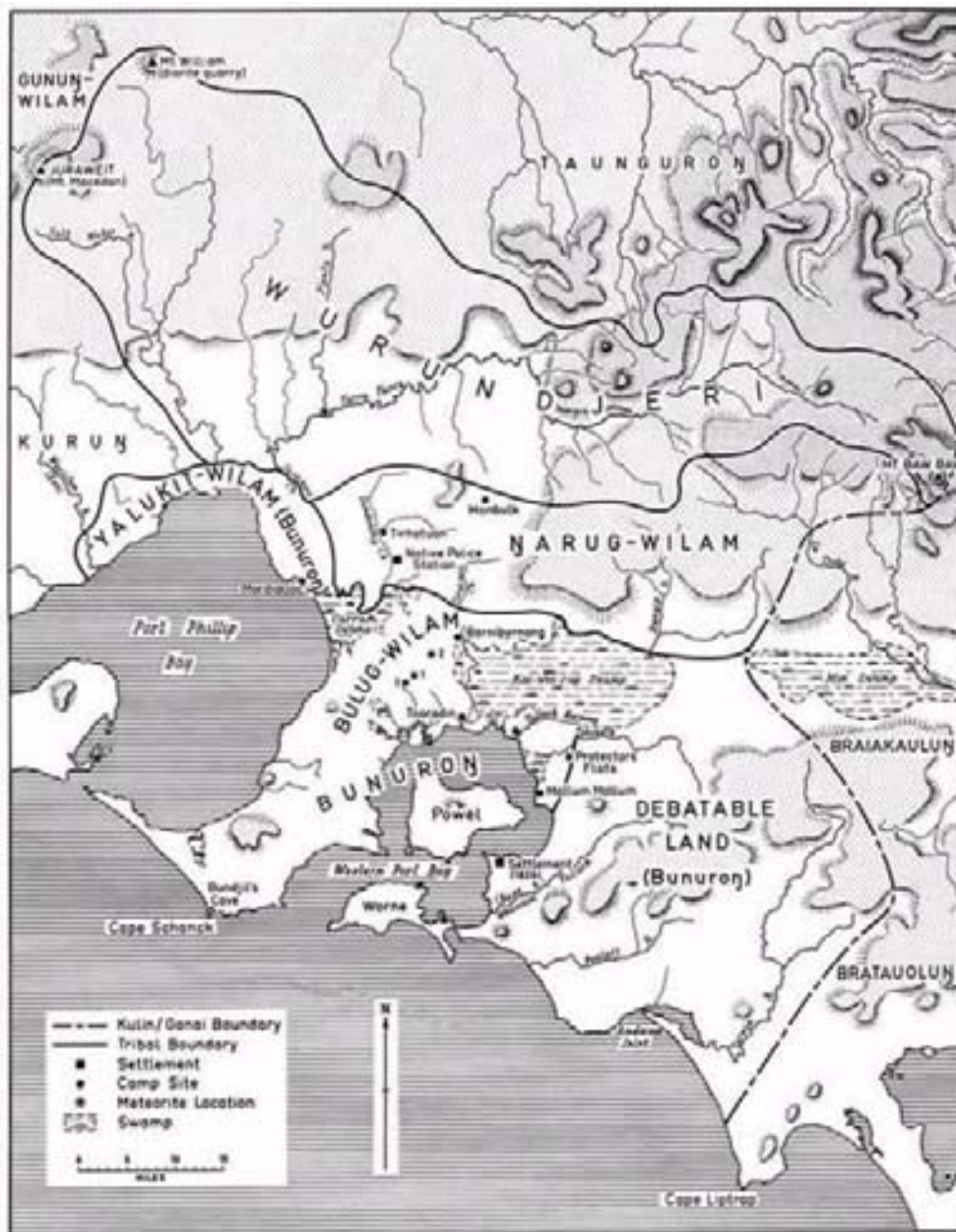
⁴⁴. Clark 2000, 5: 269.

⁴⁵. Clark 2000, 6: 59, 185.

⁴⁶. Wesson 2000: 4. I am grateful to Sue Wesson for allowing me to reproduce her map; other maps of Robinson's 1844 journey are given in Mackaness 1941/1978: 35 and Rae-Ellis 1988: 235.



Map 1: Drawn by Gary Swinton for Sue Wesson, *An historical atlas*, showing Robinson's routes in Port Phillip and Monaro.



Map 2: drawn by Keith Mitchell for Niel Gunson, *The good country*, showing Aboriginal tribal boundaries.

large tract of country being labelled the debatable land (see Map 2).⁴⁷ The first extinction, as attested by William Thomas, George Langhorne, and local reminiscences, took place before pastoral and agricultural settlement and virtually eliminated the people originally occupying the coast between the Yallock⁴⁸ and Bass rivers. The cause was undoubtedly the settlement of Bass Strait sealers and runaway convicts from the early 1800s onwards at Mallum Mallum (Red Bluff) and Corinella or Settlement Point. These men forcibly took the local women and engaged in local skirmishes. Disease possibly helped in the decimation and the short-lived convict settlement in 1826–28 at Corinella probably hastened the progress. The land was now open to the Bunurong of the Mornington Peninsula and Cranbourne on one side and the people between the Bass and the Tarwin on the other, and this may well have been the real reason for the extensive fighting that took place between the two groups in the historic period.

It is probably significant that when JT Gellibrand's party landed sheep on the eastern side of Western Port Bay in 1836 there were no signs of Aboriginal occupation, whereas on the western side (Mornington Peninsula) there were many signs of occupation including a 'deserted village' of 100 'native huts'.⁴⁹

The second extinction, or 'succession' as Wesson calls it, took place much later and was caused by internecine fighting between the Bunurong inhabitants of the Tarwin river area and the neighbouring Ganai/Kurnai or Gippsland tribe in which the Bunurong were eventually eliminated.⁵⁰

The true 'successors' in the debatable land were probably the Tasmanians. Several of them were sent to recover the sheep lost at Western Port in 1836.⁵¹ By 1841 some of them were seeing it as a territory to make their own and a base to resist white oppression. Their leader 'Napoleon' claimed that 'they had unlimited bush to roam over at their will'.⁵² Their initial raids were made in the company of coastal Bunurong, but in the debatable land the five Tasmanian raiders worked alone. The murder of two whalers at Cape Patterson in 1841 eventually led to their capture and punishment. Robinson's account⁵³ is brief compared to that of the other participants, especially Thomas and Ensing Rawson,⁵⁴ no doubt due to his bitter disappointment in his charges and the unfortunate message that the alleged 'failure' of 'civilized' Aborigines conveyed to the settlers.

Apart from numerous visits to Narre Warren in the early years of the Protectorate, Robinson made very few visits to Western Port, the most detailed being the preliminary stages of the excursion to Gippsland and Monaro from 13 April to 20 October 1844. A few of Clark's identifications in the area are questionable. Robert Jamieson's station was

47. Gunson 1968: 15.

48. The exact border is unclear due to the confusion between Yallock and Tobin Yallock (Torbinurruck). There were certainly Bunurong living between these two rivers in historic times, perhaps temporary custodians. There were swamps either side.

49. Gellibrand 1986: 69. This account was first published in *Transactions of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria*, 3, 1859: 63–85.

50. For discussion see Clark 1990: 369; Wesson 2000: 10, 18–19. See also Dixon and Blake 1991: 48.

51. Gellibrand 1986.

52. William Thomas, quoted Christie 1979: 59.

53. Clark 2000, 3: 13–14.

54. See Gunson 1968: 45–46.

at Yallock, not Torbinurruck (Tobin Yallock): these locations were on two different rivers, the present Yallock creek and the Lang Lang River.⁵⁵ The Mallum Mallum run went to the mouth of the Lang Lang River but Mundy's residence was at the Red Bluff.⁵⁶

As one reads these extraordinary volumes one cannot fail to be impressed by the richness of the material and its eyewitness effect on our understanding of events. Clark has done us a great service by making the experience available to a wider and more sympathetic readership. Because the task was so great, one is aware that when Clark came to complete the last two volumes there is a general improvement in his notes on Robinson's contemporaries and his presentation of the material. One hopes that he or another scholar will select what is best in the six volumes and condense them into a tightly disciplined text, a single volume aimed at an even wider readership.

The three epigraphs prefacing the last volume might well have prefaced the whole series, though they can be read as an epitaph, especially Robinson's thoughts on the Protectorate and what might have been. The other two are worth recording as a tribute both to his sensitivity and his grasp of reality:

The natives should be treated [as] men, they work as men and they should be treated same as men, a fair day's wage for a fair day's labor but this is never accorded them. It is thought that if they get food it is enough for blacks. The natives have a feeling that they are men and they evince that [they are] higher beings. The settlers all abuse them, men great scoundrels &c.

George Augustus Robinson Journal – 28 January 1850

The Aborigines have ideas of property in land. Every tribe has its own distinct boundaries [which] are well known and defended. All the wild ducks are considered as much the property of the tribe's inhabitants or ranging on its whole extent as the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle that have been introduced into the country by adventurous Europeans.

George Augustus Robinson undated jotting.

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Book reviews

Mission Girls: Aboriginal women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900–1950, by Christine Choo, 350 pp, University of Western Australia Press, 2001, ISBN 1 876268 55 7 pbk \$38.95.

Christine Choo's exploration of the lives of Aboriginal women in Catholic missions in the Kimberleys between 1900 and 1950 is an important contribution to historical analyses of Kimberley missions in this colonial period. It was short-listed for the 2002 Australian Historical Association W.K. Hancock Prize, the non-fiction category of the 2001 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards and the Christina Smith Award of the National Community History Awards.

Choo approaches her topic by focusing on the Pallottine missions at Beagle Bay and Broome in the West Kimberley and the Benedictine mission at Kalumburu (formerly Pago or Drysdale River Mission) in the east Kimberley. Choo has drawn extensively on archival and historical documents and has used these in conjunction with narratives from oral interviews with a number of women who grew up at these missions to create an impressively researched work. Choo is at pains throughout to reveal the ways in which Aboriginal women exerted their agency and employed strategies of resistance amidst a period of profound acculturation. Insofar as Choo discusses not just the 'structures, processes and institutional apparatuses ... including the legislation, the bureaucracy ... and the Church' (p xvii), but also changing economic conditions in the Kimberleys as the region became settled by Europeans and others, this work provides a well-balanced exploration of these issues. In relation to the latter, particularly poignant is her description on pages 273–4 of the poor health of Aborigines who had not come into the missions in the Wyndham district towards the end of World War II.

Choo argues in her introduction that Aboriginal women have been largely ignored and made invisible in accounts of the development of the north-west. This work goes a large way towards rectifying this. Choo treats her material thematically, and thus, after she has laid some foundations about the 'Kimberleys and its people' and 'Catholic missions in the Kimberley', the chapters deal with different aspects of Aboriginal women's experience of these missions. In Chapter Three Choo discusses Aboriginal women on the pearling coast, mainly concentrating on Beagle Bay mission. Similarly, Chapter Four deals mainly with Beagle Bay in its discussions of 'homes for wayward women'. Chapter Five focuses on the removal of 'half-caste' children from their mothers, and the government policy and legislation underpinning this, particularly relevant in this era of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generations and more recently, the release of the movie 'Rabbit Proof Fence'. In Chapter Six Choo discusses

the failed first and only attempt to establish an Order of Indigenous nuns. I found this chapter particularly valuable, for as Choo herself says, a conspiracy of silence has tended to surround this endeavour, both from the Church and among the women themselves who joined the Order. In Chapter Seven Choo discusses mission marriage with respect to Kalumburu /Pago, and the disjunction between what constituted right-way marriage for Aboriginal people versus the missionaries' attempts to break down this aspect of tradition. In Chapter Eight Choo discusses the war, and the impact upon Aboriginal people by virtue of the internment of German Pallottine priests, the stationing of American troops in their country, and the bombing of Drysdale River Mission.

