

ABORIGINAL HISTORY



VOLUME THIRTEEN

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SPECIAL NOTE

That in order to keep together the two volumes of *Aboriginal History*, i.e. Vols. 11 and 12, which are dedicated to the memory of Dr Diane Barwick, this volume, No. 13, has been dated 1989. Volume 12, the second of the Barwick volumes, will be dated 1988 and is currently in production.

Editor of Vol. 13.

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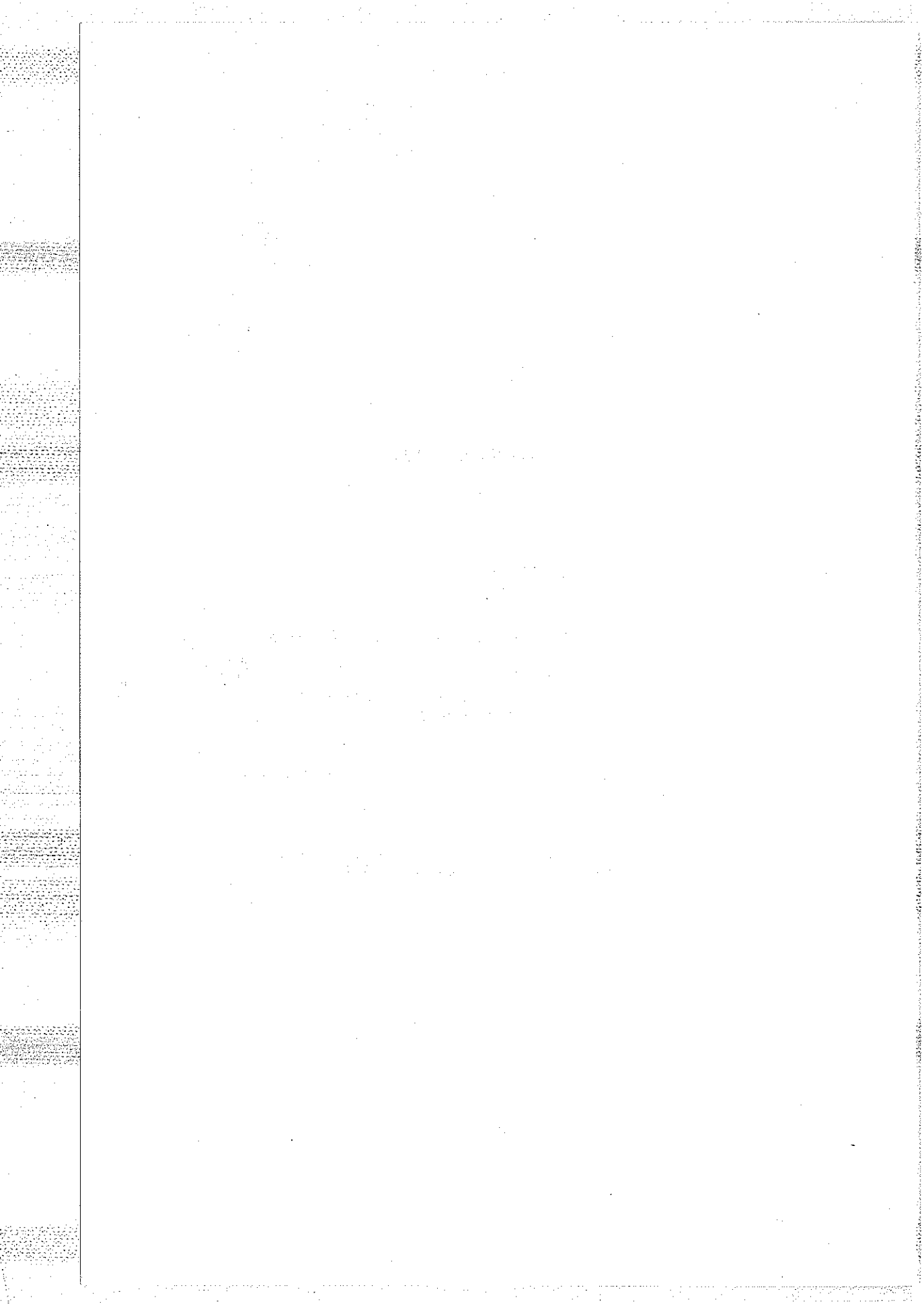


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WHO OWNS THE PAST ? - ABORIGINES AS CAPTIVES OF THE ARCHIVES

Henrietta Fourmile

The first part of the title of my paper is an obvious reference to the Australian Academy of Humanities Symposium, of that title which took place here in Canberra almost exactly five years ago. Papers given at that symposium were subsequently published under the editorship of Dr. Isabel McBryde in 1985.¹ In reading through those papers I was struck by their generally philosophical approach to issues of ownership regarding what was considered to be "the past." I was disappointed that a more realistic analysis of what constitutes ownership and how it is effected in relation to the past of indigenous peoples was not given, although Professor John Mulvaney in his paper, "A Question of Values: Museum and Cultural Property", in quoting American historian, Professor W.T. Hagan, did sum up the situation pretty well. The second part of the title of my paper refers directly to the reality for Aboriginal people, a reality we share with the American Indians, of being "captives of the archives."

In this paper I will be using the term 'archives' somewhat liberally to refer to all kinds of collections of information and documents concerning Aborigines, their cultures and affairs, maintained in non-Aboriginal hands.

Dr McBryde, in her introduction to the book, *Who owns the past*, declared that

"The past is the possession of those in power; the past belong to the victor."²

G. K. Chesterton once remarked, concerning the possibility of German occupation of France at the outbreak of World War 1, that 'the culture of the conquered can be injured and extinguished simply because it can be explained by the conqueror' [thus creating a] German picture of France [in which] Germany would 'claim to interpret all the people to themselves'.³

In referring to definitions by Winnebago Indian, Reuben Snake, of what it is to be Indian, Professor Hagan suggested another:

To be an Indian is having non-Indians control the documents from which other non-Indians write their version of your history

He adds further to this reality by pointing out that

...the historical Indian may be the captive of the archives, but the key to those archives is in the hands of non-Indian historians.

He goes on:

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1 McBryde, 1985.

2 Ibid:6.

3 Quoted by Stanner 1979:299-300.

... for the Native American this is more than just some intellectual game. What is at stake for the Indian is his historical identity, and all that can mean for self-image and psychological well-being. At stake also is the very existence of tribes, and the validity of their claims to millions of acres of land and to the compensation for injustices suffered in earlier transactions with the federal and state governments.⁴

The parallels for Aboriginal people in Australia are so obvious as to require no further exploration here.

It is this reality and the way that ownership of the past is effected in Australia, thereby imposing a serious barrier to Aboriginal people in the making of our own history, that I want to address in this paper. I shall focus on three aspects which effectively ensure that ownership and control of Aboriginal historical resources are denied us - these concern

- (1) the distribution of Aboriginal historical resources
- (2) problems of access; and
- (3) issues of legal ownership.

The Distribution of Aboriginal Historical Resources

In their *Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander history*, Barwick, Mace and Stannage (1979) disclose an impressive array of sources of information and documents concerning Aborigines and Islanders. Most of these are in principle available to everyone, including Aborigines and Islanders who can locate them. There are some notable exceptions, for example, police records and some government documents - information, needless to say, which would detail much about the strategies of officials charged with the administration of Aboriginal and Islander affairs.

However, virtually all of these records encompassed in the *Handbook* exist in centralised locations, primarily the capital cities, and frequently across state borders, thousands of kilometres away from the communities to whom they have relevance. Furthermore Aboriginal communities themselves have no library facilities in which the records and documents can be held and used.

According to the *Review of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies*,

Studies of the Aborigines have been stimulated to the extent that the Aboriginal people have probably become, next to the American Indians, the most extensively studied ethnic group in the world.⁵

Yet copies of this research and resultant publications are rarely ever given to the relevant Aboriginal people or communities, although in recent years there has been more accountability by researchers to Aboriginal people.

Our old people are our most valuable sources of our history and culture. It is absolutely essential that we have our own historical resources located in our own communities for ready access to assist our elders in their recollections of our history. Schools in Aboriginal communities are in desperate need of essential reference material so Aboriginal children can learn about their own history and cultural traditions.

This lack of our collections of books, documents, and records constitutes a severe impediment in our quest to make and pass on our own history.

⁴ Hagan 1978:135, 138.

⁵ Walsh 1982:16.

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Problems of Access

This basic lack of equity in the distribution of Aboriginal historical and cultural resources creates immense problems of access. For the economically impoverished Aboriginal community access to these resources imposes a considerable financial burden: the expense of travel and the need to purchase copies of important items, eg. photographs, birth, marriage and death certificates, and books and articles concerning particular communities, make the quest for our history beyond the financial reach of the huge majority of Aboriginal people.

Important and original collections of my cultural resources, resources of the Kunggandji and Yidinji people of the rainforest region around Cairns, are located in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane. Unless one can obtain a research grant it is simply beyond our means to be able to do our own historical research.

Much of Aboriginal people's own sense of powerlessness stems from ignorance because of this lack of access to information about matters which control our lives. An informed Aboriginal population will have a much greater feeling of power over its own destiny.

Aboriginal people also remain widely ignorant of the existence of records and documents which concern them because the holding institutions have never informed them. I have come across essential resources simply by chance. I lived in Adelaide for two years ignorant of the fact the S.A. Museum had collections of our cultural property gathered by Tindale and McConnell in the 1930s. It was only after I had been told by a former museum employee living in another city that those collections existed that I was able to see my clan designs for the first time in my life. Perchance my visit coincided with that of Tindale and I was naturally eager to find out what else he knew. To my utter amazement he brought out a volume of the genealogical studies he made at Yarrabah in October 1938 and there, before my eyes was my family history extending back to the 1860's. In addition there were photographs of my great-grand-mother and other relatives. My mum and dad were recorded as children. Tindale's genealogies, collected over a period of years relate probably to most of the Aboriginal population of Australia. For many Aboriginal people today his genealogies are the essential key to their tribal identity, to ancestral lands, and to finding relatives. Yet their existence has only just become known in the last couple of years - much because of my own efforts. Many people who have seen their family histories and photographs in Tindale's volumes have cried with joy, but there is also bitter resentment about the fact that we were never told about their existence. And this surely raises not a few ethical and legal questions about the custody and control of personal information regarding still living individuals.

Likewise, while on a visit to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, the name "Fourmile" rang a bell with one of the staff member. She located tapes recorded in 1959 of my grandfather speaking language. Some of my people have been trying to encourage and revive our language for about the last 10 years yet the existence of valuable resources like these remained unknown to them. One might well ask: is it deliberate government policy to limit funds to institutions like the state museums and the Institute so that they are generally unable to compile comprehensive registers and send catalogues or inventories of their collections of our property to us, and thus maintaining our ignorance for political purposes? As we all know, an ignorant population is very susceptible to political manipulation.

Even when Aboriginal people visit institutions holding their cultural and historical resources the problems don't dissolve. Aboriginal people feel ill-at-ease and self-conscious when entering white institutions which emanate an entirely alien cultural presence. So much depends upon the person at the counter. As Professor Hagan relates:

I suspect that many archivists do not fully appreciate their power to facilitate the researchers, Indian or non-Indian. After working in this field for over a quarter century, I am still dependent to a disturbing degree upon the good will of archivists and librarians. The materials are so varied and vast that the researcher who thinks he knows exactly what is available on his subject is deluding himself.⁶

If this is what Professor Hagan himself feels, what must Indians feel, or Aborigines, especially when sometimes they only have some vague notion of what they're looking for?

Also many institutions contain documents and records which might be quite embarrassing to the institutions themselves because of their past histories in dealing with Aboriginal people. Under such circumstances it is quite conceivable that counter clerks have been instructed to feign ignorance about archival collections.

And finally, on the issue of access, there is a language barrier for many of us with regards to what is written about us. The institutional language of government, law, economics, anthropology and so on, the jargon, is simply incomprehensible to many of us to whom English is a second or even third language.

The nett effect of the lack of our own cultural and historical resources and the difficulties of access to those that exist elsewhere is to foster our dependence on non-Aboriginal specialists in law, history, anthropology, education and in Aboriginal affairs generally. They effectively become our brokers in transactions between Aboriginal communities and the various institutions and the public at large which have an interest in our affairs, and thereby usurp our role as history-tellers. This in turn causes much resentment. As Professor Tatz pointed out:

I am hyper-aware that what knowledge we have, all that is heard, seen and read is white interpretation of Aboriginal being. For Aborigines the ultimate indignity is the sovereignty of those who control the gathering and dissemination of the written and spoken word concerning their situation.⁷

While the situation is changing with the emergence of Aboriginal scholars, historians, and story-tellers like Kevin Gilbert, Bill Rosser, Marcia Langton, Colin Johnson, Roberta Sykes, Maureen Watson - just to name a few who quickly spring to mind - in the context of Aboriginal sovereignty it is completely untenable that one "nation" (ie European Australia) should have a monopoly and control of such a substantial body of information concerning another, the Aboriginal "nation".

Issues of Legal Ownership

The final point I wish to make concerns ownership in the legal sense. The information collected about us is simply not owned by us. With regards to public collections of documents these are Crown property in right of either the Commonwealth or the respective states with ownership vested in various public institutions like libraries and museums. With regards to private collections and research these are protected by laws regarding ownership of both real and intellectual property. Information we give to researchers becomes their intellectual property protected under the *Copyright Act*. I have been in the position of having to ask permission to use records regarding my own family history.

A survey of legislation conducted by Adrian Marrie (1987) under which various collections of our cultural property and records and documents concerning us are administered is most revealing. For example, in State and Commonwealth museum

6 Hagan 1978:141-2.

7 Tatz 1979:86.

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legislation around Australia, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies is included here, there is no provision or requirements for Aboriginal input into the management of our cultural resources. There is no requirement for Aborigines to be members of the governing boards or councils, no provision for some form of Aboriginal management or advisory committee, and only in the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* is there requirement for the employment of Aboriginal and Islander people. Thus we have been legislated out of any effective say over the management of our cultural resources in the museums and the Institute.

That there are Aboriginal members of controlling boards and councils, and some Aboriginal advisory committees is beside the point because without requirements in legislation and the effective definition of powers and responsibilities their existence is merely token. No provision or requirement in legislation means no power. It means for example, that the various museum boards are legally empowered to dispose of our cultural resources without any legal obligation to consult with us. Under s. 13 (3) of the *South Australian Museum Act 1976 - 1985*, the Board, with vested ownership of the world's finest museum collection of Aboriginal cultural property,

In the performance of any of its functions may, upon such terms and conditions as it thinks fit -

b) sell, lend, exchange or dispose of any objects of scientific or historical interest; or

c) lend or otherwise make available to any institution, body or person carrying out scientific or historical research any object of scientific or historical interest from the State collection.

Still with the S.A. Museum, it was pointed out in the *Museum Policy and Development in S.A.: Final Report* that the documentation was "one of the most distinctive strengths of the collections in the Division of Man,"⁸ - now the Division of Anthropology. Elsewhere the *Report* states that:

The call for information on Aboriginal culture in schools, colleges, and universities and by private researchers has never been greater. In addition, museums provide a resource of information for government departments and authorities concerning extremely important issues involving Aboriginal people today in the field of land rights, health, housing, education, social welfare and cultural development. This will be an ever-expanding role for the Museum in the future.⁹

And all virtually obtainable free of Aboriginal controls, discretion largely remaining with the curators whose powers as public servants in the face of officialdom are extremely limited. In a political climate becoming increasingly inimical to Aboriginal interests, who uses this information and to what ends is of grave concern. The situation is compounded because the Museum contains much information of personal concern to thousands of Aboriginal people throughout Australia, the existence of which is unknown to them.

Likewise Aboriginal heritage legislation around Australia is seriously defective. This legislation does not recognise Aboriginal legal ownership of Aboriginal cultural resources and does not put into effect the principles of self-determination - supposedly official government policy in most states. Instead such legislation is highly protectionist with wide discretionary powers governing all aspects of Aboriginal heritage vesting with a government minister. Aboriginal heritage committees, where they do exist, are advisory

⁸ Edwards 1981:31.

⁹ Ibid:66.

committees adding a further insult. Such advisory committees merely emphasise the fact that ownership and ultimate authority over our heritage rests in non-Aboriginal hands. A partial exception is the new S.A. *Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1988*, which gives unprecedented power to traditional owners: under certain circumstances the Minister must delegate his powers to the traditional owners. But even this legislation is divisive, leaving the heritage concerns of perhaps five-sixths of S.A.'s Aboriginal population, who might be construed by the powers that be as non-traditional, in the discretionary hands of the Minister with no recourse to independent arbitration.

Aboriginal heritage legislation is inferior to that enacted to provide for the management and protection of the various aspects of non-Aboriginal cultural heritage. It falls far short of what is possible, within the current constitutional and legislative framework, to provide for the best protection of our heritage and for its ownership and management by statutory involvement of Aboriginal people themselves.

Another area of pressing concern, and not raised in the symposium despite its obvious candidature, is the issue of the protection of Aboriginal folk-lore. Professor Alice Tay, however, did make a passing comment that:

Legal systems have not tackled such thorny question as whether owners of manuscripts or carriers of secret traditions - whether Masons or Aborigines - should have the power to veto the study and publication of these traditions or of relics associated with them, except on the basis of traditional legal principles such as breach of confidence.¹⁰

It seems that a golden opportunity to examine "such thorny questions" was passed by. The Working Party on the Protection of Aboriginal Folklore was formed in 1975 in response to the abuse felt by Aboriginal people over the commercial exploitation of their sacred designs. The high quality of the *Report of the Working Party* belied its shabby presentation as a document. It was released in January 1983, virtually without publicity, a year after its completion. It seemed that the Government preferred not to know about it. However, it was regarded by Peter Banki, Executive Officer of the Australian Copyright Council, as "perhaps that most significant event in intellectual property law in years."¹¹

As Banki points out:

The Report contains innovative recommendations - far beyond the boundaries of copyright ... not only as a suggested means of protecting an important cultural heritage, in addition to offering users improved certainty in the law, but as an attempt to employ fresh ideas in intellectual and industrial property law.¹²

In 1988 we are still awaiting an Aboriginal Folklore Act to provide us with adequate protection of an integral part of our cultural heritage.

At the core of the problem concerning the documentation and recording of our culture and history is the fact that much of it is a shared enterprise undertaken between members of two quite different cultural backgrounds. The documentation itself is a record of the interactions which make up our history. Simple justice would acknowledge the rights of both parties not only to share the physical records of that history but also to share responsibility for their custody and management so that the rights of one party are not prejudiced in order to

¹⁰ Tay 1985:107.

¹¹ Banki 1983:3.

¹² Ibid:1.

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benefit the other. Anglo-Aboriginal history is evidence that simple justice has not occurred and that Aboriginal people have suffered as a consequence.

What is all too evident from the situation I've just outlined is the total lack of any cultural policy formulated between Aborigines and governments which gives Aboriginal people ownership and control over important historical and cultural resources which might be housed in Aboriginal cultural facilities comparable to those available to non-Aboriginal Australians. It is a fact to be thoroughly deplored that in Australia today in no capital city, except Adelaide, is there a major Aboriginal cultural centre owned and controlled by Aboriginal people to complement the many facilities which exist for the celebration of non-Aboriginal culture.

This lack of cultural policy has disastrous consequences for Aboriginal people. What we experience is the effective withholding of our cultural and historical resources from us. We see this as part of a deliberate strategy of assimilation, the real agenda behind the official policy rhetoric of self-determination. If the revitalisation and resurgence of Aboriginal culture is to fully take place, and so that we can contribute our culture to the world heritage on our own terms, then we must once again be able to own, control and enjoy our cultural and historical resources housed within our own community facilities.

Around Australia the establishment of community cultural centres and keeping places is gathering apace. Library facilities within such centres are essential as are facilities for the display of the documents of our history. It is important for Aboriginal people and visitors to see the various pieces of legislation and regulations instituted for our protection; the exemption certificates; the police records; Aborigines Protection and Welfare Board Reports; the "Stud Books"; parliamentary debates recorded in *Hansard*; the photographs, cartoons and so on, for everyone to understand what went on.

The liberation of Aboriginal people can only take place with the help of the educated understanding of the non-Aboriginal community which must confront fundamental truths about its own character. Anglo-Australians must realise that they have no mortgage on civilized behaviour, that at the height of the British Empire and their belief in their innate superiority they too were capable of some of the grossest acts of inhumanity perpetrated by one people on another in the history of mankind. That, for them, will be one of their great lessons of history.

In concluding, I wish again to return to Professor Hagan's words:

... the historical Indian may be the captive of the archives, but the key to those archives is in the hands of non-Indian historians.

The symbolism of the key is paramount representing as it does in European culture, freedom, maturity, authority, responsibility, ownership and control, or to those who don't have the keys, the converse.

To Aboriginal people, the key to our historical and cultural resources and therefore to our cultural and historical identities is firmly clasped in a white hand. Therefore

To be an Aborigine is having non-Aborigines control the documents from which other non-Aborigines write their version of our history.

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LEAVING THE DESERT: ACTORS AND SUFFERERS IN THE ABORIGINAL EXODUS FROM THE WESTERN DESERT

Jeremy Long

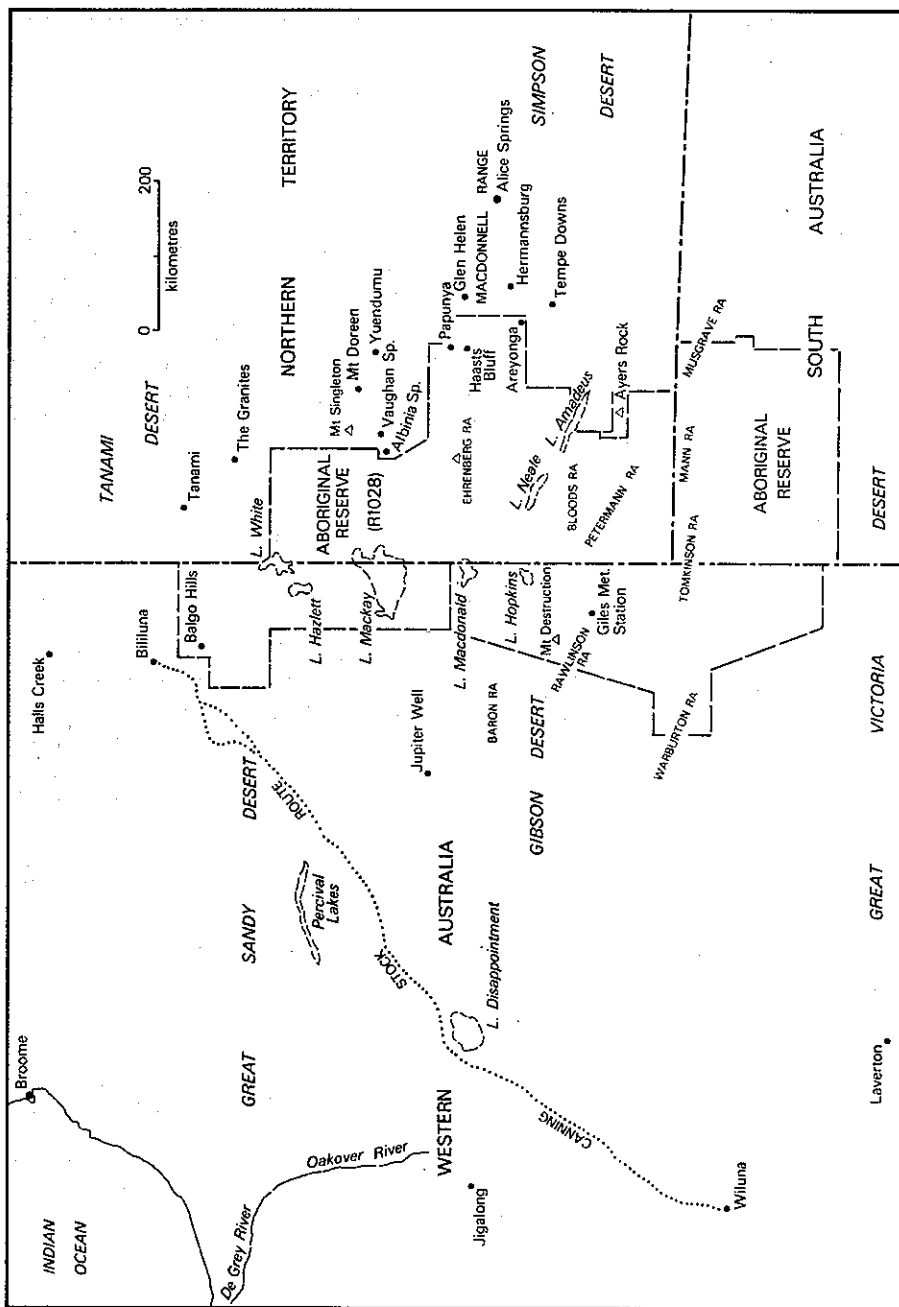
In 1980 the Australian Parliament passed the Aboriginal Development Commission Act providing for the establishment of a Capital Account to promote Aboriginal 'development, self-management and self-sufficiency . . . as a recognition of the past dispossession and dispersal' of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. 'Dispossession and dispersal' is an apt summary of the experience of Aboriginal people as they came progressively into contact with settlers around Australia in the years after 1788 and most notably in the fifty years between 1830 and 1880 when the pastoral frontiers were expanding rapidly. But the emergence from their desert homelands of small groups of Aboriginal people in October 1984 and again in October 1986 provided reminders that 'dispossession and dispersal' was not the experience of all Aboriginal groups in all parts of the continent. Large tracts of desert and semi-desert country in the interior, and smaller areas of relatively rugged and inaccessible forest and swampy country in, for example, the tropical coastal regions, have never been settled and there has been no dispossession, no ousting of the original inhabitants. In a few parts of these remote regions settlement was attempted only to be abandoned in the face of Aboriginal resistance and a difficult environment, but for the most part no settlement has ever been even attempted.