Despite my overall commendation of the book, there are some things within Choo's work with which I wish to take issue. On a sheerly stylistic level, Choo italicises the words *native*, *full-blood*, *half-caste*, *white*, *coloured*, *indigent* and so on throughout the text. These are words derived from historical and archival texts, and their italicisation is meant to draw attention to 'the implicit and explicit racism of the naming group' (pxx). For me, as a reader, the effect of their italicisation throughout was to reinforce these words, rather than to critique them by diminishing them as any kind of salient descriptors. In my view, Choo's intention would have been better served using a different stylistic device, perhaps by placing such words in inverted commas. This was particularly the case given that Aboriginal English words – *wrong*, *straight*, *skin*, *promise*, as well as Aboriginal words such as *ramba*, *pelmanga* and so forth – are also italicised. The kind of attention Choo wishes to draw to Aboriginal words such as these is surely different from that which she wishes to draw to the other terms she italicises. The italicisation of both does not serve them well, serving to problematise the former but, if taken consistently, also the latter.

Secondly, I found it peculiar that Choo could devote so much time to the mission at Beagle Bay, with scarcely a mention of Lombadina mission (which does not even merit an index entry). Beagle Bay and Lombadina were both run by Pallottines, although initially founded by Trappists, and Lombadina was originally established as an outpost of Beagle Bay. Elsewhere Choo comments on, and makes a case for, the 'close connections' between Beagle Bay and Drysdale River mission (p 83). She fails, however, to comment on the close relationship between Beagle Bay and Lombadina. Given the movement and links (certainly contemporarily, but also during the era that Choo describes) between people at Lombadina (and, today, the adjoining Djarindjin community) and those at Beagle Bay, this omission seemed glaring. Among the six postulant Aboriginal nuns at Beagle Bay that Choo discusses in Chapter Six, for example, at least one came from Lombadina. In addition, many Lombadina couples were married at the mission at Beagle Bay. There are also important differences between these two missions; children were not brought to Lombadina from elsewhere in the Kimberleys in significant numbers as they were to Beagle Bay. The differences in such practices between these two closely-related and closely-situated missions are notable (and have distinct contemporary ramifications in these communities) and in my view are worthy of some comment in a work of this kind.

Despite these criticisms Choo's is an impressive work and should be welcomed by all who are interested in the history of north-west Australia, as well as those who are interested in Aboriginal affairs in Australia generally. One of the book's overall offerings to readers is its specific focus on Aboriginal women along with its addressing of

complex questions as to how the conditions and experiences of Aboriginal people in the past, and their reactions to these, continue to shape their experiences of the present.

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It's not the money it's the land: Aboriginal stockmen and the equal wages case by Bill Bunbury, 192pp, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002. \$24.95.

This very readable book is based on the Radio National Hindsight series broadcast in 2000. It tells us a story of the failure of settlers' 'good intentions' towards Aboriginal people.

The storyline is quite simple and probably well-known: in many parts of northern Australia Aboriginal stock workers had been underpaid and exploited by colonial pastoralism since the late nineteenth century. When equal wages were finally awarded to Aboriginal workers in 1965, most Aboriginal people – not only workers but also their families – were forced to leave the stations (ie their countries) and live in townships with the new social problems of boredom, unemployment and alcohol, instead of enjoying racial and economic equality. Taking an overview of the history of the pastoral frontier as well as carefully examining the sequence of events leading to the introduction of the Equal Wages Case, Bill Bunbury explores the questions of 'how' and 'why' this happened, drawing on the views of professional historians, Aboriginal ex-stock workers, unionists, and many other witnesses of the event. I acknowledge Bunbury's challenging task of not only documenting the sequence of events but also locating the story in the wider map of 'assimilation' in order to learn from past mistakes. As Bunbury states, 'the equal wages story is strongly tied to issues like 'Native Title', 'welfare dependence', 'the Stolen Generations' and, both then and now, to the doctrine of 'assimilation'' (p 70).

In terms of giving an overall picture of the Aboriginal history of pastoral Australia, Bunbury's framework is mostly provided by some prominent historians such as Geoffrey Bolton, Ann McGrath and Gillian Cowlishaw: while Aboriginal people in the pastoral frontier were the victims of racism and undoubtedly exploited by the settlers, their feudalistic race relation with pastoralists was based on mutual compromise, and 'both parties informally negotiated a new arrangement' (p 23). This view has been widely accepted since the 1980s and has the advantage of emphasising how disastrous the later introduction of the Equal Wages Case was. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this view contains a serious contradiction: how could racism and exploitation coexist with acknowledgement of 'mutual interdependence' (p 12)? It should be noted that Aboriginal oral histories in most publications rarely state that their relationship with pastoralists was 'mutual', not to mention 'equal' or 'interdependent'. In many cases this view of 'mutual

interdependence' is deduced by professional historians from Aboriginal oral evidence about how it was a 'good life' living in the cattle countries. However, it is important to listen to what Aboriginal people are literally saying; they are not always acknowledging the mutual 'race relations', but are often simply stating their affection for the 'stockworking life with cattle in their countries'. In other words, it was not the settlers' treatment of Aboriginal people but their relationship with cattle and country that Aboriginal people managed to negotiate and compromise (Hokari 2001). Therefore, although Bunbury's picture of the overall history of the pastoral frontier does reflect a standard view among the historians today, I do not necessarily agree with it.

When discussing the sequence of events preceding the introduction of equal wages, Bunbury gives us much insight into the failure of assimilation theory and policy. It is hard to disagree that the introduction of equal wages was ethically unavoidable. Nonetheless, settlers' 'good intentions', based on the idea that 'Aboriginal people should have the same rights as other Australians', clearly failed. When equal wages were finally awarded to the Aboriginal workers, pastoralists refused (or could not afford) to pay all the workers they had previously employed. Other than a few skilled workers, station owners kicked most of the Aboriginal population out from 'their properties'. The well-intentioned Equal Wages Case resulted in the exile of Aboriginal population from their countries to the townships. Aboriginal people not only lost their jobs but also their access to ancestral land. Even though the latter part of this book describes some efforts to return their countries, such as the outstation movement and Aboriginal-owned station management, Bunbury is careful to emphasise that the impact of the event was so strong that there is still a long way to go to full recovery.

A key factor for understanding this failure is, according to Bunbury, the 'lack of communication'. If Aboriginal people had been informed of the expected sequence of the Equal Wages Case and had the opportunity to express their desires about the future, the shape and the effect of the Case would have been different. It is shocking to learn that the Case was discussed, prepared and introduced without any consultation with the Aboriginal workers. Even Dexter Daniels, one of the few Aboriginal unionists in Darwin, was not called to appear before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (p 98). Hal Wootten, Junior Counsel in the Equal Wages Case, gives his observations when they visited cattle stations:

On one side the rest of the Aboriginal community silent, uncommunicative, not making a sound, and on the other side all the white fellows in the case, the union representatives, the judges, the Commonwealth representatives, the pastoralists and absolutely no interaction or communication between the two groups. (p 95)

In my view, such a failure of communication was probably grounded in what Ghassan Hage calls the 'White Nation Fantasy': it is a disposition that both 'evil' and 'good' whitefellas tend to imagine Australia as a place for white governance (Hage 1998). In this sense the 'lack of communication' was not the dead past of assimilation policy, but is still alive today both in the 'evil' One Nation movement and in 'good' multiculturalism, and possibly even in the idea of 'self-determination'. The 'well-intentioned' idea that 'we should give Aboriginal people the same rights as us' or 'we should consider Aboriginal rights in our policy making' tacitly presumes white Australians are the governors of all Australians. Therefore, I believe Bunbury's message of learning

from the 'failure of communication' is of fundamental importance for shifting the question from 'is it a good intention?' to 'whose intention is it?'

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Papunya Tula: genesis and genius, edited by Hannah Fink and Hetti Perkins, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 2000, 319pp. ISBN 0734763069 (pbk.) 0734763107 (Hbk), \$50.00.

The story of how people at Papunya began painting in 1970 has been told many times in books, articles and exhibition catalogues, notably by Geoff Bardon, the art teacher who started it all. The essays published in this lavishly illustrated catalogue of the retrospective exhibition in 2000 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales add some depth to earlier accounts and bring the story up to date. Several of the contributors provide overviews of the painting movement from different perspectives: the editors outline the various styles and practices characteristic of the work of individual artists and of successive periods; Vivien Johnson's 'brief history' focuses on the intentions of the artists and on the strategies and tactics of those engaged to manage the painting company as 'advisers', 'coordinators' and 'field officers'; and Fred Myers discusses the processes by which the market for the paintings was developed. Paul Carter provides 'a critical account of the movement's beginnings' in 1971 and 1972, and Bardon himself reflects on his interactions with the artists at that time.

The contributions of several others who have been directly involved in supporting the Papunya Tula painters and organising the exhibition and marketing of their work in the past 30 years present a variety of views and viewpoints. Dick Kimber writes of his close association with Papunya Tula in the 1970s and beyond, and John Kean describes his experiences as an 'art adviser', visiting outstations in the late 1970s. Hetti Perkins interviewed Daphne Williams and tells the story of Williams' 'shrewd and steady stewardship of the company' in the twenty years since she started as a field officer in 1981. Marcia Langton contributes a discussion of the relationship of the painting to landscape and the 'sacredness of place' and Kimber offers a sampling of the dreaming stories of the Western Desert region. Splendid photographs of the artists and others - at work or posing for the camera, in their country or visiting foreign parts - are scattered through the text.

In addition to these articles, the editors provide a list of the paintings shown in the exhibition and reproduced in the book (149 by my count) with expanded accounts of the 'stories' of many of them, and biographical notes on the 49 artists represented, ten of whom are women. A lengthy chronology at the end of the volume, as well as listing

most, if not all, the important exhibitions of Papunya Tula paintings, provides additional information about the history of the community. A map shows the (approximate) location of most of the places mentioned in the text. The book has a select bibliography, including a list of exhibition catalogues, a short glossary of Aboriginal words used, notes on the contributors, and a useful index.

A certain amount of duplication and overlap is inescapable in a collection of essays like this, but the general effect is to enrich the story. Bardon's own accounts, for example, have presented him as working in an 'assimilationist' bureaucratic environment which was hostile to his efforts to encourage the use of traditional motifs, but Kimber and Carter record that the relevant Welfare Branch staff – the school principal, the settlement superintendent, and the district welfare officer – were interested and helpful supporters of the painting project in its early years. Both Kimber and Myers also stress the importance of the support that Bob Edwards at the Aboriginal Arts Board and other agencies, including the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, were able to provide in the early years.

These essays, like earlier accounts of the movement, are not altogether free of historical errors. Twice (in the articles by Johnson and by Carter) it is stated that 'two hundred' western Pintupi came to Papunya between 1963 and 1966 (the total was 115) and Johnson perpetuates the furphy that 'close to half' of those immigrants 'died within a year'. Johnson also writes of 'the prospect of physical extinction raised by the alarming death rates of the early 1960s', but this was not a prospect that could ever have disturbed anyone at Papunya, where births exceeded deaths every year and the natural increase in the two decades from 1950 to 1969 added 400 to Papunya's population. It is also misleading to suggest, as Johnson does, that the Papunya population was substantially increased as a result of 'stockmen from cattle stations across the region' being sacked. A handful of men who had come to Haasts Bluff/Papunya long before 1968 became key figures in the painting movement, but they had come to find wives. The demographic facts were that males outnumbered females in the station communities – a sure indicator of a declining population – while the reverse applied in the growing and youthful population on the reserve. Paul Carter is also guilty of two howlers when he writes of 'Citizenship rights, granted as a result of the 1967 Referendum' and of 'The Office of Aboriginal Affairs, belatedly set up four years after the Referendum': it was announced within four months and was up and running within nine months.

None of the contributors to this volume throw much light on why men at Papunya were ready to respond as they did to Bardon's tentative efforts to encourage young and old to draw and paint using the kind of images that they used in their ritual body painting and ground painting. Writers mention that Papunya people were familiar with the art and craftwork done at Hermannsburg, and refer in particular to the watercolour painters and to Albert Namatjira's period of detention at Papunya in 1959. But this work was in non-traditional styles and had not inspired imitation at Haasts Bluff/Papunya, although some of the Anmatjerre men from cattle stations to the north were selling carved and decorated wooden objects. A small clandestine trade had also been carried on for years in engraved stone and wood objects, usually offered for sale carefully wrapped in cloth. Yet in 1971 Papunya men decided to show the world their culture and, as Myers writes here, the 'painters have had a consistent view of their

work from the beginning – as “giving” (yunginpa) or “showing” (yuntininpa) their dreamings, as something “dear” (of ultimate and inestimable indigenous value)‘.