The Simpson Desert is one such region (Hercus 1985) and the Western Desert is another and the largest. Extending from the Nullarbor Plain in the south to the Kimberley cattle country in the north and between the limits of pastoral occupation in Western Australia on one side and in the Northern Territory and South Australia to the east and including the Great Victoria, Gibson, Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts, the Western Desert has remained for practical purposes part of 'Aboriginal Australia' rather than of 'White Australia'.¹

Jeremy Long retired from the Australian Public Service in 1987 after serving as Commissioner for Community Relations (1982/86) and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1975/82). He earlier worked in the Northern Territory as patrol officer (1955/57), settlement superintendent at Haasts Bluff (1958/59) and research officer (1960/68).

** When the late Dr Diane Barwick and others were first planning to produce this journal of Aboriginal History, I gave her an undertaking that I would offer an article on the contact history of the Pintupi. I have been able belatedly to make good this commitment mainly because the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in April 1987 gave me an appointment as a visiting research fellow and made available an office and other support. I acknowledge with grateful thanks the help of my colleagues at the Institute, and in particular Mrs Pat Ware who has seen countless drafts through the word processor, and of Mr Dick Kimber of Alice Springs who has patiently read some of those drafts and offered many comments, corrections and additional information.*

¹ Cf. Rowley's distinction between 'Colonial Australia' and 'Settled Australia' in *The destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Appendix B:375-378. The areas referred to here are shown as Aboriginal reserves or as 'thinly settled or unoccupied' in Rowley's map p.377.



Locality map, Central Australia [John Heywood, Cartographic Unit, RSPacS]

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In the nineteenth century the inhabitants of the Western Desert lived largely unaware of and scarcely affected by the long and troubled history of settlement in Australia. Several small parties of men with camels and horses passed through the region on exploring expeditions between 1872 and 1874 and at long intervals during the next eighty years. Early in this century a fragile line of wells, marked on maps as the 'Canning Stock Route', was sunk in the west of the region and for some fifty years herds of cattle were occasionally driven from north to south along this 1200km trail. The Trans-Australian Railway line was completed through the southern edge of the area in 1917. Church missions and governments established a scattering of communities on the desert fringes and in one notable instance missionaries, acting in defiance of State government policy, established themselves at the Warburton Ranges in the heart of the region in 1933.

By 1958, 170 years after the first British settlement on the continent, there probably remained about 200 Aboriginal citizens of Australia many of whom had never laid eyes on any white person and who still supported themselves in or near their traditional lands. A monarch in England had claimed sovereignty over their lands in international law but colonial, state and federal governments in Australia had done little to disturb their enjoyment of their traditional rights to occupy and use these lands. Yet most of the traditional inhabitants of this vast area, amounting to perhaps one quarter of the land surface of Australia, had already left their homelands and had moved out to live at cattle and sheep properties, mission stations, government ration depots and settlements, mining townships and railway sidings on the fringes of the desert.

Some have been inclined to take it for granted that Aboriginal people would be attracted from 'the bush' to live in association with the settlers but it does not seem immediately obvious that the attractions of the settled areas would have been strong enough to prompt long treks across unfamiliar territory to live among strangers. Some of the early emigration took place when the cattle stations on the desert fringes were by all accounts dangerous places, and places where a lot of work was demanded in exchange for meagre rations.² Many observers have therefore found it puzzling, even upsetting, that so many Aboriginal people should have left their homelands, moved by 'some irresistible attraction towards centres of white man's culture'.³ Explanations have generally emphasised the attraction 'of a regular and dependable food supply for a lesser effort than is involved in nomadic hunting and foraging'⁴ and for the desert people an assured supply of good water is likely to have been a significant advantage. But less tangible attractions are mentioned by some who have suggested that 'sheer curiosity' may have been more important than any hankering for material goods among the desert people.⁵

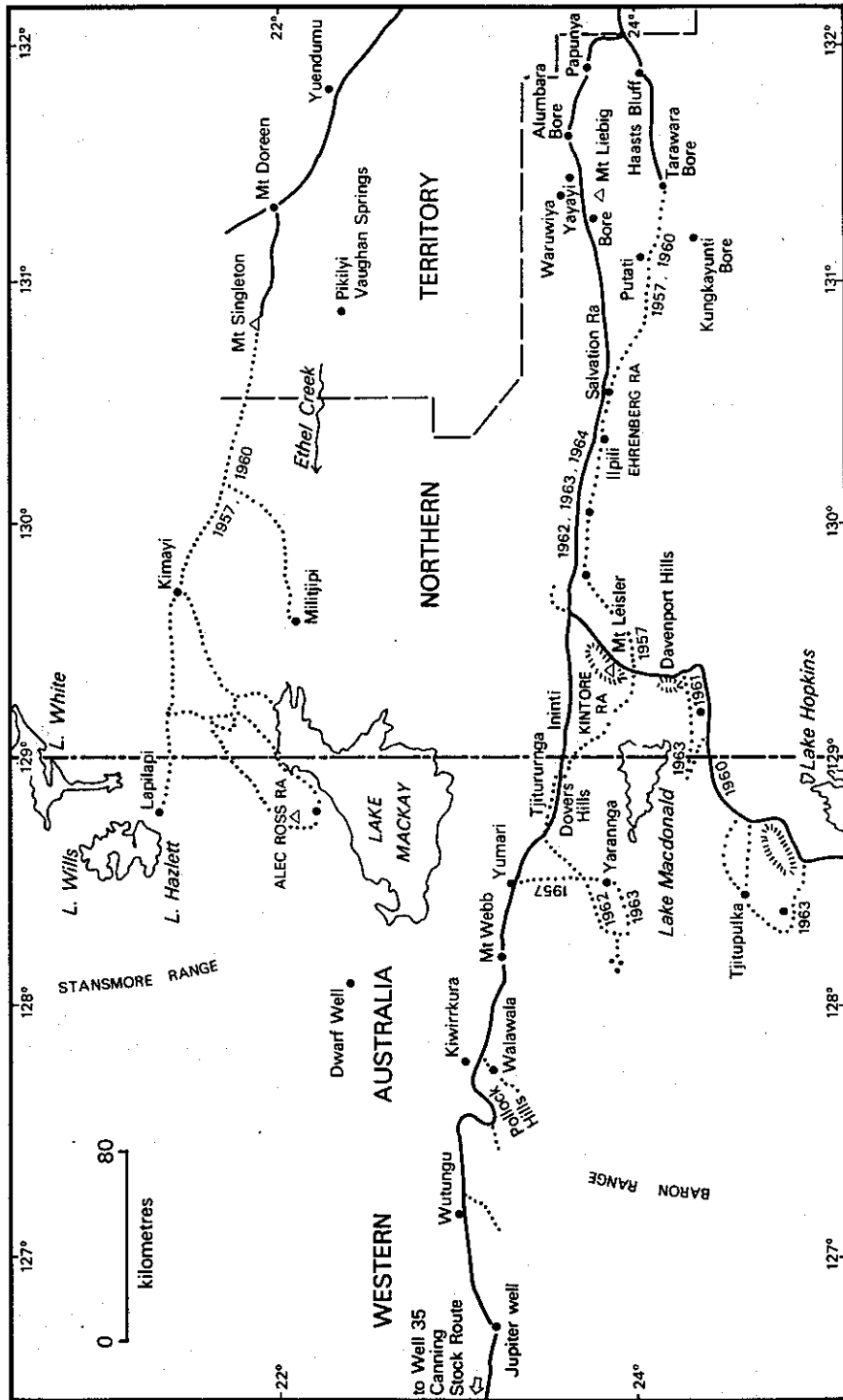
Those who have been inclined to assume that Aboriginal people would (or should) have avoided, or at least not sought, contact have sought to explain the depopulation of the desert areas in terms of duress exerted by white authorities - 'round ups' designed to clear areas for various purposes and to assemble Aboriginal people at places convenient for government or

2 Cf. Kolig 1978.

3 Anon 1958:40.

4 Stanner 1960:70.

5 For general discussion of the way anthropologists and others have sought to explain the migration of Aboriginal people to settled areas see also F. Merlan, 'Flour, sugar, tea: materialism and idealism in Australian Aboriginal anthropology'. Paper prepared for biennial conference of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1988. Meggitt 1962:336; Tonkinson 1974:23; 1978:130.



Map showing areas visited by Welfare Branch Patrols 1957-64 [John Heywood, Cartographic Unit, RSPacS]

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missionary purposes.⁶ There have been a few instances of interventions by missions and governments which can be used to lend some colour of plausibility to such explanations but for the most part the facts do not fit. Everywhere it appears that emigration from unsettled areas began before any interventions by missions or governments and in many places continued in the face of active discouragement. Even the most superficial examination of the process reveals Aboriginal people as active participants, as people making choices and decisions about their lives, rather than as helpless victims.⁷

In different areas of the desert and of the neighbouring settled areas the history of emigration has been different. Local events and local topography have influenced the decisions taken by Aboriginal and other people and the actions of governments and other authorities. But it seems likely that, for all the local variations in the history of interaction, there may be broadly similar forces at work, encouraging or discouraging white intrusions on the one hand and Aboriginal emigration on the other.

I took part in the interaction process for a few years in one section of the long desert frontier roughly from the South Australian - Northern Territory border north to Lake Hazlett and between Papunya in the east and the Canning Stock Route in the west. The following account is therefore based in part on my own experiences and discussions with some of the Aboriginal people involved, mainly between 1957 and 1975, and on reports and papers I wrote during that time. The main focus is on the part of the region which was and is occupied by people commonly referred to as Pintupi. But I also refer to the area to the south occupied by the people whom the Pintupi refer to as Pitjapitja, who are more widely known as Pitjantjatjara and who occupy the Petermann Range and Blood's Range area of the Northern Territory.⁸

Early contacts.

The first published reference to the Pintupi seems to date from 1930 when several different parties visited the eastern margin of their lands. Before then intrusions into the Pintupi lands had been few and transient. Ernest Giles in 1872 and 1874 approached their territory. On his first expedition he reached and named the Ehrenberg Range at the end of September, 1872, but, finding no water, retreated.⁹ These hills seem to mark the approximate eastern limit of the area used by the Pintupi. On 2 February, 1874, on his second attempt to cross the desert he rode north from the Rawlinson Range to Mt Destruction in hot summer

6 Eg P. Nathan and D. Lechleitner. *Settle down country*. For a critique of this approach and an interesting discussion of Aboriginal and white responses to the situations on the Northern Territory frontier, see also T. Rowse 'Aborigines as historical actors: evidence and inference' *Historical Studies* 22.87.

7 See also Read & Japaljarri 1978; Kolig 1987.

8 The term Winanpa or Wenamba is sometimes applied to groups living south of Lake Macdonald and north of the Petermanns. The Warlpiri, north-eastern neighbours, tend to refer to the Pintupi as 'Bindabu' (Cf Thomson 1975:x). See also Myers 1980:28-29; Tindale 1974:23. Several accounts of Pintupi contact history have been published, notably Myers 1986:30-46, but most have been brief narratives in volumes devoted to the paintings of the Papunya school. One of them (Kimber 1988) provides a longer history, as do unpublished reports of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Penny et al. 1979; Kimber 1982)

9 Giles 1889:64-65.

weather and again retired having lost three horses on the 50 km. journey.¹⁰ On neither of these excursions into the margins of Pintupi country did he meet any Aboriginal people.

Colonel Egerton Warburton traversed the country of the southern Walpiri (Ngalia) in May and June, 1873, on his way from Alice Springs to the west coast. In early June he rode west into Pintupi territory south of Ethel Creek and must have been close to Lake Mackay when he turned back.¹¹ (If his map was accurate Warburton would actually have found Lake Mackay, since it shows his course as running more than 160 km west of Albinia Spring. It appears, however, that in fact he travelled in a more south-westerly direction between sand ridges and probably turned back from a point about 40 km north of the Kintore Ranges.) He then went north and travelled through the sandridge country of the Pintupi's northern neighbours on his way westward to the Oakover River.

William Tietkens, who had been Giles' second-in-command in 1873/74 and 1875, was the first white man to travel far into the Pintupi country during his expedition of 1889 when he found and named the Kintore Range and Lake Macdonald and defined the limits of Lake Amadeus. On 17 May, 1889, Tietkens came on recently burnt country south of the Ehrenberg range and thereafter as he travelled west he saw many signs of Aboriginal occupation but did not meet any people. He found what he took to be the remains of signal fires on top of Mt Leisler and commented that 'the native population must be very small indeed, as not a vestige of a camp has been seen anywhere'. Later, when he was west of Lake Macdonald (6 June), he found more burnt country among the claypans and some native camps, suggesting to him that a 'large population' visited the country. For the next few days as he travelled around the south of the Lake he saw occasional 'smoke fires' but still no Aborigines. South of Davenport Hills he found a large rockhole with several camps nearby and a cave with 'idle or playful drawings'. A few kilometres farther on he found fresh tracks of three people going west and a recently built 'rain wurley'. Farther south he found more 'wurlies' near a native well and rockhole and a few days later noted fires in several directions. When he reached Lake Amadeus he noted that the country was 'not frequented by blacks'.

These first visitors were sponsored by pastoral interests and they hoped to find useful grazing lands or at least country good enough to allow stock to travel between South Australia and its Northern Territory and the colony of Western Australia. Though Giles found some attractive country farther south in the Petermann Ranges and in the ranges along the South Australian border and into Western Australia, the results of these travels were disappointing enough to ensure that no pastoral settlement was attempted and the inhabitants were left in peace by the cattle men who were taking up land in Central Australia in the 1880s and 1890s.

Later visitors to the desert up to 1930, and many of those after that date, were mostly hoping to find gold. The most remarkable of these prospecting parties was led by the Hon. David Carnegie who travelled with camels and horses through some of the same country as Tietkens in May 1897. In September/October 1896 he had ridden north from the Western Australian goldfields through the spinifex-covered downs of what he called the 'Great Undulating Desert of Gravel' about 220 miles west of the Northern Territory border, on his way to Hall's Creek. On his return journey southward, after spending the hottest months resting at Hall's Creek and acquiring camels for the return trip, he travelled well to the east, skirting Lake White and, riding almost due south from Stansmore Range, passed to the west of Lake Mackay. He ventured the remarkably accurate observation that 'it is more than

¹⁰ Giles 1889:283-291.

¹¹ Warburton 1875:168-173.

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probable that a large salt lake exists in this locality, possibly connecting in a broken line Lake White and Lake Macdonald¹² There at 'Dwarf Well' he met Pintupi when he came on a camp of 12 or more people and captured one of the men to lead the party to water. Again near Mt Webb (Winparrku), farther south in the heart of the Pintupi country, he met a small group of 8 or 9 people and, finding in their abandoned camp many 'message sticks', pearl shells and spears and other objects, remarked that 'certainly for its size this was the best appointed tribe we had seen'.¹³ Near Winnecke Hills, west of the Kintore Range, he met two women, with a dead black cat, and took one as a guide for a few miles. He found thirteen bark 'portmanteaus' in their camp and concluded that 'numerous natives must have been in this camp'.¹⁴ He found tracks of a family near what he took to be the Davenport Hills and captured one man who led them to a nearby water.¹⁵ South and south-west of there he travelled for many days through the southern margins of Pintupi country without seeing any signs of Aboriginal people until he was near the western end of the Rawlinson Ranges.

For many years the country apparently had few visitors. In 1913 C.H. Walker led a four-man prospecting expedition with ten camels from Alice Springs to Wiluna. Finding their way west blocked by a great salt lake (Lake Mackay), they travelled south to the Kintore Range, south-west around Lake Macdonald and then westward by way of the Baron Range on a line north of Carnegie's route. (They seem not to have had maps of Tietkens' or Carnegie's journeys and their own 'discovery' of a vast salt lake was not recorded by the official map-makers.) They encountered a group of about 30 people (probably Warlpiri) in the area of Mount Farewell and they saw fires and followed fresh tracks almost every day as they examined the Kintore Range and travelled west of Lake Macdonald. But the few people they saw fled at the sight of the party and their camels until, near the edge of Carnegie's 'undulating desert of gravel' they came upon an old woman, apparently abandoned at a rock-hole, whom they supplied with bread and tea. Among the spears and other implements abandoned at one camp west of Baron Range they found 'a very old make of hatchet'. It appears that an Afghan visited the Lake Macdonald area with a camel team, hunting and trading for dingo scalps, perhaps in the 1920s. I found the leg bone of a camel at Yarangga well in 1962 and informants said that this water had been visited by an Afghan with a string of camels. Terry reports that a lone Afghan riding a camel was believed to have travelled from Wiluna in Western Australian to the telegraph line in 1904 and reported finding a large lake roughly where Lake Mackay is.¹⁶

Some of the encounters Aboriginal men and women had with travellers on these brief visits to the Pintupi country were no doubt terrifying and all were more or less disturbing, even when they avoided any direct contact. But all the contacts were fleeting and it seems unlikely that all the intrusions into the lands of the Pintupi up to 1930 had of themselves any marked effect on life in the area.

12 Ibid:393.

13 Ibid:394

14 Ibid:397.

15 Carnegie believed that after leaving Mt Webb he travelled to the east of Lake Macdonald but it seems that he was actually west of the Lake and that his 'Davenport Hills' were the hills now marked on maps as Turner Hills and Emery Range.

16 Terry 1934:306.

Hermannsburg Mission and the Pintupi

But emigration of Pintupi and neighbouring groups from their desert homelands had certainly begun by the 1920s. The anthropologist, Geza Roheim, writing about his field work in 1929 among Aranda and Luritja people at Alice Springs and Hermannsburg referred to the 'western tribes' Pindupi, Yumu and Pitchentara, and appears to have had more than one Pintupi informant at the mission and at a ceremony held at Bowson's Hole some 50kms to the south-west.¹⁷ When the Lutheran missionaries established themselves on the Finke River in June 1877, the Aboriginal people had been tentative in their first approaches.¹⁸ They made their first visit in August and it was a year before any women visited the mission. But by then a few men were doing some work for the mission and when in November 1879 a loading of government rations reached Hermannsburg over 100 people came and helped to consume the suddenly plentiful food. Apparently substantial numbers appeared each year after that when the annual loading of rations arrived and stayed through the Christmas period, only to leave as the rations were exhausted. Hartwig also notes that

They tended to leave the Mission in good seasons and to return in dry seasons, when, it may be assumed, they considered that the small amount of work demanded of them in return for European food would cost them less effort than securing a livelihood by traditional means.¹⁹

The missionaries were keen to attract and hold children to educate them in the Christian faith and many of the Aboriginal men were evidently hostile to these efforts. But in the 1880s, when Aboriginal men were spearing cattle on the neighbouring stations and themselves being pursued and shot by police and pastoralists in retaliation, the mission provided a relatively safe place for Aboriginal people to live, if not a secure refuge for men suspected of being involved in cattle killing. In the late 1880s and early 1890s the numbers normally living at the mission increased to about 100 of whom about one-third were at school. After the founding mission workers left in 1891 the mission was maintained by a reduced staff until Pastor Carl Strehlow arrived in October 1894 to re-establish the work and in these three years the attraction of the mission seems temporarily to have diminished. In the decades that followed the missionaries again recorded that in drought periods as in 1897/8 and 1903 'Aboriginal people from outlying areas sought food and refuge at Hermannsburg' and in good seasons numbers - and school enrolments - reduced again.²⁰

The violent engagements between Aboriginal 'resisters' on the neighbouring Tempe Downs and Glen Helen Stations in the early 1890s had not simply reduced the local male population. It appears that people were already moving in from beyond the frontier of settlement in the 1880s and 1890s and the young men who came in and took to cattle killing were likely to be shot, until in the 1890s police practice changed and more arrests were made.²¹ At the same time, others were settling at these western stations and

¹⁷ Roheim 1972:141, 1974a, 1974b. Roheim identifies one Pintupi informant as 'Lelil-tukutu' who is probably the 'Liltjukurba' who three years later travelled with T.G.H. Strehlow into Pintupi country.

¹⁸ Hartwig 1965:396.

¹⁹ Hartwig:501.

²⁰ Leske 1977:26, 29.

²¹ Hartwig:404-6.

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exploiting the possibilities for securing reliable food supplies in exchange for their labour, as some had been doing at Hermannsburg. When the Horn Scientific Exploring Expedition came to Tempe Downs homestead in the winter of 1894, they found 'a good number' of both 'Luritcha and Arunta Tribes' camping there.²² Farther north near Deering Creek, they came upon a gathering at a 'young men ceremony' which included some from the 'sandhill tribes from the westward' who 'declined to come into contact with white men'.²³ It seems likely that by 1922, when Pastor Strehlow died, much of the original population of the country within 150km to the west had moved east to the mission, where the population reached 190 that year, and to the stations north and south-west of the mission.²⁴

During the 1914-18 war, the Government terminated the annual 300 pound subsidy to the mission and this must have reduced its capacity to feed and employ Aboriginal people. But the subsidy was renewed at a lower level (200 pounds a year) in July 1923 and this may have encouraged a more expansionist mood.²⁵ In 1923 the Finke River Mission board, responsible for the Hermannsburg mission, adopted a new policy of extending its evangelical work to 'other native tribes' and of using Aboriginal evangelists in this 'spiritual outreach'. In that winter a party of 'three devoted Christians ... set out on a trip towards the west to get in touch with the Natives of the area and to explore the state of the country',²⁶ But, by coincidence, the day before they set out a group of 37 'wild natives' came in, most of whom had not previously visited the mission station and some of whom reportedly remained there.²⁷ It is at least possible that this party included some eastern Pintupi. (The Mission's report for the year to 30 June 1924 stated that 'twenty-seven came in from outside the station' - a substantial addition to a population of about 200).²⁸ The mission history does not reveal how far west the 1923 party ventured, nor a second group who apparently went out in 1924, but a memorial erected near Haasts Bluff to 'Early Mission Pioneers' records that the party (August Landara, Epaphras Entamintama and Robert Palyinka) travelled 'some 200 miles west and north-west of Hermannsburg from 2.7.23 to 22.8.23'²⁹ a distance that could have taken them well into Pintupi country. Albrecht records that the party 'took several young men back to Haasts Bluff'.³⁰ One Aboriginal informant, the late Alwin Malbangka, told me that a trip was made with camels by a party of Aboriginal evangelists from Hermannsburg before 1930 to a point west of the Kintore Range and that this party brought in quite a number of Pintupi to the Macdonnell Range country.

Evangelical trips in 1925 and 1926 seem to have been directed to groups living within the settled areas³¹ and in the dry years from 1927 to 1929 the mission was struggling to

22 Spencer 1896:111.

23 Winnecke 1897:34.

24 Strehlow considered that the bulk of the Kukatja people of the Haasts Bluff area had drifted in to Hermannsburg and Alice Springs by about 1920 (Carl Strehlow Research Foundation *Newsletter* 2.11, 1988).

25 Leske 1977:34.

26 *Ibid*:36.

27 *Ibid*:37.

28 NTA 1924:27.

29 Leske 1977:38, 48.

30 *Ibid*:48.

31 *Ibid*:38

feed the people adequately. Scurvy broke out and was only diagnosed and checked in August 1929, not long before relieving rains fell in December³² Again drought conditions appear to have prompted more Aboriginal people to move to the mission: two boys arrived whose mother had died on the journey in and one of them died soon after as a result of his privations.³³ The movement of people from the west was an embarrassment to the mission. The mission's response to the influx in 1923 had been to adopt a policy that no able-bodied people would be taken in unless there was work for them. All others had to leave, 'to try and make a living by rabbiting, dingo scalping or working on other stations'.³⁴

Government Policies

Up to this time the Territory Administration had demonstrated no active interest in the welfare of Aboriginal people living outside the limits of settlement, apart from declaring some lands as Aboriginal reserves. A policy of non-intervention had been generally followed from the beginning of settlement in the Territory and was the only practicable approach, given that neither administrators nor missionaries for the most part had any resources to spare for ventures into unsettled areas. The same theme was taken up from time to time by Administrators of the Territory and by their advisers. F.C. Urquhart, Administrator in 1922, wrote that

Wherever it can be done without danger or serious inconvenience to neighbouring white residents, I am of the opinion that it is best to as much as possible leave Aboriginals alone to lead their own free and natural lives until, if it is really desired to attempt their civilization, efficient agencies for the purpose are organised and set in motion.

Professor W. Baldwin Spencer, who served as Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines in 1912, had recommended a somewhat more interventionist approach, combining the creation of large remote reserves with the appointment of superintendents to teach the Aboriginal men to engage in pastoral and agricultural work. Such reserves might not only keep the Aborigines within their territories but even induce those who had moved to the fringes of pastoral areas to return to their country. But in Central Australia he had proposed only the continued maintenance of what he referred to as the Hermannsburg reserve - actually a mission lease.³⁵ He proposed that the area should be taken over by the Administration to 'serve as a reserve for the remnants of the southern central tribes where they can, under proper and competent control, be trained to habits of industry'.³⁶ But these proposals were too ambitious and costly for the times and Spencer's report was set aside.³⁷

When the Queensland Chief Protector of Aborigines, J.W. Bleakley, reported to the Commonwealth Government in 1928 on the condition of Aborigines in Central and Northern Australia, the two administrative areas into which the Northern Territory was then divided, he recommended 'no unnecessary interference' with the 'nomadic tribes' living on

32 Ibid:46.

33 Ibid:46.

34 NY 1925:17.

35 Spencer 1913:26.

36 Ibid:26.

37 Mulvaney and Calaby, 1985:311-3.

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unalienated land.³⁸ He did, however, recommend that the South West reserve should be extended. This reserve had been created in 1920 in collaboration with the governments of Western Australia and South Australia, which at the same time had reserved large adjoining areas in those states, and covered an area of some 12,000 square miles, including the Petermann Ranges and Ayers Rock/Mt Olga.

The Aboriginal inhabitants of the south-west corner of the Territory had had rather more contact with the exploring parties looking for pastoral country in the 1870s and subsequently with scientific and mineral exploration parties than had their relatives to the north.³⁹ The area was not far from the ranges running along the South Australian border and reaching into Western Australia, which had begun to be used each winter by men hunting dingos for the bounty, and coming both from Oodnadatta on the South Australian side and from the Western Australian goldfields. Bleakley proposed that this reserve should be extended north to the 23 degree parallel and east to longitude 132 degrees so that it would have covered most of the country occupied by the Pintupi in the Territory as well as the Haasts Bluff - Mt Liebig area.⁴⁰ He also suggested that some 'benevolent supervision' of the area should be provided for by encouraging the Lutheran mission at Hermannsburg to establish at least one institution in the western Petermanns near the Docker and Hull Rivers. The aim was only to provide some protection from intruders and to check on conditions during dry seasons when there might be a scarcity of water and game. He stressed that 'the aim, at the beginning, is not to draw the people away unnecessarily from their tribal life, but to win their trust by kindly ministrations, relieving them in distress or sickness and guarding them from abuse'.⁴¹ In writing these words he may have had Arnhem Land more in mind than Central Australia, but it is clear enough that the aim was to allow the people beyond the frontiers of settlement to continue living as far as possible undisturbed. He was concerned, like others, that droughts caused 'numbers of the desert blacks (to) drift to the outstation stock wells sponging upon the native well-attendants for their rations' and developing 'an appetite for the white man's luxuries'.⁴²

Prospectors and Evangelists 1930-1940

But years passed before any action was taken to protect the Pintupi lands as Bleakley proposed, and meanwhile they had again attracted the interest of explorers and prospectors. In May and June 1930 Donald Mackay flew the first of several inland aerial surveys from a bush landing strip which his party had cleared at the Ehrenberg Ranges and 'discovered' the vast salt lake that bears his name. His party evidently met some thirty Pintupi at this camp (Mackay 1934) and identified the people they met as members of the Pinto and Eumo tribes.⁴³ Later that year the same airstrip was used by the aircraft with the party searching for Lasseter's fabulous gold reef and this party was also based at Ilpili water in the Ehrenbergs. The party seems to have taken its truck as far as the Kintore Range and into the country to the south-west and Lasseter himself, with Paul Johns, later travelled with

38 Bleakley 1929:39.

39 Terry recorded that more than 80 parties were known to have been out to the Petermann Range 'on various quests' (Terry 1934:505).

40 Ibid:35 and map.

41 Ibid:33.

42 Ibid:33.

43 See correspondence in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 30 June and 34 July 1935; Mackay named a salt lake in Western Australia Orantjugurr after 'the chief of the Pinto tribe'

camels through the eastern and south-eastern parts of the Pintupi country on his way to and from the Petermann Range, where Lasseter died in January 1931. While Lasseter was still using Ilpili as his base a party from Hermannsburg mission arrived there in September 1930.

When the 1929 drought crisis was relieved, the Hermannsburg authorities had expressly revived the 1923 policy 'as an act of gratitude to God' and made plans 'to bring the Gospel to the nomads to the north-west of Hermannsburg'.⁴⁴ At the end of August 1930 Pastor F.W. Albrecht led a party with camels north-west to Pikili (or Pikilyi : Vaughan Springs) in Warlpiri country, then south-west to Ilbilla (or Ilpili) in the Ehrenberg Ranges where they came upon the huts and airstrip made by the Mackay Exploring Expedition in the year. The group of Aboriginal people they met here had earlier been in touch with the two parties which had used this water as a base and at least the 'headman' (Kamutu Tjungarayi) had a shirt and pair of trousers.⁴⁵ The party returned east by way of Potati Spring (Putati: Mt Peculiar) where they met more Aboriginal people from Haasts Bluff. For several years after this first trip parties left Hermannsburg for the north-west each winter and efforts were made to establish evangelists permanently with the group around Putati and later other natural waters.

If this initiative by the mission was motivated primarily by an earnest desire to take the message of the Gospels to the desert dwellers, it was also a response to the migration of western groups into the mission and to nearby stations. The intention was to try to halt the eastward 'drift' referred to by Bleakley. Pastor Albrecht noted that Ilbilla was 'within a great Reserve' but speculated on the likelihood that the people living there would move to the settled areas 'as many had done already' or that pastoral interests might take up the country as was then about to happen to the country around Vaughan Springs. An active interventionist policy of venturing westward to work with people 'in the bush' was conceived as having a secular protective purpose as well as an evangelical one.

In July 1932 Michael Terry, on one of his prospecting trips with camels, visited the Ehrenberg Range (Wiyanpiri: Salvation Rockhole) on his way north to make an unsuccessful attempt to explore the country north-west of Lake Mackay. He was there again in September when travelling south to the Petermann Ranges and Western Australia⁴⁶ and visited several waterholes south-west of the Range, guided for a time by Aboriginals who almost certainly included some who had visited the Mackay and Lasseter camps at Ilpili two years before. These he referred to as the 'Ipillie-Marlu or Ti-tree scrub tribe', commenting on their friendliness to strangers.⁴⁷ The following year, in a better season, he succeeded in reaching the country north-west of Lake Mackay, named the Alec Ross Range and travelled north, finding Lake Hazlett and Red Cliff Pound before going east to the Granites.

Meanwhile the Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg had helped to arrange for a group of Pintupi to be at Mt Liebig for the purposes of the Adelaide University anthropological expedition in August 1932. E.E. Kramer, an independent Swiss missionary in Alice Springs, supported by the Aborigines' Friends Association, Adelaide, had taken a pair of Hermannsburg evangelists out to Putati in 1931 when Pastor Albrecht fell ill and he undertook to gather Aboriginals at Mt Liebig for the University researchers.

44 Leske:46.

45 Ibid:49.

46 Terry 1937.

47 Ibid:136.

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T.G.H. Strehlow, then working in Central Australia on a research grant, went out with him on camels in June or July. Strehlow contacted the group of Pintupi who had previously been camping at Putati with the two Aboriginal evangelists from Hermannsburg (Rolf and Titus Rengkaraka) before making a camel trip west to the Kintore Range with one Pintupi guide, Lilitjukurpa.⁴⁸ They met no people on the outward journey, but saw several smokes and met one small group on the return trip. Strehlow reported seeing tracks of a police party on camels which had come up from the Petermann Range area and was heading east to Alice Springs. Partly as a result of these efforts, there were some ninety Warlpiri (Ngalia), Pintupi and others at Mt Liebig when the University expedition was there in August.⁴⁹

In the space of two and a half years the eastern reaches of the Pintupi lands had been visited by several prospecting parties and by missionaries and probably by a police party - more visitors than in the preceding sixty years since Ernest Giles first reached the Ehrenberg Range. Aboriginal mission workers were semi-permanently established at Putati, then at Ayantji and later at Alalpi (near Haasts Bluff) and were trying to work out a mutually satisfactory relationship with the groups with whom they lived. The evangelists had to be rationed to live at these outposts but the Aboriginal people expected them to share their food with them while it lasted. The cumulative effect of all these friendly contacts and in particular the continuing contacts with Hermannsburg, seems to have prompted several more Pintupi families to move eastward to settle in the Haasts Bluff/Mt Liebig area or to move on to the Tempe Downs and Glen Helen cattle stations and Hermannsburg mission. Possibly in response to these intrusions, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Dr Cecil Cook, revived the proposal to extend the South-west reserve in December 1932 and in March 1933 his recommended sixty kilometre wide addition, including the Kintore and Ehrenberg ranges, was gazetted.⁵⁰ But it was not extended eastward to include the Haasts Bluff area because this was held under lease and grazing licences.⁵¹

At least by 1935, the Hermannsburg evangelists were encouraging these western people to believe that if they responded to Christian teaching, there would one day be a station like Hermannsburg established near Haasts Bluff where their children could be educated, the old and sick cared for and no one need go hungry.⁵² Reporting on his visit to the camp that winter, Albrecht recorded that he had been told that the Pintupi feared to return westward. Their relatives out there thought they had killed a young man who was said to have been taken in to Alice Springs by an Afghan dogger visiting the Kintore Range some years earlier.⁵³ On the annual visit in 1936, this time with a motor car to supplement the camels, Pastor Albrecht estimated that his party contacted groups totalling nearly 300 people in the area between Haasts Bluff, Mt Wedge and Mt Liebig.⁵⁴ But early the next year Albrecht learnt of plans for the Haasts Bluff country to be stocked with sheep under grazing licence.⁵⁵ His vehement protests, supported by Dr Charles Duguid of Adelaide,

48 Strehlow, personal correspondence 1964.

49 Fry 1934.

50 AA/FI.38/418).

51 Ibid.

52 Leske 1977:53.

53 Albrecht 1935.

54 Ibid:53.

55 It appears that a cattle station had earlier been established in the Haasts Bluff area for a few years around 1911 (R.G. Kimber, personal communication 1987; Albrecht 1935).

who had accompanied Albrecht on his annual inspection visit to the Haasts Bluff area in 1936, were effective in persuading the Federal Minister to order that the grazing licences should not be renewed and that the Haasts Bluff area should be left to the desert people who had moved there.⁵⁶

Haasts Bluff Reserve and Ration Depots 1940-50

Government concern about the movement of 'western' people towards Alice Springs evidently made it relatively receptive both to the 1937 proposal to exclude graziers from the Haasts Bluff area and to proposals developed in 1939, on the basis of the reports prepared by Strehlow who was appointed as patrol officer for Central Australia from October 1936, to reduce the area of the South-West Reserve and create a new Haasts Bluff reserve in the north east. The northern part of the 1920 Reserve was revoked in October 1940 on the basis that this was 'country useless to natives' and instead 'food-producing and adequately watered areas adjoining the north-east corner of the Reserve as far as and including Haast's (sic) Bluff were reserved - an area of some 7636 square miles.⁵⁷ This entailed buying back the Haasts Bluff lease and the solitary improvement on it - a well at Alalpi - at a cost of fifty pounds. The new Reserve adjoined the mission lease and pastoral leases on the east and extended south to Lake Amadeus but did not reach as far west as the Ehrenberg Ranges, so that the country of the Pintupi in the Northern Territory was again unprotected.

Reports that dry conditions in October 1940 were prompting some of the people in the Haasts Bluff area to move east to outcamps on Glen Helen station helped the Hermannsburg mission to win early approval in 1941 to establish and maintain a ration depot at Ngankaritara soak, south of the Haasts Bluff range, with Government subsidies to cover the costs of erecting a store, employing a storekeeper, rationing the aged and infirm at 3/8 per week each and supervising the operation.⁵⁸ When the first rations were distributed in April 1941, Strehlow listed 65 aged and infirm people as eligible for rationing, but there were many more than this in the area.⁵⁹ A list of Aborigines at Haasts Bluff in October 1942 records 71 males, 85 females and 90 children, a total of 263 people. It seems likely that about 90 to 100 of these were Pintupi at this time and the others were Warlpiri from the north-west, Kukatja from the western MacDonnell Ranges and a few families from the south-western country.

The storekeeper employed at Haasts Bluff by the mission, Theodor Abbott, held cash to pay men for dingo scalps, kangaroo skins and 'curios' as well as rations for the women and children and aged and infirm.⁶⁰ Although only about half the men and not all the women who were in touch with his store were actually rationed, the services available were evidently attractive enough to hold a substantial group in the Haasts Bluff area and possibly to persuade some who had moved east to Alice Springs to move back. But word of the new ration depot may have taken some time to reach people in the west who had not already been in touch with the Hermannsburg evangelists. Already by 1942 it appears that a wide expanse of uninhabited country had opened up between Haasts Bluff/Mt Liebig and the Western Australian border country.

56 Leske 1977:54.

57 NT 1940:30.

58 AAF126.30; Leske 1977:55.

59 AAF126.30.

60 Leske 1977:55-56.

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Before the Haasts Bluff depot had been established for many months official concern about Aboriginal people congregating at the railway sidings south of Alice Springs led to a request to the mission authorities in 1942 for another ration depot to be set up to halt and perhaps reverse the eastward movement in the area south of the Macdonnell Ranges.⁶¹ A spring in a narrow valley in the Krichauff Ranges south-west of Hermannsburg was chosen as a convenient site and a gang of men set to work to make an access track. The government dumped stores for the new Areyonga depot at Hermannsburg and later improved the creek crossings so that supplies could be trucked in rather than carried by camel team. The mission history records that the news spread quickly and people soon arrived, grateful that special provision was being made for their needs. These apparently included some people whom Pastor Albrecht had seen in the Petermann Ranges when he travelled there with Patrol Officer Strehlow, in 1939.⁶²

Both there and at Haasts Bluff, water shortages soon became a problem as the population grew. As early as August 1941 Pastor Albrecht was recommending that bores or dams should be provided at several different places near the Haasts Bluff depot so that people could continue their foraging life as long as possible.⁶³ By 1946 there were 238 people at Haasts Bluff and 93 at Areyonga and bores had to be sunk to provide reliable supplies at both depots. Bores were also sunk at three other sites on the Haasts Bluff reserve to allow the country to be stocked.⁶⁴ By 1948 vegetable gardens had been established and several buildings erected, including a church at Haasts Bluff in 1946 and a house for a missionary who took up duty there in June 1947, with his wife who was a nursing sister.⁶⁵

There was some modest development of the two depots over the next seven years and some increase in Aboriginal employment but essentially the rationing scheme remained the same until, in 1954, the Northern Territory Administration assumed direct responsibility for both places and began to invest more money in their development and to provide work for the able-bodied males and some women. Mr L.G. Wilson, who had earlier been recruited by the mission to supervise the Haasts Bluff cattle herd, became manager of the settlement there and more cattle bores were sunk north of the range. But already, in the winter of 1952, Wilson had developed a scheme for 'dispersing the native population to several springs on the reserve'.⁶⁶ 'The Pintupi Tribe' he reported 'have requested to settle at Walimbury Spring (later referred to as Alumbaru) a distance of 50 miles from the settlement by road' and about 70 were living there when the fortnightly delivery of rations was made in mid-July.⁶⁷ Another camp was soon established at Unabuna and later a group of stockmen and several dingo hunters were camped at Mt Liebig bore. This practice was applauded as 'good policy' by the Native Affairs Branch District Superintendent in Alice Springs.⁶⁸ Taking rations out to dispersed groups to some extent counteracted the centralising pull of the

61 Leske 1977:60; NTA 1946:28.

62 Ibid:62.

63 AA/F126/30.

64 NTA1946:28.

65 Leske 1977:57.

66 AA F1/52/440.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

ration depot and restored something resembling the pattern of living that had prevailed in the ten years before the depot was established.

Welfare Settlements

The government take-over of Haasts Bluff (and Areyonga) reflected the new, more positive and interventionist approach of the N.T. Administration under the direction of Mr (later Sir) Paul Hasluck who had been appointed Minister for Territories in 1951. More money was available to the Native Affairs Branch, which became the Welfare Branch in 1953, in order to develop employment, training, education and health services on the settlements.

At Haasts Bluff the immediate changes were few: an assistant was appointed to take care of the cattle work and more fencing, yard building and other developmental work meant more jobs but the 'dispersal policy' was maintained for several years and the Pintupi group continued to spend at least a part of each year away from Haasts Bluff, camping at bores or natural waters. But when the water supply at Haasts Bluff was found to have deteriorated and to have a high content of sulphates and fluoride, the decision was taken to develop a new settlement north of the range at the Papunya bore where there was abundant water of good quality. During the construction period (1957-9) workers and some others chose to camp there but Haasts Bluff remained the rationing centre for the more than 400 people then settled on the reserve.

In the late 1940s and 1950s more families had continued to walk in to the Haasts Bluff/Mt Liebig area from the west but some - probably young men and boys for the most part - had also returned to the west on occasions. One man (Bruno Tjangala) told me that he had been to Haasts Bluff as a boy but had gone out again and been initiated about 100 kms beyond the Western Australian border, probably in the early 1940s, and had returned to Haasts Bluff only in 1956. These men would have carried news of the ration depot to their relatives, as would the men who accompanied a prospecting party, led by Mr James Prince, which went out with camels and trucks in January 1947. Five Aboriginal men accompanied the party which travelled west past the Kintore Range and Lake Macdonald, then south to Tjila well and the Rawlinson Range, meeting at least two groups of Pintupi in the country south of Lake Macdonald. Because the mission storekeeper did not ration able-bodied men but did trade dingo scalps, there was some incentive for men to make journeys to the west to procure scalps and at least some of these seem to have ventured to and beyond the Kintore Range.

In 1956 a dogging party of three men from Haasts Bluff (of whom only Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi survives at the time of writing), went out with camels and met relatives near the Western Australian border. They had a significantly different tale to tell of life at Haasts Bluff. There were rations for all, not just for the old and infirm and women with children; there was work and a small cash wage for all who wanted work; free issues of clothing and blankets were made regularly; and the growing cattle herd provided fresh meat every week for all. Where previously married men might have concluded that they were marginally better off in touch with the depot than maintaining an independent existence in the desert, there was by 1956 no question that life would be more secure and families better nourished at Haasts Bluff. When the doggers told their relatives of 'flour, tea and sugar, trousers and shirt' and urged them to come in, it was a distinctly new message, reporting a significant change for the better in what Haasts Bluff had to offer. The response seems to have been enthusiastic: two men walked quickly to summon others camped farther south, west of Lake Macdonald, and together the camel men and some nine families set off for Haasts Bluff. A party of some 34 people reached Haasts Bluff in December 1956 from the west.

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More had set out but several turned back from the Ehrenberg Ranges, deterred by the privations of the long walk through unfamiliar country in a dry summer. One woman died at a bore only 20 kms from Haasts Bluff. Those who survived the long walk in were found to be in poor condition: 'many ... were undernourished, had respiratory signs, and more severe trachoma; two of them had tuberculosis, and many others radiological evidence of respiratory disease'.⁶⁹ In November and December 1956 the settlement had reported an outbreak of pneumonia, apparently before the immigrants had arrived, but in the Manager's report for May 1957 he noted that there was still 'a little Dysentery and Pneumonia about, introduced when the Pintubi mob came in from bush last December'.⁷⁰ The tuberculosis cases were closely watched but by July it was noted that 'the general health of the Pintubi people who came into Haasts Bluff last Christmas . . . has considerably improved'.⁷¹ An influenza epidemic struck the settlement in September but there were no fatalities among the recent arrivals.

At about the same time other groups were making similar trips elsewhere around the desert rim. It appears that groups came in to Cundelee mission east of Kalgoorlie, to the Warburton Range Mission, to Christmas Creek station in the Kimberley region and to Balgo Hills mission in 1955 and 1956. The years 1952 to 1955 were not unusually dry in Central Australia and drought does not seem to have prompted these moves. In 1955 some press publicity was given to reports that small parties from the west were coming in to Mt Doreen Station, some 160 kms north of Haasts Bluff. Welfare Branch officers in Alice Springs spoke to some of the men and to the lessee of the station, Mr W.W. Braitling, who reportedly attributed these visits to the fact that the desert people had become 'lonely and (had) lost contact with what is going on around them'.⁷² They proposed sending out a party to check on the health and the needs of the people living between Mt Doreen Station and Lake Mackay, and to report on the possibility of providing supplementary water supplies and on the development potential of the area. Shortage of field staff in 1955 and 1956 meant that the patrol was postponed but the proposal gained some political momentum when public controversy erupted late in 1956 over claims in the Western Australian parliament that Aboriginal people were starving in the country around the Warburton mission and the recently established Giles Weather Station.

69 Hargrave 1957.

70 AAF1.55/382.

71 Ibid.

72 AA/F1.55320.



Above: Row of huts at Haasts Bluff, built by the Finke River missionaries, c.1948. The houses were possibly intended as houses for the sick, but were probably occupied by Aboriginal mission staff.
Below: Digging out Alalbi well, 1958, a few miles east of Haasts Bluff. The well and the leasehold improvements were the only compensation received by the holder when the reserve was resumed. (Photograph by Jeremy Long)



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Lake Mackay and Kintore Range Patrols.

The expedition was finally undertaken in June 1957.⁷³ It was led by Mr E.C. Evans, Chief Welfare Officer with the Welfare Branch, NT Administration, who was accompanied by the author, then a Cadet Patrol Officer with the Welfare Branch; Dr John Hargrave, Medical Officer, Department of Health; Mr N. Jones, Geologist, Bureau of Mineral Resources; Mr G. Chippendale, Botanist, Animal Industry Branch, NT Administration and an assistant; and Mr T. Cooper, Driver, NT Administration. Mr W. Braitling of Mt Doreen Station accompanied the patrol in his own vehicle. Two men who had lately walked in to Mt Doreen guided the party back to their families, a group of 20 people, who were met at a small well about 30 miles east of Lake Mackay. A second group of 22 people was found south of Alec Ross Range on the other side of the lake.⁷⁴ These groups were living 150-200 kms away from Mt Doreen station and only one of the western group had previously made the journey there. Members of the first and closer group had visited Balgo Hills mission as well as Mt Doreen but had chosen 'to return to the bush'.⁷⁵ The patrol was accompanied by Dr Donald Thomson of Melbourne University who planned to spend some months with one of the groups to study their pattern of life but our report sounded a cautious note about the likely effect of the visit on the people:

It is difficult to judge what the effect of recent intrusions by parties of whites will be. Already one group has attached itself to Dr Donald Thomson (Melbourne University) and the other will probably also test his hospitality. It is his intention to avoid disrupting their way of life and he hopes to move about with them on foot to study their normal routine, but such an intention must be difficult for the Pintupi to understand. They no doubt hope to camp with him to share his supplies for as long as possible. When Dr Thomson leaves the area, the Pintupi may revert to their normal way of life, but one man expressed his intention of visiting Mt Doreen and Yuendumu Settlement again in the near future and others may follow Dr Thomson in to Mt Doreen.