The Papunya Tula painting movement has commonly been seen as an assertion of traditional culture and beliefs in response to the ‘pressures’ of assimilation policy. That policy was clearly one essential element in the combination of circumstances that produced the painting movement. The Papunya school was the place where it started, and the building and staffing of this first school in the Haasts Bluff reserve was a result of Paul Hasluck’s success in persuading his Commonwealth government colleagues to provide greatly increased funding for his ‘positive policy’. But Papunya was by no means the most likely community in Central Australia to give birth to an ‘art movement’ and then to be criticised by people in neighbouring communities for the indiscreet and improper revelation of secret-sacred designs. In contrast to the confident and outgoing Warlpiri at Yuendumu to the north who cheerfully tolerated and indeed welcomed the presence of appropriate white people at their most important ceremonies, the men at Haasts Bluff/Papunya had kept their ceremonies to themselves, and for very good reason. Their early contacts had been for the most part with missionaries and evangelists from Hermannsburg where the performance of initiation and other significant rituals had long been banned. One of the first things they learnt was that these white people, who were providing rations and other aid, wanted them to give up their most important ceremonies and adopt the Christian religion. Many people at Haasts Bluff and later Papunya made only desultory appearances at church services and prayer meetings, but it was both prudent and polite to have adopted, as they did, a policy of concealing their ceremonies from whites. This awareness of white (missionary) disapproval of the ritual life central to their culture had been instilled decades before the assimilation policy had any impact on their lives.

Other influences were at work and by 1971 the times were indeed changing. Australians were becoming reconciled to the end of the ‘White Australia’ policy. Governments through the 1960s had been stressing that ‘assimilation’ did not mean Aboriginal people ‘should lose their racial identity, or lose contact with their arts, their crafts, and their philosophy’. The marketing of Arnhem land bark paintings had been promoted and dance performances were sponsored, all in the cause of promoting a positive view of Aboriginal people, overcoming prejudice, and winning public support for the idea of their becoming part of the Australian community. The church missions were also changing their approaches, adopting a less negative view of indigenous beliefs, and the Lutheran missionaries were not immune to these influences.

The chronology in this book lists two events that might well have helped to change the perceptions of men at Papunya about how white people regarded their cultural traditions, the first in the winter of 1969:

May-June A party of over thirty Pintupi men from Papunya and Waruwiya outstation return to Yumari, an important site in the country of Uta Uta Tjangala, to perform rituals for filming by AIAS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies). (p304)

It did not prove unduly difficult to persuade senior Pintupi men to allow their rituals to be filmed: the Institute film unit had already made films with the Warlpiri at sites well-known to the Pintupi; for some of the senior men it provided their first (and last) chance to revisit their country since they had left ten or more years earlier; and

conditions were agreed upon including restrictions on the viewing of the films. In addition to the cost of hiring a tourist bus to transport the party some 400km to the west, providing food and water for a week, and meeting all the incidental costs of the expedition, the Institute paid a substantial sum of money for the privilege of making the film record. The chronology records that a similar exercise was conducted the following May and June, the year before Bardon arrived at Papunya, taking another bus to perform at a cave site, Yaru Yaru, farther west in Western Australia, and farther off the road. These two expeditions would have been impressive demonstrations – both for the Pintupi involved and for others at Papunya – that government and important white people were seriously interested in and valued the rituals and songs of their country. This would have been something of a revelation, although encounters with pastoralists and with officials would have revealed that not all whites were actively hostile to their beliefs and rituals. A third expedition was made in August 1972 to film rituals at Mitukatjiri, a site to the south and east of the Kintore Range, which, like the sites of the other films, has featured in many of the paintings. It is not difficult to find paintings made in 1971 and 1972 and reproduced in this book which seem likely to have been directly prompted by these visits. The ‘giving’ and the ‘showing’ of the ceremonies the men performed at these places was certainly done in the same spirit that the paintings have been offered to the world in the following thirty years.

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Rethinking Indigenous education: culturalism, colonialism and the politics of knowing, by Cathryn McConaghy, PostPressed, Queensland, 2000, 312p. ISBN 1876682027 (Pbk).

Although addressed to those who practice and theorise Indigenous education, Cathryn McConaghy’s critique of ‘culturalism’ should stimulate any historian of race relations, colonisation or Indigenous resistance – that is, just about any reader of or writer for *Aboriginal History*. However *Rethinking Indigenous education* is not as accessible as it should be. Editing would have slimmed it down and eliminated minor lapses of wording. This writer has not thought much about how best to engage her readers, perhaps a by-product of a certain political righteousness and of confidence in her own critical apparatus.

McConaghy’s critiquing strategy is to describe in abstract terms the objects of her critique – varieties of what she calls ‘culturalism’ – and then to refer to instances of this or that ‘culturalism’ in the literature (mainly education studies) on Australian Indigenous people. These instances could have been subject to close reading, with plenty of quotation, but they are not. Rather than showing the reader what is problematic about the ‘culturalism’ of a particular book or paper, McConaghy merely tells the reader what, in her view, makes it an instance of that regrettable intellectual tendency. We have to trust her paraphrases of these errant texts, since she has afforded us very little quotation that would allow a reader to interrogate the author’s reading.

Of course, I noticed this particularly when my own work came under scrutiny. I question some of her summations of my views; for example, she finds that in my PhD thesis¹, cited extensively in chapter five, I attributed to the Northern Territory system of 'welfare colonialism' an intention to 'denigrate and control' Indigenous people. To attribute such an intention, she points out, is an instance of 'culturalism', for it reduces 'whites' to an essential characteristic subjectivity. A fair reading of my thesis would find it guilty of no such reduction. One of the themes of the thesis is the different ways that pastoralist employers and Welfare Branch officials considered and enacted their relationships with Aboriginal people under the policy of 'assimilation'. The theoretical framework underpinning the argument displaces and disunifies colonial intentionality, by drawing attention to the variously institutionalised logic of a certain colonial structure - the rationing relationship.

If I find McConaghy an unreliable reader of my own work, I am nonetheless arrested by the encompassing scope of her critique of 'culturalism'. What does McConaghy mean by 'culturalism'? 'Culturalism' is the presumption that the most important feature of a situation is the cultural differences among that situation's protagonists. Typically, 'culturalism' perceives subjectivity as determined by the characteristics of the 'culture' to which the individual subject is thought (by the observer) to belong. It explains relationships between subjects in terms given by observers' accounts of the 'culture' to which the subjects belong. It accounts for behaviour in the same terms as it describes 'identity'. 'Culturalism' is essentialist (that is, 'cultures' go on having the same qualities that each has always had, and all 'members' of that culture have those qualities). The characteristic grammar of 'culturalism' is binary. That is, 'Aboriginal' makes sense in distinction to 'non-Aboriginal', 'traditional' in distinction to 'urban', and so on.

McConaghy finds that 'culturalism' pervades the ways that intellectuals, officials and Indigenous activists (three overlapping categories of actor) talk and write about the Indigenous predicament in Australia. Were she a historian she might have traced the rise of the ideologies and vocabularies of 'Indigenous identity'. Were she a sociologist of knowledge she might have said more about the utility of 'culturalism', as when she acknowledges that 'radical culturalism' 'has been useful as an anti-colonial strategy at many sites, including projects to "Aboriginalise" Indigenous education and its support for positive discrimination as a social justice strategy has promoted many gains for Indigenous people' (p 250). However, the history of 'culturalist' discourse is no more her concern than is the elaboration of her brief suggestions of links between actors, interests and ideas. McConaghy's primary object is error - or, more positively, she believes that by overcoming 'culturalism' we will be able to 'theorise adequately' - a locution that she uses over and over again to refer to what it is that her critique enables.

According to McConaghy, there are four styles of 'culturalism' abroad in writings on Australian Indigenous education: pastoral welfarism, assimilationism, cultural relativism, and radicalism.

¹ Rowse, Tim 1989 PhD thesis University of Sydney, later published as *White power, white flour* CUP, Cambridge, 1998.

Pastoral welfarism postulates – in different terms in different circumstances – Indigenous incapacity. Certain institutions find their rationale in this postulate. McConaghy mentions ‘reserves’, but this is a problematic example as the arguments for reserves (that she does not quote) sometimes postulated Indigenous capacity to look after themselves as much as Indigenous incapacity to cope with colonial intrusion. Another example of an institution that depended on and reproduced this notion of ‘Indigenous incapacity’ is ‘the settlement’ whose various training programs would bring about certain required ‘competencies’. Christian missions have been yet another example.

The ‘Imperial humanitarian’ tradition, whether Christian or secular, propagated the idea that Indigenous Australians needed saving from their incapacities. It is a measure of the breadth of the category ‘Indigenous incapacity’ that McConaghy sees no point in distinguishing between two self-imposed humanitarian missions: saving Indigenous Australians from their own ‘incapacities’, and recognising their limited capacities – military, legal and political – to defend themselves from inhumanitarian colonists. To McConaghy, what these two different attributions of incapacity have in common is more interesting. That is typical of the unsettling effect of her work: the historian’s temptation to ethical judgment (distinguishing helpful from self-interested humanitarian impulses) is refused in favour of laying bare a discursive unity.

McConaghy says that ‘pastoral welfarism’ is a continuing discourse, but she gives no contemporary examples, such as the current policy discourse about Indigenous Australians’ ‘human capital’ and ‘social capital’ deficiencies. McConaghy prefers to see such notions as manifesting a different kind of ‘culturalism’ that she calls ‘assimilationism’. ‘Assimilationism’ is distinguished by its preoccupation with justice and equity. The point of remedying Indigenous deficiency is to make ‘them’ equal to ‘us’ according to various measures of ‘equality’. That equality is sustainable because it is based on a new Indigenous capacity for ‘self-reliance’. However, the essence of ‘assimilationism’ as a colonial ideology is that this transformation is always judged incomplete. Practitioners of ‘assimilationism’ are defined by their continuing to find reasons to tutor Indigenous Australians to mimic the tutors’ ways. Because they can never be satisfied with the result, they continually renew their mandate.

McConaghy’s examples of institutionalised ‘assimilationism’ are citizenship training programs on government settlements and in adult education and vocational, post-primary education in the Northern Territory. Her review of the research and policy literature on the role of the adult educator in remote communities makes clear the ways that ‘self-determination’ is a project of tutelage as well as of emancipation, whose by-product has been the professionalisation of adult educators. She is critical of the ‘competencies’ approach to adult education for its tendency to propagate standardised definitions of what trainees need. However, McConaghy says, when Indigenous intellectuals put forward Indigenous ‘difference’ as a corrective to such standardisation, they all too often standardise the implications of being ‘Indigenous’ – another pathway to imperfect mimicry.

McConaghy is critical of assimilationism’s aspiration to ‘universalism and social cohesion’. However, her critique is not from the standpoint of some ‘Indigenous’ alternative: A critique that supposed it knew ‘the Indigenous’ perspective would be

enslaved to culturalism's 'two-race binary'. Can those engaged in 'Indigenous studies' and 'Indigenous affairs' ever escape such a pervasive 'dichotomy'? McConaghy puts the very category 'Indigenous' in question, but she holds fast to a conception of 'colonialism'. In what terms can 'the colonised' name themselves and enunciate a common interest without falling into the 'two-race binary'? It seems to me that McConaghy is sceptical that they could ever do so.

McConaghy's third 'culturalism' is 'cultural relativism'. This project uses ethnography to inform teaching so that pedagogic practice will be harmonious with learners' culture. She sees cultural relativism as a sophisticated mask of the interests of those who espouse and practice it. McConaghy refers to the 'arrogance' of its 'white agency: of whites doing for others, respecting, tolerating and ensuring fair treatment' (p 190). Relativists kid themselves about what it takes to challenge racism, and they think achieving justice is a matter of improving the distribution of certain goods. They overstate the incommensurability of 'cultures' and they believe that education can be culturally 'neutral'.

Contrary to relativists, McConaghy insists that we need to make distinctions of value and pertinence. It is justifiable to do so as long as one is reflexive about the 'standpoint' from such judgments are being made. Because there is no knowledge or action without its 'standpoint', relativism's pretensions to neutrality are unbelievable. Her examples of the institutional expressions of relativism are programs to restore or renew Indigenous languages, education for 'community development' (where the problem is the subtly authoritative delimitation of 'community' or 'Indigenous domain'), and a search for Indigenous collaborators in intellectual production (which she judges to be to the greater advantage of the non-Indigenous). McConaghy seeks to undermine our illusions about the emancipatory impact of such programs.