Every effort was made to ensure that the impression was not given that the Administration wanted these people to leave their country and come into Mt. Doreen or to a settlement. There is, however, no guarantee that this and other misleading information was not provided by our interpreters.⁷⁶

Our personal views about the desirable future of these people are manifest in the findings and recommendations we made. The people were found to be in good health with access to adequate food but only few and meagre water supplies. The country visited had 'almost negligible' pastoral potential and there was no evidence of any mineral deposits of value. We proposed that the area south of the 21st parallel of latitude, lying west of the Mt Doreen pastoral lease and of the existing Haasts Bluff Reserve as far south as the South-west Reserve should be declared a reserve and a matching area north of the existing Central Reserve in Western Australia similarly set aside by the authorities in that State. The expressed aim was to allow for contact to be 'controlled and supervised' to avoid disturbance

73 For more contemporary accounts of this and the subsequent patrols up to 1964 see J.P.M. Long, 'The Pintupi patrols: welfare work with desert Aborigines' *Australian Territories* 4(5):43-8, (6):24-35; and E.C. Evans and J.P.M. Long 'The Aborigines of western central Australia' *Geographical Journal* 131:318-29.

74 Evans 1957.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

of their way of living and the introduction of diseases. We made no proposals for sinking bores or wells in the area, partly because the heavy rains that fell during the patrol's visit had relieved any immediate shortages. We also recommended that another patrol should be made to the Kintore Range west of Haasts Bluff 'to ascertain the number and condition of the Pintupi inhabitants' and that an annual patrol be made to revisit the Lake Mackay area to 'observe the condition of the people' and maintain contact.⁷⁷

At the end of October 1957 a very much smaller party - two patrol officers (the author and Colin McLeod), with a mechanic and two guides ('Nosepeg' Tjupurula and Tapatapa Tjangala) - left Haasts Bluff for the Kintore Range area. The weather was hot and water shortages forced a detour south of the Range but in four days we had reached the Western Australian border without finding any signs of recent occupation of the area or any response to the 'smokes' put up by our guides.⁷⁸ The next day we did see a smoke and met a group - two men and their families - about 45 kms west of the border, at Yarangga well, north-west of Lake Macdonald. Visiting another water (Yumari) about 60 kms to the north, we saw a smoke some distance away to the south west but decided against travelling farther west and started back to Haasts Bluff, bringing with us the young man (Tim Tjapangati) we had met who was keen to visit his mother and other relatives at Haasts Bluff. (I took him back to rejoin his family in June 1958 when a National Mapping party went out to Lake Macdonald. He brought his wife and child back to Haasts Bluff later in the year and another man (Pinta-pinta Tjapanangka) also walked in with his family before the end of 1958.) The few people seen at Yarangga (4 adults and 3 children) also seemed in good health.

We proposed that another patrol should be made with a medical officer in about April 1958 and that similar short patrols should be made each year. Although the two patrols had found that the country in the Northern Territory was mostly unoccupied we suggested that the NT Administration should continue to take an interest in these people whose relatives had moved in to Haasts Bluff. During and after the patrol I compiled a list of families known to be living in the 'Pintupi country', totalling 56 adults and 44 children, apart from those met during the two patrols. I noted that all of the previous year's immigrants 'would like to return to their country, but the older people were aware that it is beyond them and only the young men . . . are likely to make the return journey'.⁷⁹ My report went on to suggest that:

The Pintupi could best be served at present by the sinking of bores to provide reliable waters, capable not only of meeting their drinking water needs but also to provide water for the camels of the dingo hunters and possibly for a few cattle to supplement natural game.⁸⁰

I noted that the Pintupi, who made up the bulk of the population at Haasts Bluff, do not like living at the settlement and are keen to return to their own country if the Administration would assist them and live there and develop it.⁸¹

By early June 1958, when I visited Mt Doreen Station, most of the people we had seen twelve months before near Lake Mackay, along with some young men we had not seen then, were camping near Mt Singleton, at a waterhole at the western edge of the property. Some had been for a few weeks with Dr Thomson in the Labbi-labbi area but after he had

77 Ibid.

78 Long 1957.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

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left in October most had moved east. Three young men took the opportunity to visit their relatives at Haasts Bluff for a few weeks.

In September 1959 the enlarged reserve (R.1028) recommended in the 1957 patrol report was created, incorporating the former South-west and Haasts Bluff reserves. The Western Australian authorities extended the reserves in that State, linking the Central Reserve near Warburton with the Balgo Hills reserve.

When a second patrol visited to the Lake Mackay area in July 1960, again led by Evans, the party met a group of 7 adults and 2 children walking back in to the station and later met two families (11 people) north of Lake Mackay. Evans was told of, but did not meet, two other small groups in the area.⁸² After questioning his guides about the apparent depopulation of the area, Evans concluded that 'owing to the series of dry years, the smaller game ... have virtually died out or have been so depleted in numbers as to no longer maintain the people in their meat needs'. He was also told that a large group had gone to Balgo Hills Mission.

The party then travelled to Papunya and followed the tracks of the 1957 patrol to the Kintore Range where they came upon a freshly graded track cut from the south by a Department of Supply roadmaking party. Distant smokes were seen one day but there was no response to the party's own 'smokes' at Lake Macdonald and Dovers Hills and they left to follow the new road south to the Giles Weather station in the Rawlinson Range. Diverting to Tjukula and Tjila wells near Lake Hopkins they met a group of four young men who had had some contact with the Warburton Mission, with Giles and with the Native Patrol Officers appointed by the Department of Supply who by then had been regularly patrolling the Petermann/Rawlinson Range area for some years.

By the end of 1960 most of the people seen in the Lake Mackay area in 1957 and in 1960 had moved in to Mt Doreen Station. Inquiries of these people indicated that six men, and 'probably no more than a dozen or fifteen in all' remained out in the Labbi-labbi area. The station owner provided rations at Government expense to those who had moved in but conditions there were rather less attractive than at the nearby Government Settlement, Yuendumu, or at Papunya and this might account in part for the fact that some had returned from Mt Doreen to the desert when rain fell. But it also seems that they returned to find their relatives and encourage them to come in.⁸³ The Superintendent at Yuendumu was, by late 1960, proposing that the 'Bindubi' at Mt Doreen should be encouraged to move to Yuendumu where they could be better looked after and be provided with useful work. Within a few months most had moved to Yuendumu where the men were formed into a special gang quarrying local stone to build houses. By 1963 they had been joined by most of those who in 1960 had been recorded as still out near Labbi-labbi and most of these immigrants remained at Yuendumu for the next ten years or so.

When, in the 1970s, with increased incomes and access to vehicles, these people were able to visit relatives at the Balgo Hills mission some moved there for varying periods; some settled at an outstation (Nyirрпи) on Waite Creek to the southwest of Yuendumu; and others joined their relatives at Papunya in later moves westward to the Kintore Range and beyond when bores were finally sunk in Pintupi country.

Meanwhile the making of the Department of Supply (Weapons Research Establishment) road north from Giles, east to Mt Liebig and west towards the Canning Stock Route had, by the end of 1960, made access much easier to the other areas which

82 Evans 1960.

83 R.G. Kimber, personal communication 1987.

were known to be inhabited. Between June and September 1961 the new road west from Mt Liebig was used by a National Mapping party which sunk a well in limestone country at the end of the graded track, some 600 kms west of Papunya and called it 'Jupiter Well', using it as a base for survey work as far as Well 35 on the Canning Stock Route. (In later years this track beyond Jupiter Well was graded and the network was extended to link up with the Western Australian road system.) Although Aboriginal people seem to have kept clear of the road making party in 1960, some certainly came in to the camps of the survey teams the following year, presumably obtaining some food from the party and certainly acquiring cans and other useful metal items.

In August 1961, after attending a meeting in Alice Springs of the Central Reserves Committee, a group of Commonwealth and State officials concerned with the administration of the adjoining reserves in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, I travelled with one of the two WRE patrol officers (Mr R.A. Macaulay) along the new road from Mt Liebig to Sandy Blight Junction and south to Giles. South-east of Lake Macdonald we found tracks on the road in dense sandhill country and met four members of a family (of ten) who usually lived in the country farther south nearer to the Rawlinson Range. After this trip I proposed regular visits to the Lake Macdonald area and a short patrol to examine the Petermann Range country and gather more information about the extent to which it was inhabited.

Reoccupying the Petermann Range

Earlier in the month I had visited Areyonga as a research officer with the Welfare Branch to study the 'movements and rate of growth' of the population there. Noting that the great majority originated in the Petermann Range country and that the prospects for development at and near Areyonga were distinctly limited, I suggested consideration of the idea, originally advanced in 1928 by Bleakley, that some services for Aboriginal people be provided in the Petermanns:

As a possible part-solution to the problem the opening up of the Petermann Range country immediately suggests itself or rather the Areyonga people, with the usual enthusiasm of natives for their country of origin, suggest it.⁸⁴

People from the Petermann Range area had begun moving east into the cattle country well before 1930 and the existence of the South-west reserve had no discernible effect on this drift. A fairly rapid depopulation of the Petermann Range seems to have followed in the 1930s, and in 1937 Strehlow commented that in the previous ten years there had been 'a flight or a rout rather than a drift' from the Petermanns and that the northern part, 'the old territory of the Pintubi, seemed to be quite empty'.⁸⁵ The Chief Protector, Dr Cecil Cook, reported in 1937 on the 'increased number of far western natives coming into Alice Springs' and noted that this movement was considered to be prompted by 'semi-civilized natives travelling about the South-western Reserve collecting dingo scalps for white employers, and disseminating among the inhabitants glowing stories of the attractions of the settled areas'.⁸⁶ But there were also several white doggers, some of them holders of pastoral leases in the country south-west of Alice Springs, who regularly ventured into the Ranges trading scalps in the 1930s. A Board of Inquiry in 1935 had examined allegations about the ill-treatment of Aboriginals in Central Australia by police and made recommendations, among

⁸⁴ Long, 1961b.

⁸⁵ NT 1937:25.

⁸⁶ NT 1937:28.

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others, for the appointment of a patrol officer to take responsibility in particular for the South-west reserve and for the establishment of a 'Government Aboriginal Station' there.⁸⁷ Strehlow's 1937 recommendation for a 'trading depot' in the heart of the Petermann Range in order to entice the former inhabitants to return was evidently set aside because of the considerable costs involved⁸⁸

Two years later, after a second patrol, Strehlow reported the reserve 'virtually empty' with an estimated fifty or sixty still living there, though he actually met just 26 men, women and children on this trip⁸⁹ (He reported meeting a young man who had returned to the Ranges after visiting Hermannsburg and Haasts Bluff the year before and a young woman who had been at Jay Creek for several months in 1938: not all the journeys from the west were one-way trips.) He seemed to attribute this depopulation in part at least to a series of dry years which had depleted the area of game. He offered no other explanation of 'hundreds of homeless Reserve natives... wandering about aimlessly in the vicinity of Alice Springs, Finke Siding, Hamilton Bore, Middleton Ponds and Kings Creek'. One need not, however, assume that he considered the 'push factor' of poor seasons the only or even the main reason for movement.

In 1939 Strehlow again recommended the establishment of a depot in the western Petermanns and he was confident enough about this proposal being acted upon to be discussing the cutting of a motor track from Hermannsburg to Ayers Rock and on to the Petermanns in order that a base may be developed in the Petermanns before the middle of summer.⁹⁰ But this proposal too was shelved and only the less costly depots at Haasts Bluff and Areyonga were proceeded with in the early 1940s. After the war, a patrol officer of the Native Affairs Branch (Mr John Bray), who was sent out to the Petermann Range in January 1951 with a party examining the mineral potential of the area and another Administration party, which visited the Ranges in 1958 in a joint examination of the Central reserves with South Australian officers, both recommended that services for Aboriginal people should be provided there but no action had been taken.

In mid-September 1961, with a patrol officer, Mr John Hunter, and two guides from Areyonga (Tjingu-nya and Ernest Tjuku), travelling in one Landrover, I spent nine days exploring the Ranges. We met members of one group of 19 'Rawlinson people' at Wanggarin, a rockhole on the south side of the Ranges near the Western Australian border.⁹¹ The country was drought-stricken and most waters visited were dry or had only meagre supplies. But my report stressed that there were extensive areas with potential for cattle grazing and strongly urged that efforts be made without delay to find underground water supplies which might allow 'a first trading-post-cum-cattle station' to be established near the Docker River. The existing track from Mt Olga provided easy access for investigational boring near the creeks running out on the north of the range but it was urged that 'outstations should be established early, south of the Range and towards the eastern end near Irving Creek'⁹²

87 Ibid:24.

88 AA/FI38/418.

89 Strehlow 1939.

90 AA F31.32/3.

91 Long 1961.

92 Ibid:4. Memorandum Long/Evans, March 1961: I was then employed with the Welfare Branch as a research officer (1960-1968) after having been stationed as Superintendent at Haasts Bluff (1958) and spending most of 1959 and 1960 outside the Northern Territory.

These proposals were supported by the Administration in Darwin and accepted in Canberra and in April 1963 I was again in the Ranges with a geologist and a Water Resources Branch boring supervisor to help select exploratory boring sites for drilling. Adequate supplies were found later that year and in due course bores were equipped. In September 1967 a patrol officer and a gang of seven men from Areyonga went out to work on clearing an airstrip, by December families began to move out and by June 1968 there were 75 Aboriginal people at Docker River.⁹³ The writer of the first report on the 'welfare centre' at Docker River recorded that 'some of the old men were exuberant at being able to return'.⁹⁴

They had certainly had a long wait. The depopulation of the Ranges was, it seems, well advanced when Bleakley had suggested in 1928 that an 'institution' might usefully be established near the Docker and Hull Rivers in the South west or Lake Amadeus Reserve and was practically complete when Strehlow urged action in 1937 and 1939. No one having any prolonged dealings with people from the Ranges in the forty years that followed Bleakley's proposal could have doubted their enthusiasm for a return to their homelands. But only in the 1960s was government ready or able to respond.

Essentially the difference then was that unprecedented money was being spent by government on Aboriginal development and welfare and what might have seemed an impossible extravagance for an impoverished administration in 1928 or 1939 was an interesting possibility in 1961. By then the development of long established and newly re-sited settlements had been proceeding rapidly for some years. The limitations of the Areyonga site with its poor water supply and restricted area were apparent to all and welfare administrators in Darwin were ready to respond to suggestions that land in the Petermanns was waiting to be developed for cattle raising projects and perhaps small-scale market gardening. They had also been concerned for some years about the poor impression given to the steadily increasing number of visitors to Ayers Rock by the groups of Aboriginal people who spent the months from about May to September each year at Angas Downs and sometimes Curtin Springs, selling artifacts, posing for photographs and begging from tourists. Officials were concerned that their children were missing school, that housing and other facilities would not be provided for them and that they had no medical services. The possibility that an outpost in the Petermann might attract at least some of these people from the Ayers Rock road had considerable appeal. For all these reasons there was solid support for the idea of directing some resources to the search for suitable water supplies and to the provision of at least minimal services in the western Petermanns. The six years or so it took from the revival of the proposal in 1961 until Pitjantjatjara people were able to begin moving back at the end of 1967 was a much shorter wait than their northern neighbours experienced in having water supplies provided in their lands.

Pintupi Patrols 1962-64

The suggestion I made in August 1961 that the new road access to the inhabited country west of Lake Macdonald should be used for yearly visits by patrol officers from Alice Springs, in liaison with the WRE patrol officers, was taken up the following year. In June, with an Aboriginal driver and guides from Papunya, I made a preliminary journey to Jupiter Well and met a group of 16 people in the Dover Hills. Returning next month we again met this group, then numbering 28 people, and made journeys off the road to the

93 Welfare Branch Annual Report 196768:128.

94 Ibid:130.

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south-west with Mr W.R. MacDougall, WRE patrol officer, where we met only nine people but were told of some 34 people living in the area. One family was taken to Papunya to allow the small son's burns to be treated but the rest were told that MacDougall would regularly visit to keep in contact.⁹⁵ But as we left one group was already moving east, apparently heading towards Papunya. (Three men walked all the way but they were returned to their families by Macdougall in September when he again visited Jupiter Well and met two men of the group living in that area.) The Report noted the possibility that all these people might soon move in and drew attention to the problems these small groups faced, living isolated from their relatives who had already moved out to places like Balgo Hills and Haasts Bluff/Papunya.

After this patrol I suggested that the needs of some 50 Pintupi families at Papunya might best be met by helping them to establish camps within about 90km of Papunya; that several bores might be sunk along the road to the border to make travel to and from Papunya safer; and that a small outpost should be established in the Ehrenberg Ranges and another later at the Western Australian border 'to provide central points for decentralised activity' in the Pintupi country.⁹⁶

MacDougall made another visit as far as Jupiter Well in mid-November 1962 and met a group of 25 camped near the border. Returning from the Petermanns at the end of April 1963, I drove north with Mr Brian Mitchell, patrol officer, and met MacDougall at the Kintore Range. We visited Dover Hills but found the waterholes dry and the only smoke we saw was far to the north towards Lake Mackay. Some rain fell in May and Pintupi at Papunya said they expected the people we had seen in Dovers Hills the year before to walk in within the next few weeks. By July four families - 16 people in all - had reached Papunya on foot.

At the end of July another patrol set out, this time with a journalist and an ABC cameraman to record and report on the journey. East of the Kintore Range we met a family of five who were walking in to Papunya and they were driven there by a vehicle which had carried extra fuel as far as Sandy Blight Junction. In the course of two trips as far as Jupiter Well, we met another 34 people, 15 of whom had been seen in 1962, and heard of some 40 to 45 others, a few of whom had met MacDougall on his September 1962 trip. It seemed evident that most, if not all, of these people intended to move in to Papunya. It was apparent that 'there [were] not enough people left for the social system to function effectively: young men cannot be initiated and young women cannot find appropriate husbands'.⁹⁷ We noted that two of the 34 people seen the year before had died and 'four children over 18 months or two years [were] more or less severely under-nourished and all out of 10 children under 10 years of age seen in the western groups had yaws'.⁹⁸ In response to requests for transport in to Papunya we suggested that a truck might be sent out after the summer if all the authorities approved. But 'some made it fairly clear that they would walk in before then' and we left water along the road at Sandy Blight and the Ehrenbergs.⁹⁹

At the same time that we discussed the possibility of meeting their requests for transport to move them east we talked about the provision of waters for their use 'near the

95 Long:1951v.

96 Long 1962c.

97 Long 1963:9.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

Ehrenberg Ranges and ultimately further West'.¹⁰⁰ In reporting on the patrol we again urged the early provision of bores near the Ehrenberg Ranges where recent immigrants and those still in the desert could live. If there was any delay in providing water there it was proposed that the desert people wanting to move in might be settled on natural waters near Mt Liebig where there were abundant kangaroos and where rations and medical services could be conveniently provided from Papunya.¹⁰¹

In September/October of the same year, Dr Donald Thomson made a second desert expedition, six years after his visit to the Lake Mackay area. Travelling first to the Giles weather station, he headed north and met a group of people whom he refers to as Pitjantjatjara near Pankaberri rockhole in the Walter James Range.¹⁰² After filming and photographing the making of wooden artifacts, the party drove north to Sandy Blight Junction and west, finding recent tracks near Yumari rockhole and driving through the night until they came upon a camp of 'two women and three small boys' past Pollock Hills.¹⁰³ Next day they met a group of 'between twenty and thirty people' at a 'good deep well' in desert oak country (possibly Jupiter Well), and 'remained there for some time' before returning to Giles and to Melbourne.¹⁰⁴

The proposals made in my report were duly discussed with the Western Australian authorities and at the next meeting of the Central Reserves Committee in December plans were made for a joint patrol with Western Australian and WRE officers in April 1964. On that trip we met four separate groups - 42 people - all of whom were living as close to the road as the dry conditions allowed and all of whom seemed to have resolved to move in to join their relations at Papunya. At least some of those whom we had met previously but did not see this time had expressed strong interest in moving east. But it is likely that some men were deliberately keeping away from the road at this time because they did not want to move. In two separate trips these 42 people were taken in to Mt Liebig. We had left two men there when the patrol set out, to look at the natural waters in the area where the immigrants might camp. They reported that they had found no adequate supply. After looking at the main spring and discussing the situation, we decided to take the whole group in to Papunya. The report recorded that :

It was a stunning experience for the group to go in to this crowded settlement and the transition from nomadic to settlement living will be altogether too abrupt. It should, however, be possible for the health, at least, of the group to be kept under close watch there.

On the way out we had travelled with a geologist who chose sites for investigational drilling in the Ehrenberg Ranges. At the May meeting of the Central Reserves Committee the Northern Territory Director of Welfare (Mr H.C. Giese) outlined plans for 'a chain of bores west of Papunya (which) will assist the newcomers to move back and forth from their "countries" as they wish' (Minutes, Sixth Meeting of the Standing Committee on the Central Aboriginal Reserves held at Canberra on 4 May 1964). Our report noted that 67 people had by then walked or been brought to Papunya since August 1962 and these, 'with the 40-odd who immigrated between 1956 and 1958 and some immigrants from the Rawlinson Range area', make up a substantial proportion of the Papunya population. We

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid:10.

102 Thomson 1975:139-147.

103 Ibid:153.

104 Ibid:154.

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stressed the urgency of establishing a depot to the west where all these people could 'make their adjustment to a new way of life under more favourable circumstances'.¹⁰⁵

Later, in September 1964, MacDougall met a group of 11 near Jupiter Well who asked to be taken to join their close relatives who had gone in five months earlier. Two years later in July 1966 a group of 17 people from the southern sand ridge area west of Lake Macdonald came out to the road and were taken to Papunya by another WRE patrol officer (Bob Verburgt). These groups brought the number of immigrants in the ten years since 1956 to about 160. It was known that a group of at least seven people remained out in the country west of Lake Mackay but the adult male in the group had lived at Balgo Hills Mission for some years and could therefore take this group there when and if he wanted to.

The need for an outpost to the west of Papunya where these people could live was urgent but thirteen investigational bores sunk near Ilpili found no adequate supplies. For the next ten years and more they lived either at Papunya or at various bores 30 to 70 kilometres to the west of Papunya. The failure to find water at the Ehrenberg Range was discouraging, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, efforts to provide water for the use of the 'new Pintupi' were focussed on areas closer to Papunya. But several of the new arrivals found it impossible to adjust to the strange life at Papunya. Within weeks of the group's arrival in April 1964 there were reports of acute malnutrition particularly among the women and eleven of the group were being given special medical treatment for malnutrition. Most of these were evacuated to Alice Springs Hospital and several recovered, at least temporarily, but by August 1964 six had died, despite the strenuous efforts made by the nursing sisters and others to encourage them to eat. The District Welfare Officer, who visited to report on the situation early in July, noted that the new arrivals 'appear to be despised by the majority of Papunya people who openly laugh at them and 'rubbish' them rather than making any attempt to help them'.¹⁰⁶ He proposed encouraging them to camp at waters far enough from Papunya to allow them to live a life more like the one to which they were accustomed. The groups that came later in 1964 or in July 1966 did not fare so badly, but in all by September 1966, 15 of the 116 people who had walked or been brought to Papunya since 1962 had died: nine adult women, five adult males (three of them in their sixties) and just one male child.¹⁰⁷ Hopes that providing transport for these people would mean that they suffered fewer health problems than the group which had walked in eight years earlier were, as it turned out, unjustified. In retrospect it seemed that the acute health problems might have been avoided if the original plan to establish the new immigrants with a few of their relatives in camps well to the west of Papunya had been followed. In the five years 1962 to 1966 there were altogether 129 deaths in the Papunya population of about 800. (There were also 204 live births.) These were the last and worst years of the ten-year drought that afflicted Central Australia: good rains fell in the summer of 1966/67. The new arrivals were exposed to diseases to which they had little resistance and conditions at Papunya favoured the spread of infection. Life there in the 1960s was significantly more institutional than life at Haasts Bluff in the 1950s, notably because a system of communal feeding had been established at all the government settlements in the Territory in this period - a system with which the immigrants found particularly difficult to cope. The replacement of the Haasts Bluff ration store with the Papunya kitchen and dining room meant that it was

105 Ibid:4.

106 Memorandum District Welfare Officer to Assistant Director (Southern), 13 July 1964, Welfare Branch File 63/443.

107 Long. Memorandum to Acting Director

no longer such a simple matter to supply food to groups who wanted to live elsewhere on the reserve.