By entertaining the possibility of community and individual autonomy, cultural relativism also invokes the psychology of more or less functional subjects. Psychology is yet another powerful knowledge in which to deploy notions of Indigenous inadequacy. In McConaghy's view the notion of Indigenous 'autonomy' 'depends on regimes of othering and strategies which seek to assert social distance and social difference. The consequence of the fantasy of autonomy in cultural relativism is the construction of Indigenous people as in a perpetual state of identity chaos, shock, dependency and abjectivity. It also legitimates the work of the specialists in such matters, the cross-cultural experts' whose business now flourishes in Australia (p 207).

McConaghy's last 'culturalism' is 'radicalism', a project that finds ways to invert the 'two-race binary' but enjoys only 'short-term' success whenever it does so. However the radical critique flatters the radical intellectual as the source of enlightenment. The problem with 'radical culturalism' is that it pays too little attention to 'issues of global and local capitalisms, and the patriarchal structures which support them' (p 226). It is not enough to assert the superior value of Indigenous perspectives and to empower the bearers of those perspectives, for such scenarios may leave the other non-racial and non-cultural hegemonies that affect Indigenous people untouched. The subjects of these other hegemonies are neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous. Here McConaghy's argument is not so much against 'binaries' per se as against the elevation of the two-race binary above all others. As well as simplifying the landscape of power, the

'two-race binary' makes it necessary to produce some version of the essentially resistant Indigenous subject.

Here is a point of engagement for those who seek to write Indigenous agency into the history of Australian 'race relations'. The colonised subject is a figure of the radical intellectual's continuing concern: 'the radicalist problem of Indigenous agency' (p 238). One common solution to that 'problem' glorifies 'resistance', but this 'validates social dislocation and romanticises poverty and powerlessness' and tends to presume that Indigenous resisters will reproduce their ancient culture's values as the basis for their future flourishing. McConaghy cites Bain Attwood as one historian who seeks to avoid this construction of Indigenous agency.

McConaghy's book is the most searching essay in the politics of Indigenous representation since Bain Attwood's 1992 essay on 'Aboriginalism'.² Her exposition of the pervasive 'two-race binary' adds to Attwood's critique in volume and in scope (she, more than he, critiques the essentialising of 'non-Indigenous'). Attwood came up with a series of recommendations toward an improved ethics of representation. In that code there were foreseeable tensions between his injunction to consult and to collaborate with Aboriginal people and his injunction to question 'Aboriginalist' orthodoxies. As McConaghy shows, some of the Indigenous Australians with whom one might collaborate are so empowered by the politics of identity that they are unlikely to aid a deconstruction of the categories of the two-race binary. McConaghy's critique of the empowerment of radical intellectuals and cross-cultural experts refuses to distinguish between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous beneficiaries of 'culturalism'.

So what lessons does McConaghy draw for readers persuaded by her argument that 'culturalism works to re-produce, rather than disrupt, colonial social formations' (p251)? In her remarks about the pervasive logic of 'assimilationism', McConaghy implies that she is not allied to any current public policy philosophy on Indigenous affairs:

Assimilationism depends on a racialised dichotomy, a dualism which exists as a problem which needs to be rectified. This dichotomy continues to be the focus of social policy, whether it is expressed as self-determination (the potential for one group to be more like another group, specifically in terms of the relative freedoms of the latter group), mainstreaming (the ability of a group to access the system of production, distribution and consumption of the larger group), integration (the ability of groups to co-exist, supposedly with each group remaining intact) or reconciliation (the desire for groups to share a social system in ways which address the social injustices of the past).(p187-8)

For McConaghy the fruit of critique is nothing more nor less than self-awareness, a reflexive openness to seeing all discourse on 'culture' – however emancipatory in intention and however respectfully informed by a sense of the other – as having multiple powerful effects. The 'reproduction of colonial social formations' may be the one constant effect, but McConaghy admits that there are others, local and short-term, that may enhance some people's room to move within the 'colonial social formation'. Whether these beneficiaries are Indigenous or non-Indigenous or both will depend on

² Attwood, Bain 1992, 'Introduction' in *Power, knowledge and Aborigines*, B Attwood and J Arnold (eds), La Trobe University Press, *Journal of Australian Studies* Special edition 35: i- xvi.

the circumstances and on the standpoint of the person making the analysis. Her hope is that we will not be restricted to talking and writing as if 'culture' is all. 'Post-culturalism contends that "culture" is significant, but not always the most significant factor in issues of pedagogy and social policy, and can never be disassociated from issues of class, gender, racialisation and other forms of social analysis' (p 44).

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Phyllis Kaberry and me: anthropology, history and Aboriginal Australia, Sandy Toussaint, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1999, xiv + 128pp, \$32.95.

Insofar as it enhances the reputation of the mid-twentieth century anthropologist, Phyllis Kaberry, Toussaint's book is to be applauded. In the 1930s, Kaberry pioneered the anthropological appreciation of Aboriginal women's social, cultural and religious roles, refuting the then-dominant view that women in 'traditional' societies were no more than mundane drudges, oppressed by the spiritual as well as secular dominion of men. From her Kimberley fieldwork, she argued that women's economic, social and religious activities were complementary, not inferior or subservient, to those of their menfolk. After this, she carried out research in New Guinea, moving in the mid-1940s to African studies, in which her reputation rests primarily on her work among the Nso'. However, it is on Kaberry as a Kimberley ethnographer that this book focusses, moving on to make some comparison with a later Kimberley anthropologist, Toussaint herself.

Whether the understatement is intentional or not, Toussaint is right to acknowledge that this 'is not an exhaustive biography of Phyllis Kaberry.' The book combines biographical snapshots with autobiographical snippets, textual explication, reflections on shifts within the discipline of anthropology and observations on change and continuity in Kimberley Aboriginal cultures. It's an interesting and potentially fruitful combination, but Toussaint doesn't quite bring it off. Partly, perhaps, this can be attributed to brevity; there's only so much that can be accomplished in just over a hundred pages. Beyond that, however, is poor judgment on how best to use the available limited space.

It starts well enough, with a deft biographical sketch of Kaberry, illuminating a woman of formidable intellect but also of humility, generosity and sensitivity. The second chapter stumbles badly. Toussaint devotes thirty pages to recounting in meticulous detail, chapter by chapter, Kaberry's major Australian study, *Aboriginal woman: sacred and profane*. Surely she could have quickly sketched the main points of Kaberry's ethnography, directed the interested reader to the text itself, and moved on to explore such matters as the genesis and initial reception of the book, and the intellectual context in which it was conceived. Although at one point Toussaint insinuates that this is a 'contextualised biography', there's precious little contextualising of the 1939 publication that is central to this later meditation. The point that it was an innovative and challenging study is made, but never elaborated. Intellectual 'context' comprises nothing more than a medley of brief, disconnected remarks on a few ideas of Kaberry's contemporar-

ies. Indeed, I can only wonder about the grasp on intellectual context of an author who designates as 'a rare and prophetic comment' Kaberry's statement that 'injury to social structure and activities contingent on white contact may lie at the basis of the problem' of Aboriginal depopulation. These were not 'rare' or 'prophetic' insights; they were, among commentators of the day, commonplace to the point of banality.

If the intellectual context in which *Aboriginal Women* was conceived is treated cursorily, so too are its author's personal connections with other anthropologists at the time. Toussaint intimates that Kaberry was not the only female anthropologist at the University of Sydney in the late 1930s, but nothing more. In fact, these women, including, in addition to Kaberry, Ursula McConnel, Caroline Kelly, Camilla Wedgewood and Olive Pink, maintained a lively correspondence among each other and with the wider anthropological community. Attention to their varying views on conducting ethnography among 'native' women may have both illuminated Kaberry's enterprise and enlivened Toussaint's account. Among Kaberry's colleagues who are mentioned, AP Elkin is represented inconsistently. In the first chapter we're told that Elkin, aware of the incompleteness of his own ethnographies because of his inability to enter the female domain, played a major role in fostering Kaberry's investigations of Aboriginal women's culture and religiosity. In the final chapter Elkin has transmuted into one of several anthropologists 'whose misinformed views about the cultural and religious heritage of women she rejected'.

Toussaint begins the autobiographical section of her book with some self-consciousness, confessing to feeling 'uncomfortable about revealing aspects of myself to strangers' and admitting that parts of her life will be 'treated with ambiguity and silence.' Occasionally, self-consciousness slips into self-indulgence. Usually, however, she handles adroitly the reflexivity she espouses in ethnographic work. The development of that reflexive mode, she rightly points out, is the source of some of the most salient differences between her own and Kaberry's ethnography. The other difference highlighted is in their respective attitudes toward colonialism, and on this point Toussaint ventures well beyond what can plausibly be sustained by such scanty research.

In her conclusion she states that Kaberry may have been a 'somewhat naive "child of imperialism"' and that she appears 'to have worked *unquestioningly* in a colonial era' (Toussaint's italics). Yet back in the first chapter, we're told that in 1946 she complained to the British Colonial Office about the Nso' being removed from their land, and that one of her 'primary and ongoing' concerns 'was that British colonisation had engendered spatial and political crises among the Nso' and neighbouring groups such as the Fulani.' Perhaps the allegations of Kaberry's naivety and unquestioning attitude are meant to be confined to her Australian writings (Toussaint is unclear about this). Even so, such vast claims about an author's views need to be substantiated by a far more thorough appraisal of Kaberry's writings, unpublished as well as published, than Toussaint has ventured. Its as if, having failed to find in Kaberry's published oeuvre some blunt and blatant denunciation of colonialism, the only possible conclusion is the earlier anthropologist's political naivety. I'm not suggesting that Kaberry should be, or can be, reconstructed as a political activist; merely that it is illegitimate to jump to conclusions about an 'unquestioning' attitude toward colonialism on the basis of a few published ethnographies plus some recollections of, and correspondence with, a pastoralist friend. Having jumped to this conclusion, yet still wanting to portray her predecessor in a pos-

itive light, Toussaint has no recourse but special pleading on her behalf. That's something Phyllis Kaberry would be better off without.

Reference

Kaberry, Phyllis 1939, *Aboriginal woman, sacred and profane*, Routledge, London.

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A Gumbaynggir Language Dictionary, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative, Steve Morelli (comp.) 2001, Aboriginal Studies Press for AIATSIS, Canberra. ISBN 0 85575 383 8, 160pp.

This is an attractively produced and solidly bound book which incorporates all materials which have been compiled on the Gumbaynggir language. It is about B5 in size, a handy size for use. No doubt to the embarrassment of the publishers, Gumbaynggir is spelt Gumbaynnggir on its cover (though this is easily not noticed), when it should be Gumbaynggir as on the title pages inside. Note also that the dictionary entry spells the word Gumbaynggirr, and the gloss has Gumbaynggir as in the title. Of course, for those who know this area, the language name has had a wide variety of spellings, some of which have led to spelling pronunciations of the name which are at variance with what was the traditional pronunciation.

Gumbaynggir, with its various dialect and clan groups, was spoken on the east coast of New South Wales, covering the area between Grafton and south of Wooli on the coast, down to Nambucca Heads and Scotts Head, and inland to Wollomombi some 40km east of Armidale, northwest to include Guyra and Ben Lomond, north east and passing east of Glen Innes until it encountered dialects of Yugambah-Bundjalung west of Grafton and the Clarence River. The map names the following dialects: Baanbay to the west, Gurubida in the centre, Gambalamam and Budaabang to the south, and Garigalay, Jambiny, Yuraala, Magan.girr and Mirragalgi to the east.

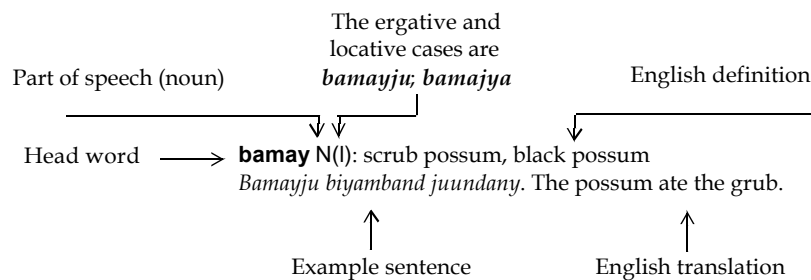
The book has a map in which names for neighbouring groups are spelt in the Gumbaynggir way, and where there are known Gumbaynggir place names, they are included with the English place names, many of which are clearly versions of the original Gumbaynggir names. The map also included the various dialect names.