The reluctance of local officials to provide services to groups living away from Papunya became less strong in the late 1960s and large groups of Pintupi were from time to time established at western bores like Waruwiya (56 kms) in 1968/9 and Alumbara (32 kms) in 1970. In September 1971 officials began more ambitious planning for a satellite community for the Pintupi, selecting a site to the south-west where there were prospects of finding good water.¹⁰⁸ After the December 1972 change of government, officials in Canberra and in the Territory were keen to give support to 'outstations' as they were called. A new pastoral bore attracted the interest of the Pintupi at Papunya and in June 1973 a large camp of some 200 Pintupi was established at Yayayi bore (40 kms west of Papunya). Apparently in an effort to persuade the authorities to maintain grants for the Yayayi venture, the people stressed that they wanted to stay there permanently and had no interest in moving farther west.¹⁰⁹ In 1974 another outstation was established at Kungkayunti (112 kms by road south-west of Papunya) and later groups were camped at Yinyilingki and New Bore, north of Mt Liebig. At the same time several outstations within 20 kms of the settlement were occupied by other groups from Papunya. The 1970s thus reproduced a pattern rather like that of the 1950s when many of the people based at Haasts Bluff had lived for much of each year at camps on natural waters or at bores along the ranges to the west. In the 1970s the outstation groups had access to wages and Social Security payments and bought food and other goods. As incomes and government grants increased they acquired cars and trucks and began to make independent journeys to visit, and be visited by, relatives at Yuendumu, Balgo Hills to the north and Docker River, Warburton and other communities to the south and west.

Meanwhile Pintupi men had been able to revisit their country, most notably on a series of journeys with the film unit of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1969, 1970 and 1972. For these visits buses were hired and parties of 30 and more men were taken west to re-enact rituals at important sites. On these and other occasions when researchers took vehicles out to the west, Pintupi men took the opportunity to gather large numbers of spear shafts in the sand ridge country west of Pollock Hills.

For the Pintupi the next big change came when satisfactory water was at last found by boring near Ilpili where an outstation was established for a time in 1979 and then in four bores sunk at and near the Kintore Range in 1979/80. In mid-1981 an outstation was established at the Kintore Range, and this place was developed as a 'resource centre' for camps elsewhere in the region. Bores were later equipped with hand pumps farther west at Ininti, Muyingu, Mantati, Yumari and Winparrku (Mt Webb) and in 1983 Kiwirrkurra, near Pollock Hills, some 460 kms west of Papunya, was developed as another 'resource centre'. The provision of bores and services in these places allowed the reoccupation of at least some of the Pintupi country.

Ironically this reoccupation of their traditional lands brought to light the fact that one group had remained behind in the desert when all their relatives left. In October/November 1984 two young men appeared and spoke to a man and his son who were camping at the Mt Webb bore, but then fled. A party set out in vehicles from Kiwirrkurra, followed the two

108 NT Welfare Division *Annual Report* 1971-72:65-9.

109 Coombs 1974:138.

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back to their camp and persuaded a group of nine to accompany them back to Kiwirrkurra.¹¹⁰

'Like perishing bullocks'

For many years one of the widespread beliefs about the history of Aboriginal dispossession in Australia was that groups had been driven from the productive and well watered areas and had taken refuge in the arid interior. This kind of white Australian folklore, which can be traced back to Governor Macquarie's day, seems in recent decades to have disappeared from the literature, though it may well linger in the popular imagination. The converse proposition, that Aboriginal people abandoned their hunting ranges to exploit the new resources of food and water and tobacco and other goods available at station homesteads, mining camps, mission stations, ration depots and townships, has, it seems, over time earned a measure of popular acceptance. One view of Aboriginal people as helpless victims, pushed into the 'harsh interior' by greedy settlers has been replaced by another view which sees them forced by the offer of easily available food and other goods into dependency, victims of a less obvious form of coercion.¹¹¹

In this account of what seems to have happened in one part of the 'Western Desert frontier' a little direct evidence has emerged of the kind of hopes and fears that may have directed Aboriginal choices, though the emphasis has been on how the actions of travellers and prospectors, missions and governments may have influenced those choices. It seems possible to draw some inferences from the exceptional cases, the instances where individuals evidently decided not to move in and engage in what Rowse has termed 'an experiment in a different way of living'.¹¹² Some of these seem to have tried the experiment and decided they did not like it. Some had good reasons for avoiding their fellows, fearing violent retribution, and as the desert population shrank the likelihood increased that marriages would be contracted between closer kin than custom approved.¹¹³ There is no evidence of overt white violence on the 'Pintupi frontier' and one might assume that fear of such violence would not have been an important deterrent to those contemplating the walk in, though limited and uncertain knowledge of the intervening country and fear of the unknown may well have dissuaded some groups from moving. But there were some violent episodes in the southern areas: Giles' party, for example, used pistols and rifles to beat off spear attacks in the Petermann and Rawlinson ranges in 1873. The men met at Yarangga in November 1957 confessed that they thought we were going to kill them and had a story that

110 Reporting on 2 March 1961 on information gathered at Yuendumu about people then still 'out bush', I listed a man of the *Jungarai* subsection; on the 1962 patrol I heard more of this man who was said to have three wives and two of whose children were said to be at Yuendumu; it appeared that there were no more than 10 people remaining in his group. In a note of May 1963 after a visit to Papunya and Yuendumu, I mentioned that this man was then thought to be dead. This was confirmed by people we met in April 1964 who reported that a man of the *Tjapanangka* sub-section who had returned to the desert from Balgo Mission was living with one or all three of the widows. On a visit to Balgo Mission in May 1967 I gathered more information on this man who was said to have left his wife and three children and walked into the desert in about January 1961. It was clear then that he chose to remain in the desert and members of his group only sought contact in 1984 after he had died. See also Peterson 1986:105.

111 See Rowse 1986.

112 Ibid:198.

113 See, e.g. Peasley 1983, Chapter 2.

some people had been shot and killed near a settlement to the south in an incident involving camp dogs stealing food. There had certainly been earlier incidents involving police and others in Central Australia to provide some basis for rumours of apparently irrational use of firearms circulating beyond the frontier. The fact that migrations from desert homelands sometimes appeared to be a direct response to the urgings of relatives revisiting those homelands (as in the instance of the 1956 migration) or followed friendly visits by relatives accompanying prospecting, government or mission parties may suggest that fears inhibited emigration. It can be assumed that in any group some welcomed the prospect of change and of new experience and readily adapted to the new circumstances, while others put a higher value on the life they knew, hazardous and uncertain as it might be.

The emigration from the Western Desert was a lengthy process, extended over more than sixty years and the conditions in which the first and the last emigrants left their homelands were very different. Curiosity may well have been the main motive for the first Pintupi undertaking the walk in to Hermannsburg. To maintain contact for ritual and social purposes with their disappearing eastern neighbours, Pintupi would have found it necessary to move east. It seems that some parties came in during dry spells and the intense and protracted drought of the early 1960s probably encouraged interest in moving out but there is little real evidence for a direct causal link between emigration and the weather: the widespread movement from the Western Desert in the mid-1950s occurred before drought conditions set in. It does not appear that a craving for tobacco was the powerful motivator that it was farther north in Arnhem Land and elsewhere and the ready availability of wild tobacco (*minggulpa*) in the desert may account for this. Pastor Albrecht, writing in 1941 as a concerned observer of the early years of emigration from the desert, remarked that, for Aboriginal people who had had some contact, 'the time ... soon comes when life under bush conditions is regarded worse than prison, and unless something is done to make it more attractive, they will go and leave for the settled area'.¹¹⁴ For the small number remaining in the desert in the 1960s and later, their increasing isolation and narrowing range of human contact must indeed have made life 'in the bush' seem dull and any prospect of change seem exciting and attractive.

A certain amount of white Australian folklore about government policy and practice has accumulated over the intervening years. A belief that governments in the 1950s and 1960s tried to clear the desert for purposes associated with weapons testing at the Woomera Rocket Range has, it seems, widespread currency. The remoteness of the Petermann Range and Pintupi country from the Maralinga and Emu atomic testing grounds makes it implausible that the test programs could be shown to have had any effect at all on those areas or their inhabitants. Serious suggestions have, however, been made that transport to Papunya was offered to Pintupi people in 1964 and 1966 because there was an 'official policy of centralization', apparently for purposes of 'assimilation', but also that 'the Pintupi were not being protected from starvation, but rather, from the WRR (Woomera Rocket Range)'.¹¹⁵ The implication is that the Pintupi were removed from the rocket testing range to get them out of harm's way and some Aboriginal informants have recalled officers warning people of rockets. As Rowse has pointed out, however, no evidence is cited of any official concern about 'falling projectiles'.¹¹⁶ The WRE patrol officers were appointed to help ensure that the activities associated with the Woomera Rocket Range caused

114 AA/F(26.30: letter of 15 August 1941.

115 Nathan 1983:68.

116 Rowse 1986:194-5.

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minimal interference with the lives of Aboriginal people living in the Western Desert and in the settled areas. They were given statutory appointments under the State and Territory legislation, they sent copies of their reports to the State and Territory authorities and they were expected to conform to the policies of those authorities. The Western Australian Department of Native Welfare wanted no disturbance of people in the desert and the patrol officers followed a policy of refusing to give lifts except when called on to carry people to or from hospital. They were also required to discourage groups in the Rawlinson Range from foraging in the garbage bins of the Giles weather station, where employees were instructed not to supply Aboriginal people with any food, in order to avoid disturbing their way of life. But this discouragement hardly justifies Rowse's view that Aboriginal people eventually taken to Papunya from there 'could be said to have been coerced in that they were not allowed near Giles even though it stood near good water'. Aboriginal groups regularly used, and were actually encouraged to use Sladen Waters (Warupuyu) and other natural waters near Giles, but were discouraged from attaching themselves to the weather station.

The 'no lifts' rule was relaxed only in 1964 after I had suggested that transport to Papunya be provided in response to Pintupi requests and this proposal had been accepted by the Western Australian authorities. MacDougall himself was unenthusiastic about the change of approach and had looked forward to continuing contact with the groups along the road between the border and Jupiter Well. The stories suggesting that people were warned to get out of the way of rockets are implausible because these inhabited areas were not under the flight path. (A group found living far to the north-west near the Percival Lakes, in the actual 'impact area' for firings of Blue Streak rocket was, I understand, offered transport to Jigalong by the Western Australian authorities. This group consisted of 20 women and children and the offer was not made because they were at risk from rockets. Apparently their male relatives had left the group some years earlier and had never returned.).¹¹⁷ If the 'coercion thesis' is to be given any credit at all, at least the WRE patrol officers should be absolved of responsibility.

There is, however, another sense in which the Woomera program and the WRE share some responsibility for accelerating the movement out of this and other parts of the western Desert. The grading of tracks through the desert made it a great deal easier for welfare authorities and others to visit the areas and, though they were cut mainly for the relatively innocent purpose of allowing map makers easier access, they almost immediately exposed the inhabitants to new contacts and to new choices. If the offers of transport to Papunya had not been made it is likely that most of the people would have walked there within two or three years. The breaking of the drought in the summer of 1966/67 would have made the journey less risky, though conceivably it might have encouraged some to stay and enjoy the relatively easy living of the next twenty years of good seasons. But it is certain that in the 1970s, when Pintupi and others at Papunya and at other communities acquired increasing numbers of motor vehicles, some of them would have used the tracks, washed out and overgrown as they became, to visit any of their relatives who might have remained and who lived close enough to the roads.

It has been these roads, occasionally improved by oil-search companies exploring in the area in the late 1960s and 1970s, which have made it feasible for governments in the 1980s to provide the water bores and other services which have allowed the Pintupi to reoccupy the country from the Ehrenberg Ranges to the Pollock Hills. And what these people want in the 1980s is more roads to give access to their homelands both north and south of the 1960 WRE road.

¹¹⁷ Peterson 1986:120.

The alternative, or supplementary, proposition that Pintupi people were coerced, prevailed upon or at least persuaded to move to Papunya in pursuit of an 'official policy of centralization' executed jointly by WRE and Northern Territory officers, is also implausible.¹¹⁸ The officers involved were consistently recommending 'decentralisation' and the provision of waters at a distance from Papunya in the way that was eventually achieved over the subsequent twenty years. No one could have supposed that the addition of another 40 or 70 people to the Papunya population was an important step towards a goal of 'assimilation'. Those officers who were making contact with the Pintupi were all, like their critics, imbued with the notion that Aboriginal people were better off living independently in the bush than choosing a sort of dependency in settlements. The managers and school teachers at the settlement may indeed have found it more convenient to provide services there than to try to devise ways of taking them to groups scattered farther west but this manifestation of 'assimilation' policy in practice affected the Pintupi only after their migration.

It has also been asserted that Pintupi people at Papunya, keen to return to the desert after 1964, were prevented or prohibited from doing so. There was never any obstacle that was or could have been placed in the way of people who might have chosen to walk back as so many had walked in and after the summer of 1966/67 there was almost always plenty of water about. The commitment of the Northern Territory officials to the policy of providing waters to the west to allow people to return is perhaps enough to indicate that no instructions would have been issued to discourage or forbid the return of Pintupi families to their homelands. If, as claimed in John Greenway's reminiscences of his travels in the Centre, one of the WRE patrol officers thought he was not permitted to take people back, this policy was probably his own invention, perhaps based on conversations with local officials at Papunya.¹¹⁹ All the evidence suggests that the consensus view among the Pintupi emigrants was that a return to the desert was practicable only if and when services were provided there.

The 'coercion thesis' represents not simply a distortion or misreading of the evidence in the historical record. As Rowse has argued, it allows no room for Aboriginal initiative, apparently to avoid conceding that any Aboriginal people would ever voluntarily leave their homeland.¹²⁰ This is unfair to the Pintupi. Over a period of some forty years most had made the decision to leave their desert homelands and most had walked out to Hermannsburg, to Haasts Bluff, to Warburton and to Balgo Hills. A few were able to induce the welfare authorities to abandon a firmly held policy of not assisting this emigration and instead to provide transport. This decision to accede to Aboriginal wishes was soon seen as an error, but it was a mistake of a kind rare at that time, when policies and practice were more often criticised for an excess of paternalism rather than for falling in with Aboriginal wishes.

The decisions to leave traditional country which the Pintupi and their neighbours to the south in the Petermann Ranges took were consistent with a tradition of opportunist exploitation of resources when and where they appeared. It was not a helpless 'drift' but a series of highly motivated and purposeful moves: as one emigrant from the Petermanns has put it 'we were like perishing bullocks' rushing to a waterhole. If their migrations meant that they abandoned, for a time at least, the care and use of the land they knew best, they

118 Nathan 1983:83, 93.

119 Greenway 1973:282.

120 Rowse 1986:198.

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also allowed them to re-establish links with their relatives and to establish new ties to many more people and this maintenance and extension of personal and ritual links was also a strong tradition. The pull of the homelands remained strong and for some of the emigrants the hope of being able to arrange to return sustained them during decades of voluntary exile and motivates their continuing efforts to win government support for the further development of services in those homelands.

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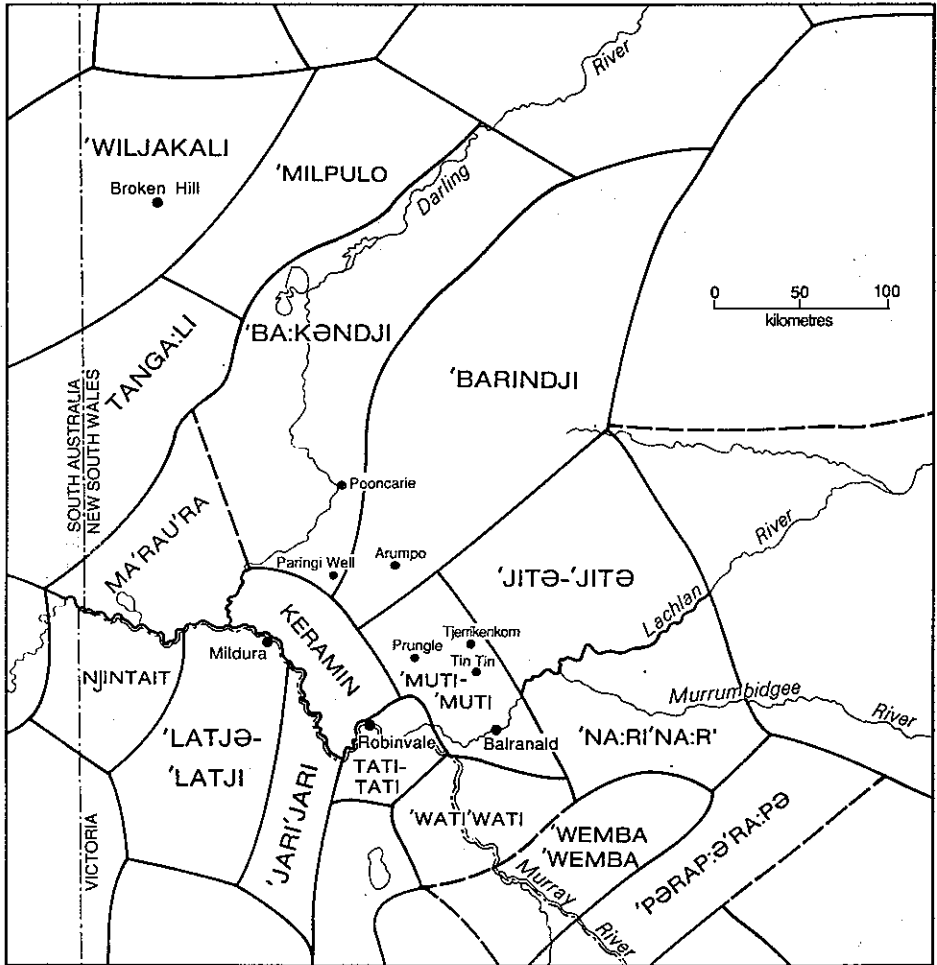
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| F3, 32/3 | P.O. Strehlow monthly reports. |



Section from N.B. Tindale, 'Tribal boundaries in Australia' (1974).
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THREE LINGUISTIC STUDIES FROM FAR SOUTH-WESTERN NSW

Luise Hercus

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1. **The Kulin Languages of the Far South-West of NSW**
 - 1a. **Introduction**

It may seem an empty exercise to compare old wordlists and try to work out who said what in the far south-west of NSW over one hundred years ago. This is far from the truth: the area is of great archaeological and historical importance and furthermore there are many families of Aboriginal people that have strong links with this region. Who said what in the far south-west of NSW still has some significance. Large groups of people once lived there, and it is tragic that in some cases all that is left of their history and their traditions is a name on a tribal map. Through recent work on the history of the area by J. Hope (MS) new information has come to light. A study of the linguistic aspects of this material will help to elucidate the general language distribution in South-eastern Australia and give some hints of the movement of people that took place before the disruption of Aboriginal Society.

During the sixties and early seventies I tried to record all I could of the languages of the far south-west of NSW with the help of the last speakers of Wembawemba and of Paakantji. Considerable help also came from Jack Long,¹ the last speaker of Mathimathi, who lived far away at Pt Pearce in South Australia. He had left Balranald as a young man late last century but his memory was remarkable and he could even recall small fragments of two neighbouring languages, Narinari and Yitayita. All other languages in the far south-west of NSW were already totally extinct at that time.

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¹ Hercus 1978.

On the basis of this information from Aboriginal people combined with the data published last century as well as from a few manuscript sources, there emerges the following relationship between the languages of the area:

The languages belong to three groups:

1. Kulin (R.M.W.Dixon calls it 'H')²
2. Paakantji (Dixon's Z) from the Darling River
3. Yitayita (Dixon's E) from the lower Lachlan and around Robinvale.

1b. **The Characteristics of Mathimathi**

The term 'Kulin' was not used by Aboriginal people as a language name it was employed by scholars, for instance, Schmidt to serve as a convenient label for a group of languages centered on Victoria. The word *kuli* is known from Wembawemba, WeRkaya and related languages where it means 'a crowd of people'. It was sometimes even introduced into English: 'who's that *kuli* over there?'

There are a number of subdivisions of Kulin, but only the languages that were spoken in south-western New South Wales are considered here. These belong to two different subgroups:

Mathimathi subgroup

Mathimathi

Watiwati

Letjiletji

Wembawemba subgroup

Wembawemba and PeRepapeRepa

Narinari

Reasons for this classification

Schmidt³ sensed that Mathimathi - which he called Piangil, after the township on the Murray northwest of Swan Hill- differed considerably from the other Kulin languages. He therefore listed it separately and even called it a 'mixed' language. The most obvious of the features that distinguish the Mathimathi group are as follows:

Mathimathi nouns differ from their Wembawemba and other Kulin counterparts by having a suffix *-i* following nominal bases that end in a consonant, and a suffix *-ngi* following nominals that end in vowels, as in

English	Wembawemba	Mathimathi
Man	<i>wúthu</i>	<i>wuthúngi</i>
Camp	<i>lár</i>	<i>léngi</i>
Fire	<i>wánap</i>	<i>wanápi</i>

There are therefore no monosyllabic nouns in Mathimathi. This difference in the length of nouns is reflected in the accentuation system and there are in fact a number of circumstances in which polysyllabic nouns have their main accent on the second syllable. This makes Mathimathi speech sound more like Paakantji and very different from Wembawemba and other Kulin languages: the phonotactic rules resemble those of Paakantji. There are old

² R.M.W.Dixon 1980:241.

³ Schmidt 1919:88.

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vocabularies of Watiwati, given by P. Beveridge,⁴ J. Beveridge⁵ and Cameron.⁶ Less is known of Letjiletji.⁷ These old sources indicate that Watiwati and Letjiletji shared with Mathimathi the same characteristic final *i / ngi*.

In grammar one of the most conspicuous features of Mathimathi is the use of free pronoun subjects in preference to pronoun subject incorporation. Thus Mathimathi people said *taka yiti* 'I hit', while Wembawemba people said *taka-nda*. Moreover there are considerable differences from Wembawemba and associated languages in the pronoun system, e.g. *yiti* is the pronoun subject of the first person. This is attested also for Watiwati and Letjiletji whereas the Wembawemba form is *yandin*.

Information on Narinari is limited, but there are clear indications that this language was close to Wembawemba, and not to Mathimathi.⁸

Wembawemba people were quite explicit that Perepaperepa (called Bureba by Mathews⁹ 1902) was identical with their own language except for a very few words, the most obvious was that they said *peRepa* 'no', instead of *wemba*. The word *peRepa* is in fact used in one of the Wembawemba songs and there is a Wembawemba word *peRepothen* 'lost, forgotten', which incorporates the same word for 'no'. PeRepapeRepa, Narinari and Wembawemba can thus be regarded as a closely-knit group, quite distinct from Mathimathi.

Because the differences between the Mathimathi group on the one hand, and the Wembawemba group on the other are so clear-cut, they can be noticed even in place-names, despite all the usual problems of spelling. A series of names reflect the characteristic final *i / ngi* of the Mathimathi group. The final is variously spelt as 'i', 'ie', 'ay', 'ey', 'y', 'ee', 'ae', and even 'eigh' as in Tori, Manie, Ganaway, Marimley, Canally, Benanee, Warwaegae and Koraleigh. There is a concentration of such names near the Murray River between Swan Hill and almost to Robinvale. Koorakee (Mathimathi *kuraki* 'sand') is the north-westernmost of these names and it must have been close to the border of Yitayita country, as will be shown by the study of the vocabulary from Prungle.

2. Who were the Berri-Ait

2a Note on the Paakantji Dialects

The relationship between the various dialects of Paakantji has been discussed in *The Bagandji Language*.¹⁰ Three Paakantji dialects were spoken in the far south-west. They were:

- i. Marawara, sometimes called Wimbaia, which was spoken around Wentworth and along the river as far as Avoca,¹¹
- ii. Parintji, from the dry area to the east of the Darling,
- iii. Southern Paakantji, which was spoken along the Darling north from Avoca.¹²

4 Brough Smyth 1876:II.73.

5 Curr 1887: 439-445.

6 Cameron 1885:367.

7 McLeod in Curr 1887:438 and P. Beveridge *loc.cit.*

8 See Hercus 1978.

9 Mathews 1902.

10 Hercus 1982.

11 Tindale 1974:196, Hercus 1984:56.

12 Tindale 1974 :192.

The name Paakantji means 'the River people'. The suffix *-ntji* implies 'belonging to', 'associated with' and can be used with ordinary nouns in the language; thus *yara* means 'tree' and *yarantji* is 'possum' (lit. 'belonging to trees'). The word *paaka* means 'river', therefore *Paakantji* means literally 'belonging to the river'. Similarly *PaRunntji* means 'belonging to the *PaRu*, the Paroo river', and *Parintji* means 'belonging to *pari*, scrub'.

The term Paakantji tends to be used in two meanings:

- a. as a term for the whole language group
- b. as a term for the dialect originally spoken in the area from Avoca to Wilcannia.

In order to avoid confusion it seems best to refer to the dialect once spoken from Avoca to Wilcannia as 'Southern Paakantji' as distinct from just 'Paakantji' which can then be used to refer to the whole group.

2b. The Berri-Ait

The area just east of the Darling is so important and well-known in the field of prehistory that it seems particularly sad that we know so little of the Aboriginal people who occupied the region at the time of the first European contact. Most of the early information comes from A.L.P. Cameron, who stayed at one time at 'Mulurulu', north of Mungo. From his evidence¹³ it seems that at least a major part of the area was occupied by the people he called 'Berri-ait' or sometimes 'Beri-ait'. He says:

Between the Barkinji, the Wiradjuri, and these tribes along the Murrumbidgee and Murray, of which the Ta-ta-thi is one, I find another large tribe, or perhaps nation, called *Berri-ait*, of which at present I know little beyond this, that it is composed of the following sub-divisions: Lagerung, Mirro, Milparo, Boanjilla, Pularli, Nielyi-gulli, Kurlki-gulli and Karndükul.

In a footnote he adds:

The vocabulary given at p. 366 shows a great resemblance between the languages of the Barkinji and Beri-ait. I suggested to my informants that they were parts of the same tribe, but they would not hear of it. I suggested that before the whites came the Beri-ait blacks must have been forced to go into the rivers in summer time. They said that now and then they did so, but went in a sufficiently strong party to fight any section of the river tribes they might meet, and when they had no water they lived on what they obtained from the roots of the Mallee and a species of *Hakia*. I was told that a proof of their being totally distinct was that any old Barkinji black could swim, but that *no* Beri-ait could.

Although the talk about swimming may appear to trivialise the situation there can be no doubt from these statements and from the vocabulary that the Berri-ait were a Paakantji group, very close to Southern Paakantji.

The Berri-ait were in fact those very same people who were usually called *Parintji*, 'belonging to the scrub'. Tindale made this identification without any hesitation.¹⁴ Yet there remains a query. Cameron was a careful observer, and took a great interest in the people of the far south-west of NSW. He wrote about the Berri-ait not only in the 1884 paper, which was edited by A.W.Howitt, but also in numerous long letters to Howitt.¹⁵ It

¹³ Cameron 1885:346.

¹⁴ Tindale 1974.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Diane Barwick for referring me to the Howitt papers.

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is puzzling why he should consistently call the people 'Berri-ait' or 'Beri-ait' in contradiction to all other sources. I am convinced that the answer lies in the fact that Cameron, as is evident from his work, must have spent some time with Yitayita people and that 'Berri-ait' was the name by which the Yitayita referred to Parintji people. The transcription 'Berri-ait' probably stands for what would now be written as *Pari-aitj*. Of all the languages in the immediate area only those of the Yitayita group permitted final *t* and *tj* (note 'bait', 'moon' in the vocabulary from Prungle listed below). Other early references to Parintji people are by Newland¹⁶ who calls them 'Barrengée, East Back Country Tribe'. Tindale¹⁷ in his edition of the Eaglehawk and Crow story in Marawara, the southernmost of the Paakantji dialects relates how:

Karnau, as a leading man of the [Barindji] people (literally "the people of the trees" in contrast to [Ba:kindji] the people of the ["Ba:kka] or Darling River) had the two girls under his care. The Barindji folk had lived on the Manara Range, away from the Darling River, for a long time. They were friendly with the River folk.

He then¹⁸ discusses the 'southward movement of the story' and implies that there has also been a southward movement of people.

2c. The Language of the Berri-Ait

By 1963 there was not a single person who thought of himself as 'Beri-ait', i.e. *Parintji*. The oldest speaker of Southern Paakantji, 'Grannie' Kate Bugmy could however recall that there had once been a group of people called *Parintji*, and she was conscious of the fact that they were 'really all part of Paakantji'.

Cameron¹⁹ has given a vocabulary comparing 'Beri-ait' with 'Barkinji'. He himself was conscious of the fact that this list brought out the close relationship between the two languages. Nevertheless it appears at first sight as if there were quite a few cases where Berri-ait (*Parintji*) differs from Barkinji (*Paakantji*). A detailed analysis shows however that these apparent distinctions are illusory. For example in the following entry

English	Barkinji	Berri-ait
woman	kümbuka	nüungu

the Berri-ait word 'kümbuka' is clearly the well-known Paakantji word *kumpaka* 'wife', whereas 'nüungu' i.e. *nhuungku* is the Southern Paakantji word for 'female'. The apparent difference is caused by the fact that Cameron is comparing words that are not exactly, but only approximately synonymous.

The word for 'girl' is given as 'wüngu' in Berri-ait. This is no doubt the same Southern Paakantji word *nhuungku* 'female' which Cameron has listed under 'woman'.

Other near synonyms:

The word for 'boy' is given as Berri-ait 'birillo' and Barkinji 'kununda'. Cameron is consistent in writing 'i' for 'a' before all retroflex consonants. There can thus be no doubt that 'birillo' represents southern Paakantji *parlu* 'child', and 'kununda' is *kunundu* 'uninitiated youth'.

16 1889:32.

17 Tindale 1939:245.

18 1939:259.

19 1884:366.

'Baby' is rendered by Berri-ait 'katchaluka' and Barkinji 'moatpu'. These are in fact both Southern Paakantji words, the first is *katjiluku* 'little' the second is *muurpa* 'small child': the lightly tapped preconsonantal 'r' can easily be misheard as a 't'.

The words for 'throat' and 'neck' have simply been reversed between the two vocabularies: both Berri-ait 'berinbah' and Barkinji 'birnbah' stand for the frequently recorded Southern Paakantji word *parnpa* 'neck', 'throat'.

'Grass' is listed as 'muttu' for Berri-ait and 'kulthu' for Barkinji. Both words occur in southern Paakantji, as well as in the other Paakantji dialects: *muthu* means 'grass' (and forms part of the well-known place-name Mootwingee, *muthu-wintji* 'fresh grass'), *kulta* is a more general term for 'ground-vegetation'.

'Sleep' is rendered by Berri-ait 'bumpara' and Barkinji 'emau'. Both these entries represent Southern Paakantji words:

pumpara meaning 'to sleep, to rest'

(*ngjima* meaning 'to lie down' (the initial *ng* is sometimes dropped and in any case Europeans often had difficulty in hearing it).

In all these cases the differences between Barkinji (Southern Paakantji) and Berri-ait (Parintji) are only apparent.

Probable mistakes

The word for 'brain' over much of south-eastern Australia is equivalent to 'head-egg'. The Paakantji word therefore is *thartu parti*. This is rendered by Cameron as follows:

Tartoo birti is listed in the Berri-ait column

Tartoo bira is listed in the Barkinji column

hartu pardi was heard a number of times from southern Paakantji speakers, never 'tartoo bira'. The word for 'egg' is given by Cameron as 'birti' for both Berri-ait and Barkinji, so 'bira' must be a mistake, and the Parintji and Paakantji words are identical.

'bulki' is given for 'hair' in both columns, but there is a difference between the two columns in the word for 'beard':

Berri-ait 'waku bulki'

Barkinji 'bulki'.

waka pulki (lit. 'chin hair') was heard many times from Paakantji speakers. The difference between the two columns is simply that Cameron presumably pointed at his beard and the Paakantji speaker thought that he was just indicating hair in general and he said 'bulki'.

The words given for 'feathers', Berri-ait 'ülki' and Barkinji 'purlki' represent the same word *pulki*, 'hair' which could also refer to 'fur' and 'down-feathers'.

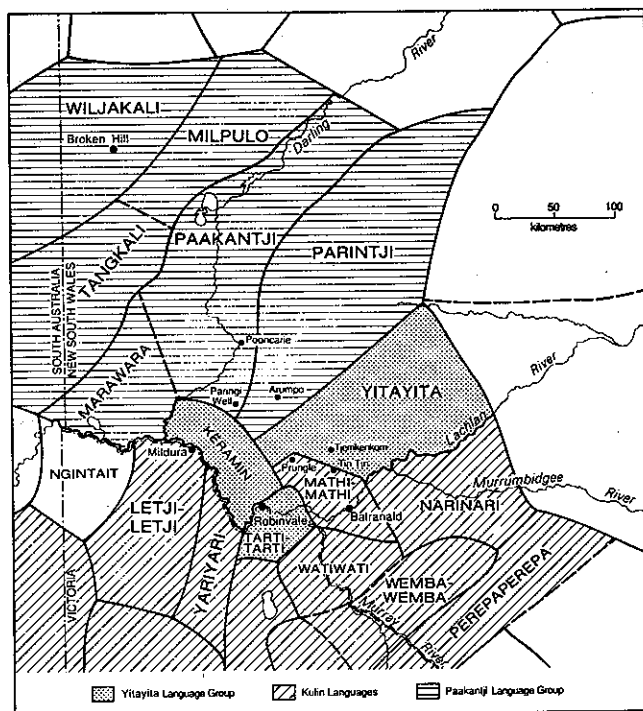
Again there is little doubt that there was no difference between the two dialects with regard to this word.

There are two curious entries, some lines apart, in Cameron's word list:

day	Berri-ait yuku	Barkinji yuku or kalkui
evening	" kalkui	" tunkunka

In the extensive Southern Paakantji material recorded over the last 22 years the word *yuku* was always used to mean 'sun, daylight, daytime', *thungka* was used for 'night' and the locative form was *thungkana* 'at night'. There was also a very commonly used adverb *kaljpu* 'now, directly, very soon', which could easily have been misheard as 'kalkui'. So what presumably occurred is that Cameron happened to be speaking to the Parintji person in the evening hence he got the term 'kalkui' for evening, and to the Paakantji person in the daytime, hence he got 'kalkui', i.e. *kaljpu* 'now' as an alternative form for 'day'; there is no doubt that both were speaking pretty much the same language.

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'Tribal boundaries in Australia' as amended [David Windle, Cartographic Unit, RSPacS]

The word given for 'thumb' is 'uma murra' for Barkinji and 'utu-tu murra' in Berri-ait. This would appear to be a mistake: *(ng)uma maRa* means 'your hand', and *(ng)urtana maRa* means 'your (pl.) hands'.

Uncertainties

There are some instances where Southern Paakantji speakers have invariably used the term given by Cameron as Berri-ait, and I fail to recognise the word given by him for Barkinji, thus *yantantji* was used for 'whirlwind' (Cameron's 'yandanki'); 'pinpah' listed as the Berri-ait word for 'pine tree' is the wide-spread word *pinpa* found throughout the Paakantji dialects and as far west as Arabana. 'würkira', the word given by Cameron for 'pine tree' in Barkinji is reminiscent only of *wurkiri*, the Mathimathi word for 'black'. Similarly Berri-ait 'windhya', for 'mud' represents Southern Paakantji *wiindja*, 'mud' and the word given for Barkinji is unrecognisable. There can be no question about it, Berri-ait, i.e. Parintji as described by Cameron is very close to, if not actually identical with Southern Paakantji as it was recorded in the nineteen sixties from river people who originated from Pooncarie. There are four instances where Cameron's entries for Berri-ait go against the rules of Paakantji by having a final consonant, but they are recognisable as slight mishearings or misspellings of ordinary Southern Paakantji words:

- 'ilpabrind' for 'wrist' is uncertain, but the last part of the word is *pirna* 'bone'
- 'kop' for 'elbow' is *kupu*
- 'burthedd' for 'kidney' is *paarthingki*
- 'dhalk' for 'lungs' is *thalka*.
- 'karapur' for 'sky' is *karapira* 'far away'

The Marawara vocabulary and sentences gathered at Yelta by Bulmer²⁰ and Holden²¹ have been analysed recently by Hercus.²² Marawara is the southernmost of the Paakantji dialects. We have the great advantage for Marawara that Tindale has published a text in this language.²³ But even without this text it would be easy to see from the old vocabularies that Marawara differed from southern Paakantji in a systematic way: Southern Paakantji intervocalic *-tj-* corresponds to *-y-* in Marawara,

Southern Paakantji	Marawara
<i>wimpatja</i> 'man'	<i>wimpaya</i>
<i>kumpatja</i> 'big'	<i>kumpaya</i>
<i>kampitja</i> 'father'	<i>kampiya</i>

There are also certain grammatical differences: these have been summarised in diagrams in *The Bâgandji Language* (205-6). There is nothing of this kind to distinguish Parintji as described by Cameron, it is simply a form of Southern Paakantji.

Not every single word in Cameron's vocabulary has been listed here, because the findings would simply fall into one of the categories of illusory distinctions described above. There are only three instances where the Berri-ait word given by Cameron does not correspond to Southern Paakantji as recorded from Pooncarie speakers. This may be because the word has fallen out of use, or because I somehow failed to record it, or it may be due to some other pitfall. There is certainly every possibility of pitfalls as can be shown by the following entry, in which Berri-ait and 'Barkinji' happen to be identically spelt:

	Berri-ait	Parinji
stars	purti	purti

The Southern Paakantji word for star is *purli* and this is indeed a very widespread word found as far west as Kuyani and Parnkala in the north of South Australia. A cognate form is certainly indicated by Cameron in his entry 'berril' for Keramin, on the same line. What has happened is that someone, perhaps Cameron himself, has misread a handwritten 'l' for a 't' - maybe Cameron did not always cross his t's - and as a result of the confusion 'purti' appears for *purli*.

The only comparative word-lists that are truly satisfactory are those which are based on a depth study of both languages involved. There are rare exceptions even when there is no depth study. These exceptions are lists made with the help of two speakers in the same environment, preferably knowing each other's language. This means that they both get the same message and are not tempted to render different nuances of the same English words, and they are therefore not using vaguely synonymous words in their respective languages. A fine example of such a list is Tindale's manuscript of a comparative vocabulary of Marawara, the southernmost Paakantji dialect, and Yuyu (Ngintait) from the Murray below Ned's Corner. Tindale made the list with both speakers present, Frank Fletcher for Marawara and Bob McKinley for Yuyu and it is clear from the background information that they knew each other's language. Cameron evidently did not have the same favourable situation, nor did he have detailed knowledge of either language. The appearance of near synonyms and of other sources of error was therefore to be expected.

20 Bulmer (Brough Smyth II 33-37).

21 Holden (Taplin 1879).

22 Hercus 1985.

23 Tindale 1939:245.

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no. 9.



Watpipa the "Old Man",
our guide on Sep. 24. 63

L. Becker.

L. Becker, 'Watpipa the Old Man', [reproduced from M. Tipping. *Ludwig Becker*, Melbourne, 1982:68, by permission of the Library Council of Victoria]

Cameron has nevertheless performed a great service by enabling us to understand the position of Parintji within the framework of the Paakantji dialects. It was evidently very closely akin to Southern Paakantji, 'nearly the same', as he himself suggested, and as was confirmed some ninety years later by the Southern Paakantji speaker, Mrs Kate Bugmy. If it were not for his careful word-list we could not be so sure that the Berri-ait, i.e the Parintji, really were so close to Southern Paakantji.

2d. **The Placename 'Paringi'**

In the Arumpo area is a well named 'Paringi well', and there is also a 'Paringi tank'. This cannot but refer to Parintji people. It is a mere surmise, but the chances are that places which refer to a tribal name may well be near the border of that group's country or else there would not be any need to point out the affiliation. An example of this is Mt Areebunna, near the border of Arabana country by the Macumba. This consideration confirms the southernmost point of Tindale's boundaries for Parintji, where Paringi well is not far from the border.

2e. **Note on the Placename Arumpo**

None of the languages in the whole area permit initial vowels, yet it is not at all unusual for place-names (and even words in word-lists) to be wrongly written with an initial vowel. The explanation is invariably that the transcriber has failed to hear an initial *-ng*. This is the case with Arumpo, which is most likely to represent **Ngarampu*. In his diary Wills calls the place Nerromboo: he was conscious of an initial *n*-sound. As Yitayita has a preference for final consonants the name Arumpo is almost certainly Parintji and this is further confirmation of the southern boundary of Parintji as given by Tindale.²⁴

3. **Twenty Words from Prungle**

There is little known about the extent of territory once occupied by Yitayita people, and still less about the detail of their boundaries with other groups. It is therefore particularly fortunate that during recent work on the Willandra Lakes, Jeanette Hope discovered the report of the surveyor Neumayer who in 1860 followed the early part of the Burke and Wills expedition. This report contains valuable linguistic information in the form of twenty words from Prungle.

Neumayer writes (p.12):

At 10 in the morning we had to cross a low range of hills extending about two miles from N. by W. to S. by W; the natives call them Prangal or Wrangkal (461); reached a good camping place by noon termed Mungin, 180 feet below the summit of the hills, the afternoon and evening being employed in making astronomical and magnetic observations. I was very much pleased by some of the Blacks showing considerable intelligence while explaining to me their way of living and giving me an idea of their language. The following are a few specimens of their words:- star, tingi; sun, nong; moon, bait; cloud, nun, spango; sky, terail; fire, arreng; tree, mann; cart, carning'; white fellow, weifellow, lang; hair, trad; throat, nei; nose, kap; eye, laong; leg, kapul; grass, dellum; saltbush, dolra; night, ran; day, nung.

From the point of view of a true linguistic study this list may appear pathetically short, moreover only seventeen out of these twenty words can be taken into consideration for the following reasons:

1. The word 'nung' is listed twice, once as 'nong', 'sun' and once as 'day'. There should be only one word for 'day', 'daylight' and 'sun'.
2. 'weifellow' is an unassimilated borrowing
3. 'carning' is presumably also a borrowing but it is not as patent: it presumably goes back to English 'cart'.

Short as the remaining list may be, there is no doubt about its linguistic affiliations: the words are Yitayita. This becomes evident when we compare the words from Prungle with other Yitayita vocabularies. Our knowledge of Yitayita and the apparently identical Tartitarti is extremely limited. I was able to record only a few words in 1963 even from the legendary old Charlie Kirby who was generally acclaimed as the last Yitayita. Our knowledge comes mainly from four sources:

1. A short wordlist by Cameron, (1984:367) and some comments on the kinship system, contained in the same article.
2. J.A. Macdonald's contribution to Curr (1886:285).
3. R. Brough Smyth's wordlist entitled 'Junction of Morcovia Creek and River Murray'.

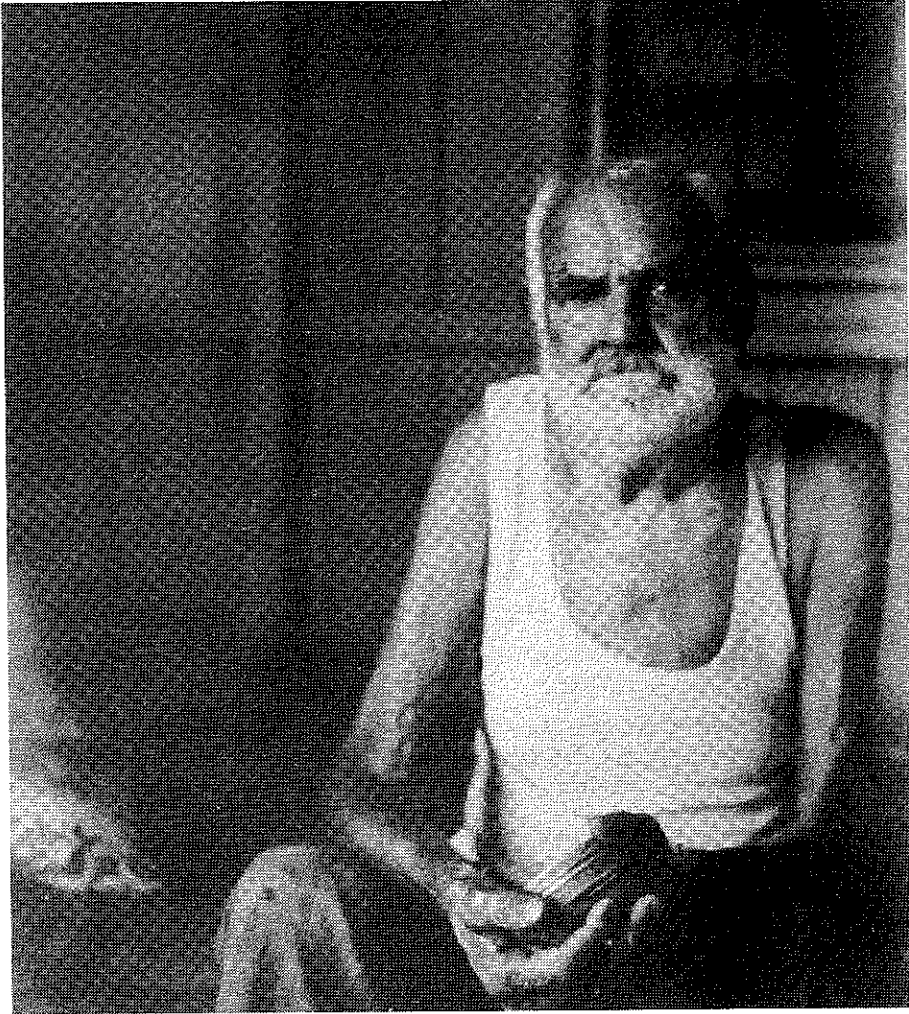
²⁴ Tindale 1974: Maps.

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4. R.H.Mathews, the Yithayitha Language (MS).

There is also a limited vocabulary by Cameron²⁵ of the related Keramin language, a short list of words from Mildura (also in Keramin) by Jamieson²⁶ and a list 'in the Kemendok tongue' by a Mr McFarlane, the owner of Mallee Cliffs Station. The vocabulary given under the heading 'Upper Murray' in the Exposition Internationale (1866) is too unreliable to be considered.

The following table contains a list of the words from Prungle next to the corresponding words from the old Yitayita vocabularies, with some additional entries from the other related languages.



Charlie Kirby, Balranald, 1963 [photograph by Professor R.G. Debray]

25 Cameron 1884:366-7.

26 Smyth 1878:II.74.

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1989 13:1

English	Prungle	Cameron	Macdonald	Smyth	Kemendok etc
star	tingi	tinka	dingi	dingée	
sun	<nong	nūng	nunk	nung	nunk (Mildura)
moon	bait	batchi	baidjh	bite	py'te (Mildura) baitch
cloud	<nun, spango				
sky	<terail	*wa-angor		wango	
fire	teriel (Keramin)		nurmt (Mildura)		
tree	arremg	mürüing	ngaroong	arronge	
cart	mann			murr (pine)	
white	carning				
fellow	weifellow,				
hair	lang	*yüyü	derart	dreut	
	trad				
		dirirt kitch Keramin)		drirk kitch	
throat	nei	*gooramil			
			*neit (chin)		
nose	kap	kup			cup
eye	laong	lanung		laong, laank	langur
leg	kapul	ngun			cuppum
			kuppul (thigh)	nunt (thigh)	ngunt (thigh)
grass	dellum	tulum	thelim	thurlum	thellum (Keramin)
saltbush	do'ra				
night	ran		roin	reun	wangoran

The symbol * is used to indicate Yitayita words found in the manuscript letters from Cameron to Howitt and not printed in the published article.
The last column refers to Kemendok, unless otherwise stated.

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3a. Comments on individual words from Prungle 'bait', 'moon'

The various ways in which this word is rendered in the word-lists makes it appear likely that there was a final *tj*, and that the phonemic transcription would be *patj*. The word is related to Paakantji *patjurka* 'moon'.

'spango', 'cloud'

As is well known there is no -s- sound in any Aboriginal language, but Europeans sometimes imagined they could hear it and inserted it in all kinds of unexpected situations: occasionally it indicated that they could hear a fricative. This would point towards a pronunciation 'wango' which is identical to the word given by Cameron and Smyth for 'sky'. As in those early days a lot of communication must have been conducted by pointing, it is not surprising that 'cloud' and 'sky' could be confused. The word 'wanganran', listed twice for Kemendok by McFarlane, once for 'night' and once for 'darkness' is very probably a combination of this same word 'wango', 'sky' and 'ran', dark'.

This analysis is to some extent confirmed by the fact that Cameron lists for Keramin:

Waing-gruimitch	morning
waingrui	dark

'waingrui' is too close to 'wanganran' for this to be a coincidence, and it seems highly likely that both words correspond to 'sky-dark'.

'nun', 'cloud'

The word 'nurmt', 'sky' in the Mildura list is suspiciously like the Prungle word 'nun', 'cloud', and it is probable that Jamieson made a mistake and that 'nurmt' should be interpreted as 'cloud', not 'sky'.

'terail', 'sky'

The existence in the Yitayita language group of the word 'terail' sky is confirmed by Keramin 'tereil'. It is the only word in the list where there is a close resemblance to the Kulin languages. In Kulin *tiril* 'sky' is wide-spread, the placename Lake Tyrell is derived from this word, and it is likely that it was borrowed from Kulin into the Yitayita group.