A dictionary such as this one is produced for literate adults, in particular Gumbaynggir people who may know little or none of the traditional language, and who are also not well-practised in the skill of consulting dictionaries. There is a foreword before the map, and following the map is a short introduction, a list of most abbreviations, a section on the sounds of Gumbaynggir, and sample entries, showing the reader what to look for in the entries. The dictionary listing of Gumbaynggir to English occupies some 86 pages, and an English to Gumbaynggir Word-Finder occupies 41 pages. A grammar section follows (p. 143-157), a couple of pages show the Gumbaynggir section system, and the last page the kinship terms. The Gumbaynggir to English section includes examples illustrating the words and affixes and their use, and the lay-out is very easy to read.

The introduction lists sources for the dictionary, with succinct annotations ('excellent', 'useful', 'unreliable', 'not useful', 'mainly ethnographic', etc). Sources listed date from 1894 ('some useful information') to 1978, and I would assume later in audiotaped material that Brother Steve Morelli obtained from a comparatively recently deceased speaker.

Sources for the dictionary include WE Smythe's work on the northern dialect area (he was a GP in Grafton, and wrote his grammar in the 1940s). Morelli regarded the manuscripts of Gerhardt Laves and the tape collections and Gumbaynggir grammar of Diana Eades as the most important sources of information for the work. 'As far as possible,' he writes, 'example sentences come from actual texts of original speakers. When these come from Northern speakers they have regularly been modified to be in line with the Southern dialect, (p6). Morelli also says on that page that '(t)he work does not pretend to be definitive', and he welcomes reports on any errors found.

Below is shown one of the sample entries (p14). Morelli shows what each section of the entry tells, a useful guide to those not familiar with dictionaries, as well as a useful reminder to those who are, who often skate over fine detail. I have also shown two other related entries to show reference to sources.



Yuriinyja N (l) LdS:Urunga. [-> **Yuruun.ga**]

Yuruun.ga N (l): Urunga. [LdS has **Yuriinyja**; RMc claims it comes from 'lengthen (yuruunda) the bridle reins!'; HB says it comes from the long spit of an island in the river.]

Most English to Gumbaynggir entries are simple finder list entries, but a number have sub-entries, e.g.

carry: **maana**

~ around **wurra-maanyi**

~ on back **jugumba**

~ on head **galiija**

~ on shoulders **gambarri, ngamili, galiija**

The grammar section is well set up to help those not familiar with grammatical concepts, and an illustration helps clarify the concept of three degrees of distance. Explanations are illustrated with examples.

This dictionary should prove a valuable resource for Gumbaynggir people and others interested in this area of Australia, and is a credit to the work of Steve Morelli and the Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative.

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Rednecks, eggheads and blackfellas: a study of racial power and intimacy in Australia, by Gillian Cowlshaw, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1999, xix + 352pp, ISBN 1865080764. \$38.95 pbk.

In 1975, Gillian Cowlshaw arrived at Bulman in Southern Arnhem land to undertake anthropological fieldwork with a group of Rembarrnga people. She had chosen Bulman in the belief – then current within Australian anthropology – that researchers needed to locate themselves in isolated communities and so minimise interaction with local settler society. Only by doing so could they hope to achieve total immersion in the day to day lives of their informants, and thus come to truly understand the complexity and richness of Aboriginal culture.

Cowlshaw's first weeks of fieldwork at Bulman reinforced her sense of the value of anthropological tradition and her admiration for mentors such as Les Hiatt. It became clear to her why so much intellectual energy had been invested in documenting the intricacies of kinship amongst the peoples of Arnhem Land. Within days she found herself not just taking part in the everyday life of the women's camp, but being offered a place that defined her identity within their kinship system and brought a wealth of obligations to the Rembarrnga.

At the same time, Cowlshaw found her new identity as *Ngaritjan* provoked ambivalent reactions and sometimes aggression from local whites and some Rembarrnga men. Her ambiguous presence as both kin and anthropologist also sparked anger at what had happened in the recent past and fear about what the future might bring. The Rembarrnga had settled at Bulman between 1968 and 1971 after being forced off Mainoru Station, about 100 kilometres to the south, when the station – which had been their home since the 1920s – had been sold to an overseas company which wanted to retain only a few 'full-time' Aboriginal workers. Since then economic initiatives at Bulman had failed due to poor management, low funding and the inability of government officials to understand or respect the cultural aspirations of the Rembarrnga. Complicating matters, the cause of the migration to Bulman had caused the Rembarrnga people to become more open and defiant in asserting their ownership of country and the continuity of ancestral law. When Cowlshaw arrived Bulman was, in her words, a place of 'confusion, mystery, horror, excitement and humour.' It was a place she had never dreamed of encountering, and one that the discipline of anthropology seemed to offer no intellectual resources to explain satisfactorily.

In retrospect, however, Bulman was the ideal fieldwork location. *Rednecks, eggheads and blackfellas* reads as testimony to the ways in which Cowlshaw's experiences, on her first and subsequent visits to the settlement during the 1970s, influenced the

course of her research. She has since offered much critical insight into the ways in which knowledge of Indigenous Australian culture has been produced through the interaction between Indigenous informants, anthropologists, pastoralists and government officials. She has been concerned to show how, in academic and public discourse, notions such as objectivity, individualism and progress are concepts with a specific cultural geography. That geography has been profoundly shaped by our colonial past, with race as its most salient feature. So too, Cowlshaw argues, have matters of fact about Indigenous people been produced with these ideas.

This concern is reflected in Cowlshaw's unusual title for the book, which she argues underscores that in their interactions with each other and with Aboriginal people, 'redneck' pastoralists and 'egghead' anthropologists drew on a shared body of racialised knowledge. Even so, the title is misleading, in so far as book does not offer the sustained analysis of early interactions between anthropologists, pastoralists and the Rembarrnga that the title implies.

Through her focus on the interaction between the Rembarrnga and white pastoralists in Southern Arnhem Land, Cowlshaw offers a sustained analysis both of the obvious and the many subtle ways that race has determined the social and ontological categories shaping the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Northern Australia. However, much of what Cowlshaw has to say about the drama on Mainoru station and at Bulman between 1920 and the early 1980s warrants consideration in broader debates about the dynamic of race in Australian history. Her book requires that we reconsider whether the hierarchy of race that determined everyday interactions between Indigenous people and Europeans in northern Australia until the 1970s has indeed been dissolved by ostensibly enlightened policies of self-determination. One is drawn to the disturbing conclusion that we need to talk about race not just as a factor in history, but as a concept that retains its cognitive magnetism, albeit in more subtle, but possibly equally pernicious, ways.

The first half of *Rednecks, eggheads and blackfellas* explores the policies and techniques of policing employed by the colonial state, ostensibly to protect the Rembarrnga people, but at the same time to re-order their lives with a view to ensuring their integration within the pastoral industry. Several historians have explored of late how colonial administrators imbued the bodies of white and black people with a range of qualities that reflected faith in evolutionary discourse. The strength of Cowlshaw's study is that she shows in concrete terms how the experiences of the Rembarrnga on Mainoru were circumscribed by the construction of boundaries between racial bodies, both social groups and individuals. The Rembarrnga and other groups saw their country cut up into sites for well-defined purposes for the use of distinct classes of people. This was evident in the nomenclature routinely employed by the Native Affairs Branch of the Northern Territory to classify and manage people by virtue of where they were located: men and women housed in native quarters or blacks' camps were either 'workers' or 'dependants'; Aboriginal people beyond the station were categorised as 'bush blacks' or 'wild myalls' who threatened its civilising mission through challenging the authority of its racial hierarchy.

This was not the only way in which an economy of race shaped notions of self and community at Mainoru and Bulman. The racialised space of the station gave race exis-

tential concreteness and normalised a range of assumptions and practices governing in more mundane and intimate ways black and white interactions. Cowlshaw takes particular care to document and reflect on the regimes of training and education at Mainoru over several generations in order to illuminate the depths to which race underpinned the humanism of local whites with whom the Rembarrnga interacted and often held in high regard. Importantly, she shows that faith in racial difference could lead pastoralists to question and, on occasion, to subvert state policies and programs that drew cognitive strength from notions of race.

While race was everything to successive generations of pastoralists and agents of government, the task of civilising Aboriginal people was often mediated by localised needs and desires, both black and white. Intimacy and love could and did cross racial boundaries. White men who thought of harnessing and directing Aboriginal labour as their providential duty nonetheless accepted incorporation within the kinship systems of the women they loved. In such a world, country ancestral law remained the foundations of identity for Aboriginal men and women, but this did not stop them selectively embracing aspects of western culture, notably ideas of literacy and private property.

Still, as Cowlshaw demonstrates, the reality of racial difference never became so unsettled by the vicissitudes of day to day life as to be called into question. Assimilation policies were never genocidal in intent, but perceptions of racial superiority were so deeply internalised by pastoralists and agents of the State that they simply could not imagine a future for Aboriginal communities as anything other than European in their essential social dynamics. Nor, for that matter, was it possible for the Rembarrnga to envisage any other future for country and culture than one in which European assumptions and goods played an important role.

This point leads to the final and arguably most challenging part of the book, in which Cowlshaw analyses the failure of economic initiatives designed to help the Rembarrnga and other peoples at Bulman achieve self-determination during the 1970s. She is concerned to understand the social dynamics of Bulman in the wake of the economic restructuring of the pastoral industry, and particularly the thinking of white officials charged with creating sound economic preconditions for self-determination. What emerges is a disturbing portrait of the gulf between the public pronouncements of these officials and their private confessions of incomprehension of and, in some instances, contempt for Aboriginal culture. Much had changed by the 1970s, but Cowlshaw presents disturbing evidence to suggest that while race no longer determined social space and techniques of governance as it had during the assimilation era, it continued to inform how whites thought and spoke privately among themselves over a few beers about the supposed failings of the Rembarrnga to embrace self-determination.

Rednecks, eggheads and blackfellas is remarkable both for its contextual depth and the sharpness of its theoretical insight. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the powerful and ambiguous presence of race in Australian history and contemporary debates.

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Colonial photography and exhibitions: representations of the 'native' and the making of European identities, by Anne Maxwell, Leicester University Press, London, 1999. 243pp, ISBN: 0 718502299. \$49.50.

Normally I would not review a book which disturbed me as much as this one, but the subject matter and the issues raised, for both those of colonised and colonising heritages, make it important to consider what we might learn from the analysis offered in this volume. Maxwell sets out to explore the representation of indigenous and colonialised peoples through the performance of representations at the worlds' exhibitions and through photography. These are presented as mechanisms through which European identities were both defined and confirmed. As Maxwell correctly argues, these are linked through the cultural mechanisms which both produce and control such imaging.

The reader is taken through seven very wide ranging chapters: on the Great Exhibitions and their performances of native cultures through the device of 'the native village'; on the photography of travellers and anthropologists; and then on the shifting discourses in the representation in four places: North America (both Native Americans and African-Americans) and encompassing photographic practices as diverse as those of Edward Sheriff Curtis and F. Holland Day; Australia and New Zealand; Samoa and Hawai'i, this last a study of the use of the Hawai'ian royal family to negotiate their claims and relationship with Europeans and elites. All the chapters function as forms of case study or loci of the main themes of the volume: the links between representational discourses and those of imperialism and identity. Maxwell rightly argues that these are key processes of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the problems of this volume is that it attempts to do far too much and as a result too many statements are underpinned by assumption not evidence. Key themes such as 'identity' and 'modernity' are glossed rather than explored and photographic practices, colonial experiences and indigenous responses are reduced to a homogenised predictability. The argument is forced into great sweeps and generalisations, while example follows example building up a sort of breathless causality which, however, explains little, for the examples lack serious analytical historical grounding. Great sweeps require distillation and density to give clarity of meaning and insight. Sadly here both are lacking, lost in a mire of partially-grasped detail in a reductionist spiral. Causal links are over-determined, over-direct and over-simplified and general points are substantiated by randomly relevant facts such as: Europeans were fascinated by China because they had read Marco Polo (p 58); Lindt's New Guinea photographs were not studio set-ups because New Guineans were not a 'dying race' which had been forced off the land and into European clothes (p 152); Samoan choices to be photographed in a certain styles constitutes a rejection of imperialism (p 179). Certainly these elements are part of the equation, but only parts of a much more complex set of relations. Rather, here, every one thinks the same, and photographs have only one intention, expressed through in a breathlessly adjectival style where colonialism is always 'oppressive', gaze always 'penetrating', Europeans always read the shows in a certain way, colonialism is always the reason. If x, then y must follow unproblematically.