'arrong', 'fire'

As indicated above (2e) early writers had problems in hearing initial *ng* and it happens quite frequently that it is simply not written. Because of the absence of initial vowels throughout the area, we can safely assume that the word was *ngarrung*. This is in fact what is implied by the form 'ngaroong' given by J.A. Macdonald.

'trad', 'hair'

'derrart' is given as 'head' by Macdonald, this is obviously the same word as 'derart' which he lists for 'hair'. All these words show a similarity to the word *thartu*, which is found in all the Paakantji dialects in the meaning of 'head'; this includes Cameron's Barkinji and Berri-ait: he lists 'tartoo', 'head' for both.

The Paakantji word for 'hair' (see above) is *thartu-pulki* 'head hair': and the Keramin word seems to have been formed on a similar pattern, as we read in Cameron's list:

English	Keramin
Head	Dirirt
Hair	Dirirt Kitch

The Kemendok word given by McFarlane is very similar, 'dirirt kitch'.

It is therefore highly likely that 'trad' heard at Prungle by Neumayer actually means 'head' rather than 'hair', a confusion that could arise very easily if people are communicating by pointing. The confusion is further facilitated by the fact that the languages in the area use the expression 'head-hair' for 'hair'.

'kap', 'nose'

This word is one of a number that show links between Yitayita and the language of the lower Murray: 'kap' is obviously related to Yaralde kobe 'nose'.

kapul 'leg'

Just as there is confusion in the vocabularies between 'cloud' and 'sky', the same type of lack of communication has led to confusions between 'leg' and 'thigh'. The fact that Neumayer was right was confirmed by Charlie Kirby who over one hundred years later (in 1964) recorded *kapim* 'leg'.

3b The Yitayita Language and Yitayita People

It is clear from the limited data collected last century that Yitayita and Tartitarti are closely connected: the languages we were told were identical. There is one other language that belongs to this group and that is Keramin, called Keringma by Bulmer (MS) and called Kureinji by Tindale.²⁷ This was once spoken on the north side of the Murray from near Robinvale down to Wentworth. Keramin had various subdivisions, Kemendok from Mallee Cliffs and Yerre-yerre from Mildura. There is therefore a group:

Yitayita-Tartitarti

Keramin (including Kemendok and Yerre-yerre)

As these languages are so very different from all others surrounding them, I made quite particularly determined efforts to find out whatever I could from 1963 onward. My main hope lay with Charlie Kirby of Balranald, a very aged man of part Yitayita descent, but he knew only a few words: he had spent most of his adult life with Ngiyampaa people away to the north at the Carowra tank.²⁸

Long after Charlie Kirby's death Jack Long recalled how in his youth he had heard Tartitarti and Yitayita spoken around him and could understand the language though not speak it. He recalled some vocabulary. He had been friendly with Angus Myers who had given information on the language to R.H.Mathews and with Angus' younger brother Dinny Myers who had subsequently lived around Balranald and Deniliquin mainly associating with Hubert Day (Wembawemba) and his family. Apart from Dinny there was

²⁷ Tindale 1974.

²⁸ Tindale 1974:194 refers to a 'survivor' of the Yitayita who took part in a radio broadcast of the re-enactment of the Sturt Expedition in 1950, and he gives the man's name as 'Clayton'. The Claytons however were of Wiradjuri descent. I met Tommy Clayton (who was certainly the person involved) in 1964 as a very old man shortly before his death. He was a handsome white-haired man, proud of his acting ability. He told me how he had been 'on the air', and how more recently he had acted in a film which he obviously considered silly. He had to spear an unfortunate kangaroo which had already been incapacitated, and he had to speak in broken English and generally pretend to be a 'savage'. His English was excellent and he knew only a few words of Wiradjuri, no Yitayita.

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one other Yitayita speaker who had survived till the forties. She was 'Queen Caroline of Oxley'. She died without anyone ever recording her speaking the language.

The Yitayita language group is of unique linguistic interest. In general phonotactic appearance Yitayita, with its large number of monosyllabic words, consonant finals and consonant clusters does bear some resemblance to languages further downstream on the Murray. Particularly interesting is the presence in Yitayita of initial *r*, which is found on the one hand in Gippsland and on the other hand further down the Murray in Yuyu and in the Yaraldi dialects of the Murray mouth. This and some similarities in vocabulary have convinced me that there is an ancient link between the people of Gippsland and the Murray.

Yitayita does not have pronoun subject incorporation: this is clear both from the material contributed by J. A. Macdonald to Curr²⁹ and from R.H. Mathews (MS). It is tempting to think that the similar situation in the languages of the neighbouring Mathimathi group, as opposed to the other Kulin languages, is due to Yitayita-Tartitarti influence.

3c. Notes on placenames mentioned by Neumayer

The name 'Tin' is certainly Yitayita: being monosyllabic it cannot be anything else, moreover it is a common word in Yitayita meaning 'foot'. The use of words for parts of the body in placenames is very usual: such names often refer to an incident in mythology. The word for 'foot' can imply that here an Ancestor made a track, and it is tempting to think that 'Tin' could refer to the myth of the Giant Kangaroo.³⁰ There is however no proof of it.

In his report Neumayer mentions a place further on - from his description it would appear to be a day's journey further, and this is called by him 'Cabul' or 'Cowell'. This seems to be the same as the word listed by him as 'capul', 'leg'. This name is of particular interest as it is likely to belong to the same myth as 'Tin', and because it indicates that Yitayita territory extended further west than had been indicated by Tindale's map. The words from Prungle prove Yitayita presence around Prungle. The placename Cabul' extends the range of Yitayita even further to the north-west, into an area that we might have thought otherwise was Parintji. The fact that the people in the Prungle area were Yitayita is confirmed by Wills,³¹ who wrote in his diary for September 19th, 1860 about the nearby place 'Tcherrikingkom':

The Blacks that are found here belong to the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan to which river they retire as soon as the water dries up on the plains.'

This is totally different from what we know of Parintji (Berri-ait) people, who always lived away from rivers. The lower Lachlan in particular was associated with Yitayita people, as Charlie Kirby used to state with pride: 'I am a Yitayita black and I come from the Lachlan where they talk backwards'. He said this to emphasise the distinctive nature of Yitayita.

There is however a statement by Tipping³² that Ludwig Becker saw two widowed women at 'Tjerikenkom', and that they were Mathimathi. Becker himself does not say anything about the women being Mathimathi, this is simply a surmise by Tipping. The placename 'Tjerikenkom', which Becker explained means 'a species of bream', has the phonotactic appearance of being Yitayita, not Mathimathi. Becker's notes therefore in no

29 J. A. Macdonald in Curr 1886: II. 285-289.

30 Cameron 1884:369.

31 Hope MS:78.

32 Tipping 1979:58.

way contradict the evidence of the twenty words from Prungle that the Tjerikenkom-Prungle area was in Yitayita country.

Becker supplied a further piece of information: he made a brilliant drawing of the old man who guided the expedition out from 'Gilalba', which he describes as being five miles from Prungle. This old man was called 'Watpipa' on the drawing, and in his fourth report Becker in talking about him says:

'Whitepeeper', 'the old man' as he, par excellence was called by the natives of the district.'

The name 'Watpipa' or 'Whitepeeper' does not at first sight link with anything known; yet it is clear from Becker's statements that it must have actually meant 'old man'. The Yitayita word given by Macdonald for 'old man' is 'beak', which looks irrelevant, until we find the clue in the vocabulary of the closely related Kemendok language from Mallee Cliffs, given to Curr by McFarlane:³³

An old man pikwaar
 An old woman pik-korump
 A white man thow-wur

It is clear that we have here a morpheme 'pik' (i.e. the same as the 'beak' of Macdonald's list) which means 'old'. To this can be added either 'korump' which means '(older) woman' (cf. Yitayita 'koram-koram', 'old woman'), or 'waar' which refers to a man, though it is not the ordinary word given for 'man'. As most Aboriginal languages have a number of words for 'man', according to age and status, this is not surprising. The word 'waar' (which is probably also found in 'thow-wur', 'white man') must be parallel to 'korump' and mean 'an older man'. We can then analyse 'Watpipa' or 'Whitepeeper' as 'war-pik-war', 'a really old man'. It is not uncommon for European transcriptions to use -t- instead of a preconsontantal tapped -r-, as for instance 'moatpu' for muurpa (see 2c above) So 'Warpikwar', 'Whitepeeper' was a Yitayita, and so were the 'natives of the district' referred to by Becker.

3d. Conclusions

The evidence from the Prungle district shows that the boundaries of Yitayita were further west than had been previously thought and we can conclude that Yitayita and the closely related Keramin or Kureinji group were in fact contiguous and not separated entirely from each other by Mathimathi country. This continuity had already been suggested by R.M.W. Dixon (pers. comm.) and the vocabulary from Prungle emphasises this point.

We can gain further and more general information from the early writers. From the evidence of Wills, Neumayer and Cameron there appear to have been two types of occupation in the far south-west of NSW. Mathimathi and Yitayita people occupied the dry areas of their country as long as surface water was still available; in bad seasons they fell back on their river country along the Lachlan and the Murrumbidgee. The Berri-ait, i.e. Parintji people occupied their own dry country permanently and in times of emergency they relied on water from roots. It is however an important fact that their language was almost if not completely identical with Southern Paakantji. This points to an inevitable conclusion: the high sandhill country east of the Darling originally formed part of the range of Southern Paakantji people. The Berri-ait, i.e. the Parintji, were a group of Southern Paakantji people who presumably split off from the main group to occupy on a permanent basis the dry country east of the Darling, and according to Tindale³⁴ there was also some movement of

³³ Curr II.: 282.

³⁴ Tindale 1939.

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people towards the south. This is in keeping with a situation that can be seen elsewhere in Australia where there has been a recent intensification of the occupation of the most arid areas. This applies to the Simpson Desert,³⁵ as well as to the Victorian Mallee,³⁶ and on the present linguistic evidence it would appear to apply also to *pari* 'the scrub', the area east of the Darling.

NOTES ON ORTHOGRAPHY

In this paper a practical orthography has been used for Paakantji: Plosives have been written as unvoiced, (k,p,t,t, rt), except in the nasal-plosive clusters mb, nb, rnd..

Retroflexes have been written as r plus consonant, i.e.

rl is retroflex l

rn is retroflex n

rt is retroflex t

Interdentals have been written as consonant plus h, hence nh, th. ng has been used for velar n.

Long vowels are written as double vowels.

The symbol * has been used to indicate a hypothetical form.

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³⁵ Hercus and Clarke 1986.

³⁶ Ross 1981, and Lourandos 1985.

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FEASTS OF THE FULL-MOON

The Distribution of rations to Aborigines in South Australia: 1836-1861

Robert Foster

Introduction

In this paper I examine the origins and development of ration distributions to the Aborigines of South Australia. The distribution of rations was the principal administrative operation of the Protector's Office and the depots, usually police stations, were the medium through which government policy was communicated and carried out. While originally conceived as a form of compensation, the Colonial Government, under Governor Grey's influence, came to use the distribution of rations as a means of gaining control over the Aborigines on the frontiers of pastoral settlement. At the end of the 1850s, as a consequence of destitution and ill-health among the Aborigines in the settled regions of the state, rations were also used as a form of social welfare.

1. Policy and Precedent

The first report of the Australian Colonization Commission contained a plan for the treatment of Aborigines which included an embryonic notion of ration distributions:

the following objects should be aimed at: to guard against personal outrage and violence; to protect them in the undisturbed enjoyment of their proprietary right to the soil, wherever such right may be found to exist; to make it an invariable and cardinal condition in all bargains and treaties made with the natives for the cession of lands possessed by them, in occupation or enjoyment, that permanent subsistence shall be supplied to them from some other source.¹

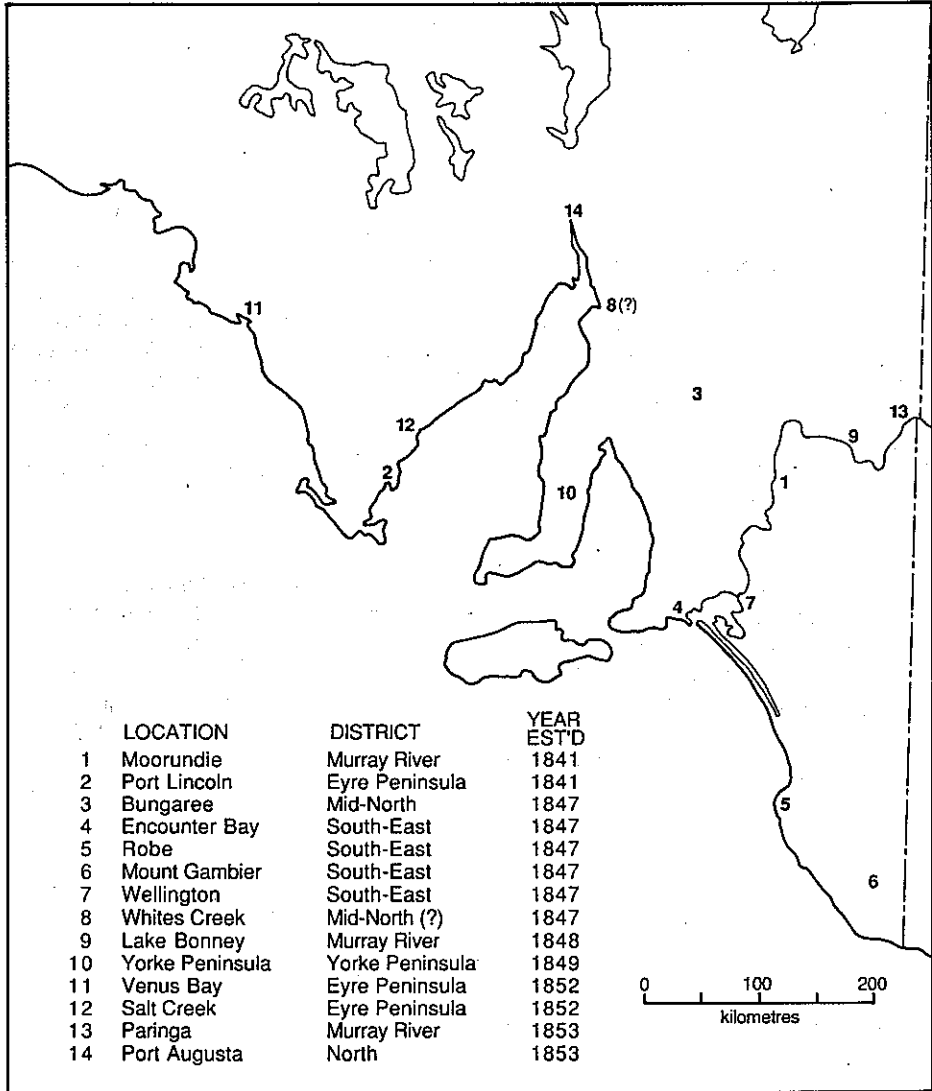
The report also contained a proposal to set up 'asylums' in districts inhabited by the Aborigines. These asylums were to provide shelter for the Aborigines "superior to those found in their rudely constructed huts", and they were to be locations from which food and clothing would be distributed "in exchange for an equivalent in the form of labour."² By this arrangement, Aborigines were to be "reconciled to labour for the sake of its reward" and trained in "habits of useful industry."³ The policy was paternalistic in conception and motivated, in part, by the desire to draw Aborigines into the labour force. During the early years of settlement, frontier violence and indifference to the settlers' notions of 'useful industry' seemed to thwart these plans, however the network of ration depots established in the 1840s does seem to have drawn its inspiration from the original idea of asylums.

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1 1st Annual Report of the Colonization Commissioners of South Australia 28 July 1836, in *British Parliamentary Papers*, XXXVI:8.

2 *ibid.*:9.

3 *ibid.*



Ration distribution points, South Australia [Cartographic unit, RSPacS]

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The earliest distributions of rations, carried out by the interim Protector Captain Bromley, were haphazard and gratuitous, intended only to gain the confidence of the Aborigines in and around the environs of Adelaide. The plan of giving food or clothing only in return for labour was forgotten. Bromley did little in his short term as Protector beside perfecting a recipe for inedible porridge - the Adelaide tribe's dislike of which almost drove him to a nervous breakdown.⁴ After only two months in office, Bromley was replaced by William Wyatt. Both Wyatt, and the first full-time Protector, Matthew Moorhouse, attempted to re-establish the distributions according to the original conception. To Moorhouse's way of thinking gratuitous distributions were counter-productive, encouraging indolence rather than work. His first report, published in September 1839, explained his attitude:

At the location we never distribute rations until an equivalent of work is done, and then the food is of an inferior quality to that obtained from the town. Bread, for instance, is preferred much before biscuit, and fresh meat before salt; and unless the number of natives be so great that the town cannot supply them, we get no work done at the location.⁵

The concept of giving rations only on the condition of work performed was persisted with in Adelaide and at the first depots established, such as Moorundie, but it never really worked.⁶ The reason is that in the early phase of contact the Aborigines saw rations as a novelty rather than a necessity - if need be, they could do without them - they consequently had little coercive effect. What is more important, however, is that when systematic distributions from local depots was begun, a new motive had emerged; besides being used as inducements to labour, rations became a tool for controlling frontier conflict. This theme will be explored later.

In November 1838, to celebrate his arrival in the Colony, Governor Gawler held a feast for the Aborigines of Adelaide. Gawler's wife, Maria, described the scene -

. . . at 12 o'clock, the interpreter (Cronck), and Dr Wyatt, the pro-tem Protector, went to their settlement, and paraded them down, the men dressed in new red woolen shirts, & the women as well as they could.

They formed in a ring and the Governor addressed them, Cronck interpreting. They afterwards all sat on the grass, and were well regaled with baked beef, biscuit, rice and sugar, and tea.⁷

The feasting culminated in a corroboree performed for the Europeans. The interpreter translated the songs for the Governor and his wife; they apparently included references to the arrival of the first ship in Holdfast Bay, the landing of the whites, and one even sang the praises of "the good biscuit they got in Adelaide, etc."⁸

Using his 'welcoming party' as a model, Gawler instituted an annual feast for the

4 Kathleen Hassell, *The Relations between the settlers and Aborigines in South Australia, 1836-1860*, :19-22. Also the Colonial Secretary's Office In Letters, Nos. 117, 152, 169, 206, 210/1837. SA Public Record Office GRG 24/1.

5 Protector's Report (9 Oct.1839) reprinted in the 5th Annual Report of the Colonization Commissioners of South Australia, *British Parliamentary Papers* (1842), :321.

6 Report of E. Eyre, Colonial Secretary's Office, In letters, 28 February 1844. SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6.

7 Letter of Maria Gawler, 1 Nov. 1838, in Papers of the Gawler Family, SA Archives PRG 50/19.

8 *ibid.*



Above: Edward John Eyre distributing rations at Moorundie. Reproduced from F. Dutton, *South Australia and its mines*, London, 1946: opp. 331, by permission of the State Library of South Australia.

Below: Edward Bates Scott, successor to Eyre at Moorundie, where he was Sub-Protector from 1847 to 1856, reproduced by permission of the State Library of South Australia.



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Aborigines to coincide with the Queen's Birthday on the 24th of May. The first was held in 1839 and was attended by the Aborigines of Adelaide and the Para River.⁹ It became customary for the Governor to address the assembly before the feasting began; in 1840 they were made to listen to a translation, in the Kaurna tongue, of the Ten Commandments, followed by the Governor's own commandments which culminated in a plea for brotherly love between the races.¹⁰ During the feast, goods of various sorts were distributed: blankets, clothing, tin dishes and cups, even pewter plates with an impress of the Queen and the letters of the alphabet. The annual gathering was also an arena in which the progress of the children at the Native School could be assessed - they were usually brought forth to demonstrate their skills in reading and writing.¹¹

The idea for annual feasts of this sort was not new; in New South Wales Governor Macquarie began the practice of giving an annual feast for the Aborigines at Parramatta in 1814. The gathering was held every December, with some variations over the years, until its abolition in 1835. The conduct of these yearly gatherings at Parramatta, which involved the distribution of food and blankets, the imparting of government instructions and displays of children from the Native School, probably set the pattern for Gawler's own annual feast.¹²

The Queen's Birthday distribution represents the earliest form of systematic ration distribution in South Australia. Its purpose was simple; it was a means of gaining the confidence of the Aborigines and was a useful vehicle for communicating government instructions. As the Protector wrote of the first distribution: "Beef and pudding, blankets and clothing were convincing and tangible inducements to loyalty."¹³

2. The Establishment of Systematic Distribution.

(i) Moorundie and Port Lincoln.

When George Grey arrived to replace Governor Gawler in June 1841 relations between Aborigines and settlers had reached their lowest ebb, the cause being the constant clashes between Aborigines and overlanders droving sheep down the Murray River from New South Wales to Adelaide.¹⁴ The Colony was almost bankrupt and any threat to the overland route threatened the financial viability of the Colony.

In an effort to secure the route a number of expeditions under the command of Police Commissioner O'Halloran were organized to protect the over-landing parties. The unexpected arrival of Governor Grey led to the recall of the second expedition and its re-organisation; it was placed under the command of Matthew Moorhouse whose instructions were to capture Aboriginal leaders and bring them back to Adelaide for trial. The expedition was met by a large party of Aborigines and in the ensuing conflict at least thirty, but perhaps as many as fifty, Aborigines were killed. An official enquiry into the "Rufus River

⁹ *The Register*, 3 Nov. 1838.

¹⁰ *The Southern Australian*, 26 May 1840 (3A).

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² R.H.W. Reece, 'Feasts and Blankets: The history of some early attempts to establish relations with the Aborigines of New South Wales, 1814-1846', *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, 2, 3 October 1967.

¹³ Protector's Report, published in *The Register*, 25 May 1839.

¹⁴ S. Hemming, 'Conflict Between Aborigines and Europeans along the Murray River from the Darling to the Great South Bend (1830-1841)'. Honours Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1982.

Massacre" found no fault with the actions of the expedition.¹⁵ At the conclusion of the enquiry, Governor Grey introduced a number of measures that he hoped would "prevent the recurrence of such unfortunate events."¹⁶

In a despatch to Lord John Russell, Grey outlined his plan to appoint a "Gentleman who could continue in his own person the two offices of Resident Magistrate and Protector of Aborigines; and who should be directed to reside upon the banks of the Murray devoting his attention to the suppression of outrages upon the part of overland parties, and to the civilization and improvement of the natives".¹⁷ These objectives were to be achieved in the following way:

I have directed Mr Eyre to bring into operation a system of periodical distributions of flour to the natives; - this distribution being made dependent upon their good conduct. They are to assemble on every other full moon, for the purpose of receiving these presents. Opportunities will be thus afforded them of bringing under Mr Eyre's notice any grievances, under which they may be suffering; and he, at the same time, can impart to them any regulations or directions for their guidance. I confidently anticipate that the measures thus adopted will, for the future, prevent a recurrence of scenes similar to those, which I have lately had to bring under your Lordship's notice.¹⁸

Eyre arrived at Moorundie, near the site of present day Blanchetown, at the beginning of October and two weeks later he was joined by twelve men and a non-commissioned officer of the 96th Regiment.¹⁹ Apart from distributing rations, Eyre made several trips up the Murray as far as Lake Victoria, attempting to make contact with as many groups as he could and, by distributing blankets, re-establish goodwill.²⁰

At the same time that overlanding parties were being attacked on the Murray River, the settlement at Port Lincoln was in a virtual state of siege as a result of constant Aboriginal attacks on stations. The newspapers at the time described the situation in doom-laden, apocalyptic prose and judging from the reports coming from the area, it was not altogether unwarranted. As a consequence of the trouble many settlers were leaving the district and the population fell by a third in the years between 1839 and 1842.²¹ Lieutenant Hugonin, the Government Resident at Port Lincoln, described the effect of Aboriginal attacks: "The deserted stations which are too frequently met with in riding about the country are melancholy by convincing proof of both their hostility and success . . ." ²²

It is against this background that Grey ordered a system of ration distribution to be established at Port Lincoln similar to that already operating at Moorundie. After reminding the Government Resident that the district was isolated and the Europeans greatly out-

15 Governor Grey to Lord John Russell, Governor's Despatches, SA Public Record Office GRG 2/5, No. 52/1841.

16 *ibid.*

17 *ibid.*

18 *ibid.*

19 *ibid.*

20 Reports of Sub-Protector Eyre, 5 Feb. 1842 and 20 Jan. 1844, reprinted in 'Papers Relative To South Australia'. *British Parliamentary Papers*, XXXII (1843).

21 *The Adelaide Examiner*, 7 Sep., 1842 (3AB); 14 Sep 1842 (3BC); 2 Nov. 1842 (3D, 4A). Hassell, *op. cit.*:75.