This simplified outlook leads to a dichotomised analytical model leaving little or no room for agency, fracture or counter-narrative. For instance, the Bora ceremony pho-

tographed by Sydney photographer Charles Kerry at the end of the 1890s is cast in terms of Kerry's ideas of authenticity and the idea that he was 'duped' (fine as far as it goes) (p 155). But surely another reading of the event was that perhaps Aboriginal people were mediating in their own representation, withholding information and presenting surface not depth. Maxwell tries to demonstrate different approaches to representation, namely through the work of Thomas Andrew of Apia, Samoa, or through the use of photography by the Hawai'ian royal family to construct and disseminate their own image, especially in relation to white elites. She is quite right in this, however by this time the relentless over-determinism of her model makes any fluidity, ambiguity and nuance of argument impossible. Then there is the relentlessly presentist, anachronistic view which saturates the argument. For instance, an engraving showing Charles Walters [sic] photographing a group of Aboriginal people in 1874 is described as 'attempt[ing] to critique the voyeurism of his own practice' (p 149) and Margaret White who 'used the concept of hybridity to critique the representational practices of colonialism ... [and] appealed to the self-reflexive space provided by irony' (p 179). White is certainly an interesting photographer - and one new to me - but such presentism masks the truly remarkable qualities in her work at the Whau Lunatic Asylum.

It would seem that, to Maxwell, the sin of many 19th-century people was in their not being enlightened post-modern theorists like us, their failure to see the follies of their cultural vision or - in Maxwell's over-determined causality - their deliberate suppression of enlightened attitudes, where photographers wake up one morning and decide to produce a nice stereotype and a family visits exhibitions merely to demonstrate its adhesion to the colonial cultural hegemony. In too many ways this approach belittles the enormity and the unpredictability of colonial experience for all concerned, reducing it to a series of trite truisms and cheap value judgements. This is not to say that Maxwell is wrong in her basic identification of profoundly asymmetrical power relations, the saturating colonial ideologies and the consequences for those entangled within them, but the exercise becomes pernicious as value judgements masquerade as analysis and insight. Such relentless eliding of the processual results in an objectification of a passive, powerless, victimised 'other' set against a monolithic colonial power, and in so doing merely reproduces 19th-century tropes through different grids.

Another problem with this book is its inaccuracies. While the odd slip is forgivable (who can truly put their hand on their heart and claim that it never happens to them) there are literally hundreds of them in this book - I counted 12 in three paragraphs at one point (p 40-1). Cabinet prints are presented as the same thing as *cartes de visite*, which they are not (p 9); Spencer was taught by Huxley, which he was not (p 142); the Aboriginal group captured and made to perform by Cunningham were from Western Australia (they were from Queensland) (p 48); the earliest representations of non-European peoples were produced by anthropologists or travellers to the Near or Far East, which they were not (p 38); the Lamprey system was published in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (actually it was the Journal of the Ethnological Society in 1868, it was not 'Institute' until 1871 or 'Royal' until 1907) (p 41); the Huxley and Lamprey anthropometric systems are confused (p 43, 49). Maybe it is sloppy editing, but then one wonders how anyone could work with the sources cited and get it so wrong. Factual errors of such proportions are not merely an antiquarian concern. They add up to an undermining of the empirical base and suggest a misunderstanding of the

fluid contexts in which photographs and representations such as these operated. The implications of such a level of inaccuracy and unreliability resonate throughout Maxwell's argument, spreading out into other aspects of the book and revealing a lack of understanding of the very processes on which her argument is based.

While the volume contains some interesting material, such as the discussion of the influences on Thomas Andrew the Apia photographer and the discussion of Walter's refusal to sell his photographs singly, it would have been interesting to extend this in relation to Deborah Poole's model of visual economy. But this brings me to another problem: key and classic texts which could have made significant contribution to Maxwell's argument, for example the works of Fabian (1983), Tagg (1988) and Poole (1997) are significant in their absence.

While this volume might have a use for a specialist reader able to pick their way through the minefield of chronic inaccuracies, generalisation, reductionism and over-determinism, it cannot be recommended for student use; the balance between overview and the many bad habits to be picked up is too weighted toward the latter.

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The cultivation of whiteness: science, health and racial destiny in Australia, by Warwick Anderson, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002, xi, 352 pp. ISBN 052284989X (pbk), \$34.95 pbk.

In 1937 men of science gathered in Paris and Canberra to consider a set of related issues. The congress in Paris was a joint initiative of the French Group for the Study and Information of Race and Racism, a Paris-based group organised to fight Nazi race science, and the International Population Congress, the general assembly of the International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems. While the major concern of this meeting was the danger of a declining European population, one section of the Congress - Biometry, Biotypology and Heredity - dealt with issues of race and was dominated by German academics. Despite being so contained and regardless of the presence of such hardened academic race science debunkers as Franz Boas, the German delegates went unsilenced and scientific resistance to the Nazi race science project continued its largely ineffectual course.

Far away but in the same year, in Canberra the Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities brought together many of Australia's 'experts' in native affairs, including the doctor Cecil Cook and the bureaucrat AO Neville. In contrast to

the absence of outcomes in Paris, the meeting in Canberra was consequential, despite the fact that within a short space of time many of the players, including Cook and Neville, had left the field. While the ideas of racial absorption that they had advocated were subsequently enacted through assimilation policy, the positions that they articulated at the meeting drew criticism (for instance from AP Elkin and WEH Stanner) that signalled a fundamental shift in scientific, and later political, opinion.

Warwick Anderson closes his 'book about medical and scientific visions of what it meant to be white in Australia during a period in which the colonial settler society came to refashion itself as a nation' with these developments and shifts in Australia.

Anderson, an Australian medical graduate and historian of science at the Universities of Melbourne and California at San Francisco and Berkeley, sets out to answer the question: 'How did science and medicine more generally give expression to concerns about racial displacement and territorial possession? In explaining health and disease in the new land, how did doctors frame ideas of race and country?' He seeks to do so through the study of the 'mid-level mundane theorising that commonly occurs when one does science or practices medicine in a settler society a long way from Europe'.

Anderson's theorising is neither mid-level nor mundane. He has addressed issues of considerable historical importance which have continuing ramifications and parallels. This work alerts us to the complex space that health theories and theorising occupies in relation to race in Australia (as it has elsewhere), the potency in this regard of medical opinion, and the confusion of that opinion with fact. That this space remains complex in relation to Indigenous Australians should be clear. Witness the medicalised government response to the HREOC *Bringing them home* report, which focused on addressing consequential harm (grief and loss) rather than the underlying breach of human rights (which would, as the Wilson report recommended, require restitution and compensation - substantially more divisive and politically loaded). Ironically, the Commonwealth is thus in the odd situation of funding counselors to address the acknowledged mental health consequences of past policy while vigorously resisting personal or group claims on the basis of harm so caused.

Indeed, *The cultivation of whiteness* is very much about such tensions and inconsistencies and the way in which paradigms have changed, not because of their manifest scientific inadequacy but in response to changing bureaucratic needs. This is not unique to Australia and the reader might consult Saul Dubow's *Scientific racism in modern South Africa*, and Elazar Barkan's *The retreat of scientific racism* to see parallels from another society and the wider international race science context (including how events in Australia contributed, such as the Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait).

Anderson's book is not, however, solely about these issues in relation to Indigenous Australians, although they are its beginning and end and a constant presence throughout. It is as much about non-Indigenous needs - to 'understand' themselves in places and roles (and 'scientifically' rationalise such understandings) on a colonial stage shared by others whose co-presence challenged cherished beliefs and principles that had theretofore expedited the appropriation of land, labour or whatever else was deemed necessary to imperial or national interest. Medical professionals, many of whom considered themselves, as such, experts on human nature and native peoples, rose to the occasion. Their discipline 'provided a vocabulary for talking about a terri-

tory, and a means of taking imaginative possession of it; later still, it created a syntax for social citizenship, and a means of living up to it'. This territory, and the vocabulary to describe it, was constantly changing in response to conflicting agendas and competing priorities. In laying out these complexities Anderson has condensed broad swathes of theory, practice and policy into a coherent and informative narrative.

The book is divided into three sections – the temperate south, the northern tropics, and Aboriginal Australia – which explore, respectively, early European accommodation with an alien environment in southern Australia, enabling the European exploitation of northern Australia, and the ill-fated marriage of convenience between medicine and anthropology in the service of the state in central Australia through the first half of the twentieth century.

In the first of these sections Anderson describes the imposition of British understandings of the relationship between place and health on a new land and its inhabitants, their preconceptions confirmed by hardship and ill health, which seemed to give way only as the land itself was altered to conform to a European ideal. In chapter two Anderson describes a shift from Europeans' preoccupation with environment to concerns with germ theory, vulnerability, and thus with inheritance. Allied developments in understanding evolution introduced concepts of adaptationism and thus of degeneration with associated social/moral implications.

The second section (the northern tropics), which deals primarily with Queensland (and to a lesser extent the Northern Territory), begins with policy regulating the role of alien labour in the north around the turn of the century, just as concerns about disease emanating from a hostile environment shifted to preoccupation with contagion and the threat of it from aliens, particularly Chinese. Against a background of political and medical debates regarding the possibility of white labour sustaining economic development in the tropics, research shifted focus to consider susceptibility on the basis of contact with hidden reservoirs of infection. Systematic research, relatively well-supported by invested State and Commonwealth governments, eventually dismissed persistent theories of physiological differences between Europeans and native populations, attention moving to the mental fitness of Europeans to tropical climes. This led to a more pragmatic approach to living in the tropics – tropical hygiene (including mass screening and treatment for hookworm) – but also to a reduction in government support with the research locus moving south with shifting priorities. This occurred concurrently with increased interest in eugenics and the urban poor through the 1920s and 1930s, significantly influenced by developments in Europe and the United States where the impact of the Depression had been far greater. Regardless, even in Australia, where 'the nation had to do its best with whatever white material it had, wherever it was found' these ideas took hold as 'medical scientists and geographers ... managed to translate the complex and uncertain political problem of the settling of Australia into a technical idiom'.

The last section (Aboriginal Australia) describes the feeding frenzy of anthropometric and physiological research based out of Adelaide (and, to a lesser extent, Sydney) through the early part of the 20th century. This is the most interesting part of the book and demonstrates the plasticity of theory in responding to research findings and political imperatives. It also emphasises that while very different policy

approaches were sometimes advocated by academic 'experts', overall their policy influence was considerable. This period saw a shift from preoccupation with heredity to considerations of adaptation: 'No longer consigned to the primordial, the "primitive" had come to signify a people who were structurally and functionally adapted to the land, a people who had become part of the land, not alienated from it'. However, 'in thus entering the biomedical present, the "primitive" was given a mediated voice in modernity, and at the same time, white modernity was offering an opportunity to absorb it'. The final chapter of this section surveys the rapidly shifting research terrain in the years before the 1937 Canberra meeting with the increasing emphasis given to genealogy, genetics and breeding giving way to social anthropological research as the project of identifying defining elements of race collapsed: '[w]hiteness was fragmenting, both within the urban fortresses and out on the reproductive frontier ... Scientists began to scoff at fictions of racial and cultural purity or homogeneity, and they predicted that biologically and socially Australia would come to take on a more variegated whiteness, if it remained white at all'.

Anderson concludes by alerting the reader that while 'race science may not inform research and practice in the clinic and the laboratory ... it remains the partly hidden bedrock underlying much public debate'. As anyone attuned to public opinion and political opportunism in contemporary Australia would be aware, he is surely correct.

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Bitin' Back, by Vivienne Cleven, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 2001, pp94, ISBN: 0702232491, \$19.95 pbk.

Vivienne Cleven's *Bitin' Back*, winner of the 2000 David Unaipon Award, represents a fascinating and engaging attempt to challenge readers to redraw the boundaries of Aboriginal writing, and even of the field of literature, more broadly. Its narrator and central character is a middle-aged Aboriginal woman living in a small outback town. No one could seem less 'literary' than the working class Mavis Dooley in her crude ordinariness. Her very language, in its colloquial coarseness and conventionality, its

severely restricted diction and syntactical range, insists upon the point, although it is one of the glories of this unobtrusively ground-breaking novel that the narratorial voice can be strikingly witty and creative within its circumscribed rhetorical limits. In almost all forms of fiction she or someone like her usually features only on the fringes of the main narrative, if at all. Moreover, it is made absolutely clear that she herself doesn't have a clue what 'literature' is, in any sense of the term. And yet, Mavis's teenage, football-playing son has decided to rename himself 'Jean Rhys' after one of the most critically-admired novelists of the 20th century, and may have the makings of a brilliant writer. The masquerade carried on by Mavis's son Nevil, in conjunction with the narrative prominence accorded his very unliterary mother, is a sly signal that the novel is intent upon some mischievous jostling of standard notions of what constitutes a proper work of literature.

Nevil's literary masquerade is also a gender masquerade, and it is this aspect of his effort to reinvent himself that most disturbs his mother, whose notions of gender identity are those that might be expected of someone whose mental categories have been shaped by the mores and prejudices of a small, isolated outback community. Mavis, while literate and no one's fool, is neither highly educated nor politically aware, and she has extremely conventional views about social roles and interactions. She thinks primarily about herself and her immediate experience, rather than social or philosophical issues. The underlying orientation of that thinking is fundamentally essentialist, for she ascribes basic ineradicable qualities to people on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, and race. In short, her own status as an Aboriginal and a woman notwithstanding, her presuppositions about individuals are fraught with the familiar biased thinking of much of mainstream Australia. It doesn't seem inconceivable that she would vote for the Howard government.

Indeed, one of the aspects of this novel that comes as a bit of a surprise is that, on a superficial level at least, it doesn't seem concerned to protest the oppression of Indigenous Australians. Mudrooroo and Adam Shoemaker, authors of the only two book-length studies of Aboriginal writing currently extant, both emphasise the degree to which the literature is of necessity highly imbued with social concern. Indigenous Australians have been and continue to be such a marginalised social group, the argument goes, that it is inevitable and right that issues of race will be prominent in any Aboriginal text. Yet here is a novel by an Indigenous writer which seems more concerned with gender politics than with racism. Its Aboriginal narrator, while aware, of course, of the black/white division in Australian social experience, doesn't seem interested in activist Aboriginal politics. That impression is enforced quietly at one point when Mavis, watching television coverage of a Land Rights march, remains unmoved, her mind on other things. In this respect *Bitin' Back* constitutes an important, remarkable contribution to contemporary Aboriginal writing. One of the beliefs held by many Europeans about non-whites who inhabit predominantly white societies is that the latter must constantly have racial matters at the forefront of their minds. Toni Morrison, the great African-American novelist, was reputedly once asked by an interviewer why the black characters in one of her novels seem unconcerned about issues of race, and her icy response was 'We *do* think about other things, you know.' Mudrooroo and Shoemaker notwithstanding, it may be that the contention that an Aboriginal text must focus significantly upon the politics of Aboriginality is a corollary of the assumption that dark-

skinned people think about little else. The very conception of the character of Mavis implicitly argues otherwise.

It is significant, in the latter respect, that Mavis doesn't even appear to feel intimidated by whites. In her heated confrontations with her rival Dotty, who is white, she displays no anxiety whatever about defying a member of the dominant racial group. Dotty does call Mavis a 'black gin' at one point, and the latter reports this in her characteristically dispassionate manner by observing that Dotty's words 'squealed outta her pinkish face.' But while that exchange is hardly conducted in terms conducive to white-Aboriginal reconciliation, it occurs only after much else has passed between the two with no hint of racial enmity. It seems they just don't like each other. And in the fictional town of Mandamooka generally, even when there are hard feelings between a black person and a white, there is little evidence of racial edginess. Indeed, if one knew nothing whatever about rural Australia other than what can be inferred from this novel, the degree to which black people have been persecuted since the beginning of the European takeover would not be apparent.

Yet the point is not that *Bitin' Back* does not address the issue of racist bigotry and its unsavory social effects, for it does – indirectly. It is a text that is concerned to break down preconceptions of *all* kinds about *diverse* social groups. In renaming himself 'Jean Rhys' and dressing and acting the part, Nevil threatens to undermine essentialist thinking about sexual identity, and more broadly still, about all group identities including those that are racially-based; it is certainly significant in this regard that the identity he has adopted is that of a white writer. And for Mavis there is something equally unsettling: he seems to be a different *person*, not her familiar Nevil. Ill-prepared for such a thought, she is forcibly introduced to the speculation that for any individual another self is distinctly realisable, just as it is always possible to trade in football pants for a dress. Identity is a matter of conning those with whom one comes into contact regularly – and, in the process, oneself. Late in the narrative, at a moment when all hell is about to break loose – a neighbor has entered the house wearing the clothes of her dead husband and carrying his shotgun, and the police are pounding at the door – Mavis says to herself 'Could a woman be maginatin all a this[sic]?' That, really, is the question that has been haunting her from the start. For the 'all a this' that has been rendered fantastic yet conceivable is everything Mavis had previously assumed was fundamentally one certain, knowable way and none other – every social or racial or gender role, and every individual personality, including her own. At the moment she puts that question to herself, the shotgun actually goes off – the text's way of signaling the final shattering of Mavis's essentialist certitude. She goes on to think, significantly, ' *Show's over. That's all she wrote.*'

But the traumatic shattering of previously unassailable modes of understanding self and society heralds a comically happy ending in which what went wrong is put right, mostly. Nevil does return to the body briefly sublet to 'Jean Rhys'; a football match and associated punch-up goes well for Mavis and her mob; and Mavis even scores the male love interest she had consigned to her arch-rival. Most importantly, Nevil, as it turns out, is not gay and not a transvestite in his heart: he has only been attempting to experience life as a woman for sake of his writing, because his first novel will feature a female protagonist. Yet Nevil's reversion to maleness does not signify a return to the status quo so cherished by the essentialist imagination. Disturbingly, he

has established himself as a male, and an Aboriginal, who literally doesn't know his place. Worse, he isn't even trying to lay claim to a place that isn't his designated one. In transgressing socially sacrosanct gender boundaries, he signals his willingness to invade any and all places, to assume, at least in imagination, disparate roles and diverse identities – including, possibly, some that are as yet unimagined.

The novel's gist, I think, is that it is to the extent that we can perform an analogous mental exercise that we may be enabled to think past the stereotypes that so much in modern society does its utmost to impose upon us. For one of the implications that *Bitin' Back* seems to convey concerns the value of literature, particularly narrative, as a means of doing what Nevil says the protagonist of his first novel does: bucking stereotypes. In this regard Cleven's text echoes an old, hopeful argument on behalf of the redeeming social value of literary discourse, one that maintains that the development of the power of imaginative projection into other lives, other beings, enhances one's capacity to comprehend and sympathise with those who might otherwise remain strange, alien, inferior, or even despicable. Radically altering the outward signs of one's gender is one way to step into the mind of someone unlike oneself. Another, less taxing and more common, is to identify with a character in a story. In many instances imaginative identification isn't much of a stretch; if a character resembles a reader in many ways and inhabits a social milieu much like his or her own, the world isn't being refracted through eyes that see very differently. But the majority of *Bitin' Back's* readers will probably be, in varying degrees, quite unlike the grandly unliterary Mavis, and may therefore have to stretch their imaginations rather expansively. For most of us, to read this novel is to engage, like Nevil, in a bit of cross-dressing – and perhaps to imagine, like Mavis, that some strange Jean Rhys has unexpectedly become kindred.

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We won the victory: Aborigines and outsiders on the north-west coast of the Kimberley, by Ian Crawford, pp 335, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2001, \$24.95.

Ian Crawford's *We won the victory* is an exploration of contact history between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people (Indonesian fishermen, explorers, pastoralists, missionaries, beachcombers and the Army) in the region of the Kimberleys mainly between Camden Harbour in the west and Cape Londonderry in the east. To a lesser extent, Crawford also refers to country and peoples west and east of this region, and to the missions, settlements or contemporary communities located in these areas. This work largely centers on Worora, Wunambal, Gambera and Gwini peoples (p 34). Wunambal, Gambera, Walambi and Gwini people congregated at the Benedictine mission of Drysdale River (Pago) in the east (now the community of Kalumburu not too distant from the Pago mission site) (p 35). Wunambal peoples were also drawn to the Presbyterian Kunmunya mission (which was subsequently re-established at Wotjulum, later as 'old Mowanjum' and lastly as 'new Mowanjum' community ten kilometers outside of Derby), along with Worora and Ngarinyin peoples (p 33).

Crawford begins with Aboriginal narratives and accounts, and to these adds layers of archaeological knowledge and his own experiences with the people who are relaying these accounts to him. Crawford juxtaposes these against non-Indigenous documentary sources, and this provides a powerful illumination of the differences in perspectives between Aboriginal people and outsiders concerning the same events, and the subsequent misunderstandings (and worse) that arose and continue to arise, in part, through such differences (see for example p 182). It is Crawford's view that 'the difficulties faced by Aboriginal people in the far north-west of the Kimberley during the past hundred years of white contact have been enormous, but their account is not a history of defeat' (p 15). This theme encapsulates the overall work, the ways in which the Aboriginal people Crawford deals with have 'retained control of their lives to a degree not paralleled in other parts of Western Australia' (p 22). This is despite contact with successive groups of outsiders and with regimes of invasion, missionisation, government legislation, and indeed land appropriation.

We won the victory begins with Crawford's description of his journey back to Kalumburu, which he uses to introduce something of the history of the region as well as some Aboriginal interpretations of the landscape and Aboriginal cultural institutions. This is followed by a focus on contemporary Kalumburu and the former Pago mission. He then discusses Indonesian contact with local Aboriginal people, the explorers of the region, and Aboriginal narratives of these exploratory expeditions. He continues with the early settlement at Camden Harbour, the impact of the pearlers in this region, and pastoral settlement. In chapter ten Crawford introduces further detailed material about Kunmunya mission and its transformation to Wotjulum and eventually Mowanjum. Here Crawford describes some of the important differences between Kalumburu and Mowanjum (p191) and the impacts the different mission regimes had and have for the ways Aboriginal people from these missions have approached Christianity and contemporary decision-making. Crawford then discusses Willie Reid, an Aboriginal man from Queensland, and the settlement he formed at Kinganna to which many local Aboriginal people were drawn and which affected Aboriginal 'views of Western culture and modified their own experiences of traditional life' (p279). This is followed by a discussion of the 'Japanese War' (World War II) and the post-war situation along the coast. There are further reflections on Kinganna via Crawford's description of his journey to Kinganna with four Aboriginal people journeying in 1988. The last two chapters of the book focus on the contemporary, in terms of Aboriginal cultural beliefs, Christian celebrations and contemporary expressions of traditional culture. In the postscript Crawford discusses the contemporary era of Native Title, and the appropriation of Wunambal land via the recent creation of two National Parks over the Mitchell Plateau and Lawley River (p307).

This is a very thoughtful, reflective and sensitively written work which is both scholarly and accessible to a wider audience. Among the things that Crawford achieves without resorting to theoretical arguments about modes of ethnographic writing is to reveal the dialectic nature of fieldwork throughout the book, and this is one of the work's many strengths. Another is Crawford's long term association with the people he writes about, an association that began in the 1960s when he worked with them while researching his doctoral thesis in archaeology, and which continued through a thirty year period of working for the West Australian Museum. The perspective that Craw-

ford can thus bring to bear is one of substantial familiarity and experience and this is evident throughout the work. One of the delights of this book is the interspersing of Aboriginal people's contemporary comments and interactions with their country alongside narratives of the past. This serves to reinforce that the past remains in the present, and reflects the ways that Aboriginal history is embedded within and retrieved from the landscape. This is therefore a book that is at the same time personal and personalised, while remaining a scholarly work and one that provides much room for Aboriginal voices to be heard within it. This book should be of interest to general readers interested in Aboriginal affairs, to readers with specific interests in Aboriginal contact history, and to those with specialist interest in Aboriginal issues and history in the Kimberley region.

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Through silent country, by Carolyn Wadley Dowley, 462 pp, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000, ISBN: 1 86368 281 3, \$32.50 pbk.

In 1921 a group of Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from Laverton, a small mining town in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, and transported over 1000km to a government settlement for Aboriginal people known as Moore River or Mogumber. Other people from the goldfields had already been transported to this settlement, including three young male relatives of the group, with whom they were reunited. A few weeks later this group successfully escaped, and, after splitting into three parties, all but one trekked safely, by different routes, across country to Laverton.

While searching for a thesis topic in 1996, Carolyn Wadley Dowley came across an account of this event in Bill Bunbury's *Reading labels on jam tins: living through difficult times*. Greatly moved by this account of an extraordinary feat of courage, endurance and defiance, she was convinced that more information about the circumstances of the removal and escape could be salvaged from government records and the oral histories of the people connected to the escapees. Locating and accessing such additional information became a major focus of her research. As her search broadened, Dowley found other published accounts or mentions of the escape: a letter by the Aboriginal activist William Harris published in a 1926 *Western Australian* newspaper, and histories written by Margaret Morgan (1986), and Anna Haebich (1988). She also located a body of documents and oral history recordings about the incident, and was able to consult with Margaret Morgan and Bill Bunbury, who had undertaken their own research of the event. Dowley's own attempts to access documents and to record additional Aboriginal history of this event introduced her to the rich but as yet poorly recorded history held by the Aboriginal people of the Eastern Goldfields.

The results and the route of her investigative adventure into the historical records and Western Australia's Eastern Goldfields Aboriginal society form the substance of *Through silent country*. The book is about the construction of history as much as it is about an account of this particular event. It is organised into four main sections, entitled

'Journeying', 'Speakings', 'Writings', and 'A New Account', supplemented with eleven appendices.

The first section, 'Journeying', consists of selected passages from the author's journal entries of 'impulsively written thoughts and impressions arising from encountering people and places' (p15) made during two field trips to the Eastern Goldfields in 1997. Dowley describes her experiences of travelling from Perth to the Kalgoorlie-Laverton region and her incorporation into a network of Aboriginal people who are connected in some way to the 1921 escapees and who were also once residents of an Aboriginal mission near Laverton, known as Mt Margaret. This section may present problems for readers unfamiliar with the Aboriginal history of the region. For instance, the author introduces persons such as the chief chronicler of Mt Margaret Mission history, Margaret Morgan, and Aboriginal people who become key participants in the research, but provides minimal clues about their identity and significance in the region's history. Only later in the book does the reader obtain an appreciation of the significance of this event in Mt Margaret Mission history. Of interest to researchers is Dowley's account of her sensitive and successful negotiation of approval for her research plans. A jarring note in this section is her reference to another researcher, who, she indicates, was regarded as less successful in this process.

While the 'Journeying' section suggests that chance played a large role in who Dowley met and where she travelled, later in the book the author describes her considerable preparation prior to the first field trip. This entailed background research, interviews with other researchers, and advice from a prominent local Aboriginal woman. Consideration could be given to the inclusion in a future edition of a section named, perhaps, 'Awakening', in which the author describes her initial ignorance of Eastern Goldfields Aboriginal history, her discovery of this event, and her preparatory work to enrich its historical record. Although these matters are revealed in an appendix, the chronology of this research process is lost in the current organisation of the book.

The section named 'Speakings' consists of skillfully edited transcriptions of tape-recorded oral accounts which were 'deliberately constructed by the speakers for this book' (p71). They provide readers with glimpses of the history of a segment of the Eastern Goldfields' population, namely those who spent a significant proportion of their lives at Mt Margaret Mission. The accounts describe the Speakers' sense of loss of history about the 1921 event, while at the same time contain their own experiences of deception, entrapment, powerlessness, incarceration and escape. Memorable among these narratives are the contributions of Mr Ranji McIntyre and Mrs Rose Meredith, who both made their own separate journeys from the southwest back to the Eastern Goldfields region, and the experiences of others of evading removal from the region through taking sanctuary at Mt Margaret Mission. Some explanation of the order of the 'Speakings' is needed. If it derives from considerations of gender, status, genealogical links to the escapees and knowledge of the event, this is not clear.

The third section of the book, 'Writings', contains the documentary material accessed during the research and describes Dowley's experiences of locating and obtaining these records – 'not straightforward nor linear' (p222). Her account of locating potential sources, negotiating their access, writing with the knowledge of the likelihood that there are still 'potentially revelatory archival files' to be accessed will

resonate with experienced researchers and inform novices. Readers will find this section both interesting and informative as it includes copies of written records. Too often, such materials are merely listed in the reference section, depriving the reader of the richness of the historical records. The author distinguishes the contemporaneous from the more distant and probably more interpretative accounts; and between the recorders, according to whether they are of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal ancestry; and according to their relationship and roles with respect to the people involved in the 1921 event. There is only one contemporaneous Aboriginal written source: a letter by the Aboriginal activist, and founder of the Native Union of Western Australia, William Harris, published in a 1926 newspaper. Non-Aboriginal sources include police reports, the letters and diary of the Mt Margaret missionary (who is also the father of Margaret Morgan) and Moore River Settlement records. Included in the 'Writings' section is a sub-section termed 'Absences in contemporary writings' in which the author notes the lack of information about the 1921 event in sources where some mention could have been expected, such as Pamela Rajkowski's *Linden girl*.

'Writings' also contains summaries and extracts of oral history recorded by others before Dowley's own research. She mentions Bill Bunbury's 1986 interviews with Reggie Johnson, in which Johnson says he learnt about the incident from his father and with Margaret Morgan (whose father gave succour to the escapees). Dowley also refers to Margaret Morgan's own recording of oral history about the event that was not available for inclusion in this publication. These 'Writings' are quite different from the other 'Writings' and seem to be misplaced in this section. To recognise and preserve their difference, in a future edition, perhaps they could be distinguished as 'Previous or First Speakings'.

In the fourth section, 'A New Account', the author presents her own construction of the history of this event, using materials from the 'Speakings' and 'Writings' sections. The borrowed materials are clearly identified, so that the reader can locate them in these previous sections. Dowley's intentions here are several, including to demonstrate how 'this account also mirrors the experience of many other people' (p319), to honour her informants and show 'the continuation of the past in the present' (p318), and to show how she developed her interpretation of the history of this event.

In choosing to present her 'New Account' as a narrative rather than omniscient form, Dowley considers that she has overcome some difficulties in dealing with constructing a history about a cross-cultural event, and from incomplete and diverse materials. Dowley regards her account as interpretative rather than definitive. Firstly, because not all the facts about the 1921 incident are known, she needed to adopt an approach that could accommodate moving 'beyond the formal rules of evidence for historical writing' (p320). Secondly, fearing that her 'necessarily limited knowledge of Wongutha culture' could adversely affect her writing about the event, she had the New Account reviewed and approved by a 'Wongutha woman of high community regard' (p320). Dowley also had qualms about whether or not she had the 'right' or rightness to write about an event that she considers belonged to other people. The approval and support of her Speakers reassured her and helped her to decide that she could not 'contribute to the silence by keeping this story, this history concealed' (p321). However, as her own research shows, the history of her Aboriginal informants has not been concealed. Rather, it has been mostly ignored, incompletely transmitted, devalued and,

perhaps, deliberately suppressed. The present book points to the urgent need for the preservation of this history; *Through silent country* may inspire Aboriginal people to write their own Accounts.

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A terribly wild man: a biography of the Rev Ernest Gribble, by Christine Halse, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2002, 220pp, \$35.00, ISBN 186508753X (pbk).

A biography of the Reverend Ernest Gribble, the extraordinary and controversial missionary, is long overdue. Christine Halse's book grew out of her research for a PhD thesis, a task that took her to Yarrabah in far north Queensland and Forrest River Mission, now Oombulgurri, in the east Kimberley to interview people who knew Gribble. However, *A terribly wild man* is important for reasons other than biography.

The book traces the life of Ernest Gribble from his boyhood at Jerilderie in the time when the Kelly gang held up the town to his death at Yarrabah mission in north Queensland in 1957. He went to school at Warangesda mission in New South Wales and was with his father at a failed mission in the Gascoyne in 1885. His name is associated with missions at Yarrabah, Mitchell River and Palm Island in Queensland, Roper River in the Northern Territory and Forrest River. In 1922 Gribble reported Aboriginal accounts of murders at the Durack River and in 1926 he reported more killings, this time at the nearby Forrest River. Halse accepts in her book that these killings occurred.

In 1999, Rod Moran, a Perth journalist and book review editor for the *West Australian*, wrote *Massacre myth*, in which he rejected claims that any Aboriginal people were killed at either the Durack River or Forrest River. Since then both he and Dr Keith Windshuttle have been outspoken critics of certain Aboriginal statements about frontier murders. Moran, in *Quadrant* (Jan 2002), described such accounts as 'stories my mum and dad told me'.

Halse is one of three authors whose recent books incorporate Aboriginal recollections of violent encounters in the Kimberley. The others are anthropologist Ian Crawford and historian Mary Anne Jebb, who each spent many years working closely with Kimberley Aboriginal people to record the hidden side of history. In January, Crawford's book, *We won the victory*, was given poor reviews in the *West Australian* by Antonia Cavezzi and by Rod Moran in *Quadrant* in the same month. The reviewers' pri-

mary objection was the use of Aboriginal evidence in reference to the Forrest River massacre.

Halse's account of the Durack River murders is through the words of Clara Roberts, who said that she was a witness. Moran, in his review of *A terribly wild man* in the *West Australian*³ pointed out some errors of fact and took Halse to task for accepting the recollections of an Aboriginal woman who was said to be six years old in 1922. Clara Wanuarie legally married Herbert Oomar in 1922 and was at least sixteen, not six, when she witnessed the murders; old enough to remember the detail and corroborate the rumours. She married Robert Unjamurra Roberts some ten years after Herbert's death. Moran also claimed that Bishop Trower, 'assisted by' Police Inspector Spedding-Smith, conducted an investigation at the mission and established that the rumours were false. And this investigation is said to prove Halse wrong? Apart from the incongruous 'Father Brown' notion that a police inspector would assist a bishop in a murder investigation, the facts – while not proving Roberts and Halse are correct – do not prove they are wrong. In a letter of 23 July 1922 Gribble informed the Chief Protector, Mr Neville, that a group of Aboriginal people reported that police assistants shot a number of people at the Durack River. As the bishop was expected elsewhere, he could not spare the time to investigate the rumours.

Spedding Smith 'hitched' a ride with the bishop to interview those who made the original complaint, but they had already left the mission. He never visited the alleged murder site and reported to the Commissioner of Police that all he heard was hearsay and bush gossip. Bishop Trower, who was on a one-day inspection of the mission, did not investigate the matter and apparently accepted the inspector's findings. The police assistants admitted to shots being fired 'in self defence' but denied the murders.

This case was raised again at the Royal Commission inquiring into the Forrest River allegations when Mr Neville was quizzed. It was put to him that Bishop Trower made a report, but Neville did not confirm this and none has been seen. Neville stated that an inquiry (by Spedding-Smith) showed that shooting had occurred at the Durack, but found no proof of murder.

Jebb, in *Blood sweat and welfare*, accepted statements by Ngarinyin elders that Aborigines were shot at the Durack River in 1922. Howard Willis, in reviewing the book for the *West Australian*,⁴ echoed Moran's sentiments and referred her to the Royal Commission report claiming this proved the murder rumours to be false, which however it did not.

Even though the 1922 and 1926 allegations of murders could not be proven, the memories of violent encounters have endured amongst Kimberley Aboriginal people and should not be dismissed merely as 'stories my mum and dad told me'. In *A terribly wild man* Halse challenges the massacre myth version of frontier history endorsed by those who want a return to the 'happy picaninny' stories of sixty years ago.

³ *West Australian*, 29th June 2002

⁴ *West Australian* 24th August 2002

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Footnote style

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

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