22 Colonial Secretary's Office, In letters. SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/240, 1842.

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numbered, Grey ordered him to distribute three pounds of flour every second full-moon - withholding it only from those said to be shielding criminals.²³ To the Resident Magistrate's surprise, the first distribution at Port Lincoln attracted 100 men, women and, however, it was brought to an abrupt halt by an approaching bushfire.²⁴

Due to the Colony's bankruptcy, the depots at Moorundie and Port Lincoln were financed, at the request of Governor Grey, by the Home Government.²⁵ Even though occasional supplies of blankets and flour were sent to Encounter Bay, Wellington, Bungaree and other locations, usually to coincide with the Queen's Birthday distributions, financial constraints initially prevented any expansion of the system.

(ii) Expansion 1847-1852.

By the middle of the 1840s the pastoral frontier had expanded into the Mid-North and South-East, giving rise to outbreaks of violence between Aborigines and settlers in these districts. In March 1847 Lt. Governor Robe, at the prompting of the Commissioner of Police, asked Moorhouse to look into the establishment of a general system of ration distribution. The depots at Port Lincoln and Moorundie were held up as examples of how rations could be successfully used to 'pacify' the Aborigines.²⁶ Acting on Robe's instructions, the protector made a tour of the newly settled districts to assess the settlers' response to the plan and to get an idea of the best locations for the depots. On his return, he made the following recommendations -

. . . the distribution of flour should take place once a month (at the full moon), that at the out stations 4lb should be issued to each adult, & 2lb to each child, under twelve years of age, & a registry kept of all who attend.²⁷

In addition to the depots already operating at Moorundie and Port Lincoln, seven sites were recommended: Bungaree and Mt Remarkable in the mid-north, Lake Bonney and Wellington on the River Murray; Guichen Bay and Mt Gambier in the South-East, and Encounter Bay. The distributions were to be conducted by the police from stations already operating at those locations. Drawing on the example of Port Lincoln and Moorundie, it was also suggested that the practice of suspending distribution in the event of theft and until the thief gave up the thief, be persisted with. The monthly distributions began in May 1847 and by the beginning of the following year the Protector believed the system was having an effect. In his final quarterly report for 1848, Moorhouse wrote: "From no station has a native been committed, where the tribes have assembled to receive flour."²⁸

After a period of relative calm in the Port Lincoln district, a series of murders in 1850 caused anxiety among the settlers. The local Corporal of Police, Geharty, suggested to the Police Commissioner that the cause of these attacks was starvation caused by a long drought in the area, "many of the natives are absolutely on the point of starvation . . . in questioning them as to their reasons for injuring the white men, they state that they were

23 Hassell, op. cit.:74.

24 *ibid.*

25 Lord Stanley to Governor Grey in Papers Relative to South Australia. *British Parliamentary Papers*, XXXII (1843) :304.

26 Matthew Moorhouse, Colonial Secretary's Office, In letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/286. 1847.

27 *ibid.*

28 Protector's Report, Colonial Secretary's Office, In letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/225. 1848.

refused food."²⁹ Archdeacon Hale, the Superintendent of the newly established Native Institution at Poonindie, submitted a detailed proposal for establishing order in the area which not only suggested increasing the Police Force but expanding the distribution of rations.³⁰ Responding to this pressure the Government established two new depots, one at Venus Harbour, about 150 miles North West of Port Lincoln, and another at the Salt Creek Police Station on the east coast of Eyre Peninsula.

The settlers' attitude toward the distribution of rations was ambivalent; in some places they agreed it was a successful means of gaining a degree of control and influence over the Aborigines, but they also saw it as a potential danger - by drawing Aborigines into the places where distributions occurred and consequently into closer contact with their pastoral stations. The Government Resident at Port Lincoln outlined these objections in a letter to the Chief Secretary:

The natives of the N.W. parts of this district have little or no intercourse with the settlement, nor is it desirable that they should have, seeing that they would have to pass and repass the line of scattered stations lying between the western coast and the dense scrub, and be under an almost equal necessity of plundering them for the means of support, at least the temptation to commit outrages would be increased.³¹

A similar argument was used by the settlers in the Salt Creek area. Perhaps as a consequence of these expressed fears, the station in the north-west was located at Cherreroo, beyond Venus Harbour and the line of pastoral settlement. Shortly after the location was established a settler, believing he had the protection of the police, moved sheep into the area, only to lose them to Aboriginal attacks.³² The government had gone to great lengths to establish the station beyond the frontier of pastoral settlement, only to find that the boundary moved with them.

At the same time that the out-stations were being set up on Eyre Peninsula, it was suggested that a Sub-Protector be appointed, and a 'feeding station' established in the Northern district. The stimulus was a series of attacks on Hayward's station near Lake Torrens.³³ The plan was deferred, but in November 1853 the Protector wrote:

This appears to be the time for establishing the feeding station for the North. The settlers are all short of men to attend their flocks & the Natives are quite aware of the fact & are much disposed to take advantage of it. The feeding station would be a means of keeping them quiet & would recommend the same scale of allowance as adopted for Port Lincoln.³⁴

The depot, under the authority of Sub-Protector Minchin, was commenced at Mt Brown on the 1st of February 1853. Initially, the distribution of both flour and meat was carried out every day, however the frequency was quickly reduced. Moorhouse summarized Minchin's role: "His aim will be to induce the wild natives from the hills to live at his station, and by

²⁹ Commissioner of Police, Colonial Secretary's Office, In letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/1577. 1851.

³⁰ Archdeacon Hale, Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/1581. 1851.

³¹ Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 30 Jan 1851:80

³² Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters. SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/2966. 1852.

³³ Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 17 June 1852:366.

³⁴ Aboriginal Protector's Letterbooks, 1 Nov. 1852:321. SA Public Record Office GRG 52/7.

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keeping them some time in contact with himself and the police, so far civilize them, as to render them not only harmless but useful to the settlers."³⁵ His efforts in this regard were quite successful; in May he reported that 130 Aborigines were at the station.³⁶

(iii) Contraction 1853-1859.

The Victorian gold rush of 1852 not only saw an exodus of labour from the colony but also mass resignations from the Police Force. At one stage even the Protector applied for leave so he too could try for his fortune in Victoria.³⁷ The dramatic fall in the labouring population, combined with the depletion of the Police Force, caused great anxiety, particularly in the pastoral districts where it was feared that the Aborigines would exploit the situation and wreak havoc throughout the countryside.³⁸ These fears proved to be unfounded, the labour exodus; nonetheless, did have a significant impact on the nature of the relationship between Aborigines and settlers.

In many districts, prior to this time, pastoralists had been physically driving Aborigines from their land, now settlers were actively encouraging their presence. In the South-East, for instance, some pastoralists were offering rations and good wages to induce Aborigines to work for them.³⁹ In these new circumstances, the rations available to Aborigines at police stations were considered an obstruction. Following a suggestion from the Government Resident at Robe, rations at that station were withdrawn from the men, it was said to be "an inducement to some to remain idle and unsettled."⁴⁰ Over the next few years the distribution of rations in most areas was gradually restricted to only the sick and infirm. At the same time the Police and Protectors were to encourage the Aborigines to work for the settlers.⁴¹

After 1852 most districts reported significant increases in the number of Aborigines employed by the settlers. In March 1853, Sub-Protector Mason reported that there were about fifty Aborigines employed by the settlers in the Wellington District - "all well-paid, and food supplied."⁴² Similar reports were being received from other areas.⁴³ In May 1854, Sub-Protector Minchin, conceding that most Aborigines did not work for the settlers, added -

it is very well known to the whites, that such blacks as are employed, and receive sufficient food and clothing, are not only invaluable for their services, but indispensable at present: the work on many stations being chiefly carried on by natives, and to a great extent among the sheep farmers.⁴⁴

It was perhaps in the optimistic light of reports of this nature that the government felt justified in trying to halt the periodic distribution of rations. In 1853 Sub-Protector Scott,

35 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 2 June 1853:362.

36 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 28 July 1853 :498.

37 The Adelaide Observer, 7 Feb. 1852 (6D).

38 *ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1852 (5D/6A); 21 Feb., 1852 (6B); 24 Apr. 1852 (4E).

39 Foster, R. 'The Bunganditj: European Invasion and the Economic Basis of Social Collapse.' MA., University of Adelaide 1983:110-112.

40 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 28 July 1853:499.

41 *ibid.*, 17 June 1852,:366.

42 *ibid.*, 25 May 1854:413.

43 *ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1854:150.

44 *ibid.*, 24 Aug. 1854:619.

at Moorundie, successfully persuaded the government not to suspend "so trifling an aid for the future".⁴⁵ In the following year the scale of rations allocated to the northern depot at Mt Brown was severely reduced. In his first quarterly report for 1854 Minchin claimed of the Aborigines, "that their ideas seem more steadily fixed on self-exertion", and that the discontinuation of rations for all but the sick and infirm, "may have a good and desirable effect."⁴⁶ It is apparent that the government now considered general and periodic distributions unnecessary, indeed, by 1856 they considered the Protector's Office unnecessary.

With the advent of responsible government in 1856 the Protector's Office was abolished and the responsibility for Aboriginal affairs fell to the Crown Lands and Immigration Office. The main function of the Office was arranging the distribution of rations, on a much reduced scale, to the surviving depots. A report by the Public Accounts Commission in 1856 noted that the only out-stations regularly distributing rations were Wellington, Guichen Bay, Venus Bay and Port Augusta. The Moorundie depot was abolished in September of that year.⁴⁷

Evidence concerning the administration of Aboriginal welfare in the period between 1856 and 1859 is scant, the only official reports regularly published were those of George Mason, who continued as Sub-Protector at Wellington. Mason documented the increasing levels of destitution among the Aborigines and their growing reliance on government rations. In April 1859 Mason reported the presence of one hundred Aborigines near his depot, forty of whom were aged, blind, or sick. He stressed the importance of rations, particularly in the winter months:

If it were not for the liberal supply of food issued by the Government, for the use of the natives, who from age or infirmity, are unable to exert themselves to procure food, many of them would have suffered severely from hunger during the past two months, in consequence of the scarcity of fish in this part of the Murray, and the game having been either destroyed or driven away.⁴⁸

The increase in Aboriginal employment, as a consequence of the labour shortage, seems to have blinkered the government to the fact that many of those who wanted employment couldn't find it, while others were too ill or too old to look.⁴⁹

As the decade neared its end, the increasing reports of destitution among the Aborigines began to be accompanied by demands for government assistance.⁵⁰ In 1857 a group of concerned citizens formed a provisional committee to discuss the problems facing Aborigines. In 1859, the Crown Lands Commissioner toured the Murray district and visited the Poonindie Mission before submitting a report to the government which recommended an expansion in the system of ration distribution.⁵¹ A number of new depots were established almost immediately; they included Overland Corner on the Murray River, and Willunga in the south. Supplies were also sent to Taplin's nascent Mission at Point Macleay.

45 *ibid.*, 25 May 1854:413.

46 *ibid.*, p.412.

47 *South Australian Parliamentary Papers* (1856), Paper No.12.

48 Report on the Aborigines of the Wellington District, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 12 May 1859:419.

49 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 24 Aug. 1854:619.

50 Various newspaper articles, e.g. *The Adelaide Observer*, 7 June 1856 (Supp 1H); 5 Jul. 1856 (5G); 18 Jul. 1857 (Supp 1E); 1 Aug. 1857 (3GH).

51 *The Adelaide Observer*, 26 Mar. 1859 (7H); 21 May 1859 (5CD).

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As a result of public pressure, and controversy over the operation of the Point Macleay Mission, a Select Committee was set up to investigate the 'Aboriginal problem'. Three months later, in October 1860, the committee presented its report which recommended, among other things, that the Protector's Office be re-established and that an expanded system of ration distribution be instituted:

it is the duty of the Government to supply the physical necessities of the natives, especially the aged, the sick and the infirm, which provision should include dispensing of medicine and medical assistance.⁵²

It was also decided to decentralize the system of distribution, to forward clothing and provisions to 'well-intentioned' settlers in the outlying districts rather than having a few concentrated distribution points. Ill-health among the Aboriginal population was found to be a serious problem so it was recommended that the Protector should be a medical man.⁵³

The report said of the Aborigines: "It is universally admitted that they are fast decreasing in numbers . . .".⁵⁴ There was a growing belief that the Aborigines were a dying race, incapable of civilization and doomed to extinction. It was a belief argued in scientific terms and held generally in the white community. Moorhouse, in his evidence to the Select Committee, echoed the sentiments when he argued that the best that could be done for the Aborigines was to make their passing more comfortable.⁵⁵

The nature of the new Protectorate and system of ration distribution was quite different to the system operating in the late forties. The system initiated by Governor Grey and fine-tuned by Moorhouse, was designed to inhibit frontier violence by providing the Aborigines with an alternate form of subsistence when faced with the alienation of their lands. This is evidenced by the fact that, prior to 1853, most of the depots were established as a direct response to local conflicts. Furthermore, by bringing the Aborigines into constant contact with the police, the usual issuers of rations, a degree of control could be exercised. The reason for the dramatic expansion of ration distributions after 1860 was a growing prevalence of ill-health and destitution among the Aborigines. An illustration of this is that while depots were still being set up on the expanding northern frontier many new depots were also being established in areas already dominated by European settlement.

3. The Ration Depots

By providing at least a periodic focus for Aboriginal communities, ration depots enabled the government to exert a direct influence over local communities - an influence that went beyond the broad intention of providing rations as an alternate form of subsistence. An illustration of this was the government's 'carrot and stick' approach to ration distribution. A practice of withdrawing rations in cases of misconduct was established very early and incorporated in the instructions sent to the first Sub-Protectors at Moorundie and Port Lincoln. In 1847, Moorhouse reiterated the principle in his proposal for an expanded system of ration distribution:

I allude to that part of the instructions, which requested Mr Driver to suspend the issue, provided any theft had been committed during the month, until the thief shall be given up by his own tribe; the plan worked very beneficially at

52 Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon The Aborigines, *South Australian Parliamentary Papers* No.165, 1860:6.

53 *The Adelaide Observer*, 19 Oct. 1861 (7H).

54 Report of the Select Committee . . . :1.

55 *ibid.*:96.

Port Lincoln & Moorundie & would be worth adopting, at the other stations.⁵⁶

While rations, in the form of food or blankets, were also distributed as rewards, Eyre reported that, in addition to his full-moon distribution, he sometimes gave rations to Aborigines for the performance of menial tasks around the depot.⁵⁷ It was a practice consistent with the early plan to use rations as means of encouraging 'habits of useful industry'. A more common circumstance was to provide extra rations to Aborigines who assisted the police in discovering the identity of their compatriots accused of sheep theft or other crimes.⁵⁸

Another effect of concentrating communities around ration depots is that it allowed the government to use the depots as conduits through which government instructions could be communicated. In 1847, when a range of new depots were being established, the Protector travelled to many of them specifically to speak to the Aborigines. Of his visit to the Mt Remarkable station early in that year, Moorhouse wrote:

I . . . explained to them, as well as my acquaintance with their dialect would allow me, the nature of British law, as affecting property, that this law is administered alike, to white and black men, & I believe that they understood the main outline of that I endeavoured to communicate.⁵⁹

It was not only the Protector who undertook the responsibility of relaying government instructions, local police, Government Residents, and Sub-Protectors were also employed as the need arose. Sub-Protector Minchin, referring to a distribution of blankets at Mt Brown in the north, wrote -

it brought many natives within my reach that continually avoided me, and over whom, by means of a blanket, I was able to gain a little influence, and to caution and advise them as they required.⁶⁰

It is clear that these distributions served many purposes, besides simply providing a substitute for sheep flesh.

Another important, though less definable, aspect of the ration system was the quality of the men who conducted the distributions. Whether Police Troopers or Sub-Protectors, they played a significant role in advocating the rights and representing the needs of the Aborigines in their districts. In the early 1850s when the government wanted to halt or reduce the distribution of rations the issuers in some districts argued strongly and successfully for a continuation.⁶¹ In 1859 George Mason, at Wellington, persuaded the government to provide the Aborigines of his district with boats and fishing equipment - settlers having denied access to the trees usually used to make canoes.⁶² In the early 1860s

56 Matthew Moorhouse, Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/286. 1847.

57 Report of E. Eyre, 10 Jan. 1842, printed in Papers Relative to South Australia, *British Parliamentary Papers*, XXXII (1843), p.305.

58 Journal of the Mt Gambier Police Station, references from 12 May to 22 June 1847. SA Public Record Office GRG 5/2/151/1.

59 Matthew Moorhouse, Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/286. 1847.

60 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 25 May 1854:412.

61 The Protector of Aborigines for the Wellington District, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 9 Feb. 1860:128.

62 Report of Sub-Protector Scott at Moorundie, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 25

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the issuers also took on the role of advocates, representing Aborigines in disputes over the payment of wages.⁶³ Given that the Aborigines had been dispossessed of their lands and made an administered people, the personal qualities of these men often determined the quality of that administration.

4. The Impact of Rations on Seasonal Movements

Most of the discussion so far has focussed on the way rations were used by the government as a means of administering Aboriginal people, but there was another side to the story: Aborigines adapting ration distributions to fit existing patterns of seasonal movement. With traditional patterns of economic activity disturbed by the alienation of land, rations became an alternative economic resource, exploited in the context of traditional seasonal movements, as well as providing the basis for new patterns of movement. A very early example of this was the movement of Aborigines from Moorundie and other locations on the River Murray, to Adelaide in the winter months. Rations were not, in themselves, the motive for the annual visits, but the existence of the depot at Moorundie and the availability of rations in Adelaide certainly facilitated those visits.

The first visits of Murray River Aborigines seem to coincide with the end of hostilities on the Overland Route and the establishment of the ration depot at Moorundie, under the supervision of Sub-protector Eyre. Eyre described the context of this annual journey:

Occasionally nearly 500 natives have been present at these monthly issues of Flour, and the reason the average attendance is not greater is that immediately after collecting at Moorundie, at the full moon, to receive their flour, from 100 to 300 would usually set off to Adelaide, where there are so many objects of interest and attraction, and remain there for several months at a time, and especially during winter.⁶⁴

It was not only the people from Moorundie who travelled to Adelaide, groups from the River, both north and south of Eyre's station, are known to have made the journey. In the early 1850s a group from Lake Victoria and the Darling River was reported to have made the trip to Adelaide, collecting rations along the way at Moorundie.⁶⁵ It is possible that groups from that area made the journey as early as 1843 or 1844.⁶⁶ Eyre suggests the existence of two routes: the first, by way of Mt Barker, was followed by the groups south of Moorundie; while the second, by way of Gawler, was made by groups from Moorundie and above.⁶⁷ So common was the presence of these River tribes in Adelaide that a second Native School was set up for them at Walkerville. It did not last for very long, as at the end of winter the groups would travel back to their own country and take their children with them - much to the annoyance of Adelaide philanthropists.⁶⁸

It is a reference to the Native School at Walkerville that provides a clue to the timing of

May 1854:413.

63 Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 20 Oct. 1864:886.

64 Eyre, *op. cit.* :374.

65 Aboriginal Protector's Letterbooks, 1840-1857 :344-5. SA Public Record Office GRG 52/7.

66 Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/193. 1843.

67 *ibid.*

68 Hassell, *op. cit.* :116.

this annual visit. In March 1846 Moorhouse wrote that he could not distribute blankets to the parents of children at the Native School, because the blankets had been sent to Moorundie:

It so happens however, that the parents were in Adelaide on the day of distribution and could not be supplied. I fully expect them in Adelaide this year on the 24th May . . .⁶⁹

The 24th of May was the Queen's Birthday when a feast was held for the Aborigines in Adelaide and items, such as blankets, were distributed. The distribution of rations was clearly an inducement for these visits.

The attitude of Aborigines on the Adelaide Plains suggest that these visits did not occur prior to contact, and that they were resented. On at least half a dozen occasions during the 1840s, the Adelaide Plains people, sometimes in concert with groups from Encounter Bay, confronted them in battle, though on most occasions the police stepped in before the commencement of hostilities.⁷⁰ It was during one such confrontation that King John, a prominent Kaurna man, explained the local attitude to these interlopers:

"You write in the paper and tell white man what for we fight. Before white man come, Murray black fellow never come here. Now white fellow come Murray blackfellow come too. Encounter Bay and Adelaide black fellow no like him. Me want them to go away. Let them sit down on the Murray, not here. This is not his country. What he do here? You tell Captain Grey to make Murray black fellow go away, no more fight them. Adelaide and Encounter Bay black fellow no want to fight; but Murray black fellow too much saucy. Let him stop in his own country." At the conclusion of this speech, all responded "very good."⁷¹

Even prior to this date attempts had been made to discourage these visits to Adelaide - aptly, by the refusal of rations to those who had made the journey. However, the government had little success and as late as 1853 the Protector's Report contains a reference to attempts at halting their movements.⁷²

The significance of these annual migrations is that the distribution of rations in Adelaide, and the existence of ration depots in outlying areas, provided an opportunistic economic resource that not only facilitated but, in some instances, encouraged the movements. Eyre had encouraged the Aborigines of Lake Victoria to visit the depot at Moorundie - they not only visited it, but used it as a staging post for their onward journey to Adelaide. While it is true that the distribution of rations proved a successful means of gaining a degree of control over the Aborigines, it is also true that the Aborigines used the depots to fit in with their preferred pattern of movements and to establish new patterns.

The evidence of the way ration distributions were used to complement traditional patterns of movement and economic activity comes from the small town of Willunga in 1859 and 1860. In some ways it is a better illustration than Moorundie because it represents a more settled pattern. In May 1859, Police Trooper Shaw, in charge of the Police Station at Willunga and consequently the distribution of rations, reported the arrival of about 30

⁶⁹ Colonial Secretary's Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 24/6/300. 1846.

⁷⁰ *The Southern Australian*, 12 Nov. 1841 (3C); *Adelaide Examiner*, 17 Dec. 1842 (3C); *Adelaide Observer*, 27 Apr. 1844 (5A) and 11 Feb. 1845 (6A); *SA Gazette and Mining Journal* 23 Jul. 1849 (4C).

⁷¹ *The Adelaide Observer*, 27 Apr. 1844 (5A).

⁷² Protector's Report, *South Australian Government Gazette*, 28 July 1853 :498-499.

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Aborigines from Goolwa. They claimed that they wanted to settle at the station but Shaw took a different view:

I believe they have been induced to come here from the report of the liberal supply of rations issued to the Adelaide Tribe, but I do not think (from the enquiries I have made) that they intend to stay longer than the winter months .

73

His suspicions proved well founded; in the following January he noted that most of the Aborigines had left the station:

Several of them left for McLaren Vale about three weeks ago and the remainder have gone to that place in order (as they say) to find employment but I believe they have gone on their "annual round".⁷⁴

There is evidence of similar uses of ration distributions in other areas of the state. In the Lower South East during the 1840s and 1850s the Aborigines were highly dependent on rations during the severe winter months but less reliant upon them in winter. The alienation of good land along the Woakwine Range and around Mt Gambier severely undermined the traditional economic activities of winter in this region; however, the coastal strip, the focus of both ceremonial and economic activities during the summer months, was left relatively undisturbed by settlement.⁷⁵

Conclusion

The rationale behind ration distributions was that they were a means of providing support for a people whose traditional economy had been undermined. In that sense they can be seen as a form of compensation. They were also a system of control; by concentrating Aboriginal groups at specific locations and, in Grey's words, by exercising "parental control" over them, it was hoped that they could be drawn away from attacking European stock and encouraged to enter the labour force.⁷⁶ Once a dependence had been established rations could also be used as a political tool, summarily withdrawn to punish groups for perceived misconduct, or to reward individuals for compliant behaviour. The labour exodus caused by the goldrush saw rations withdrawn in an effort to encourage Aboriginal entry into a desperately depleted labour force.

By and large, the objectives of ration distribution were realised: after a tentative start with depots at Moorundie and Port Lincoln, the system was extended to newly settled districts in the late 1840s and, after a short hiatus in the late 1850s, expanded again, in a modified form, with the re-establishment of the Protector's Office in 1861. Despite all this, the Aborigines in most districts of the state exercised a degree of freedom by accommodating their partial dependence on the depots to pre-existing patterns of movement and surviving economic strategies.

73 Crown Lands and Immigration Office, In Letters, SA Public Record Office GRG 35/1/380. 30 May 1859.

74 *ibid.*, GRG 35/1/51. 7 Jan. 1860.

75 Foster, *op. cit.* :37-40, 110-111.

76 Governor's Despatches, Lieut. Governor Robe to Lord Earl Grey, SA Public Record Office GRG 2/5, No.21. 1844.

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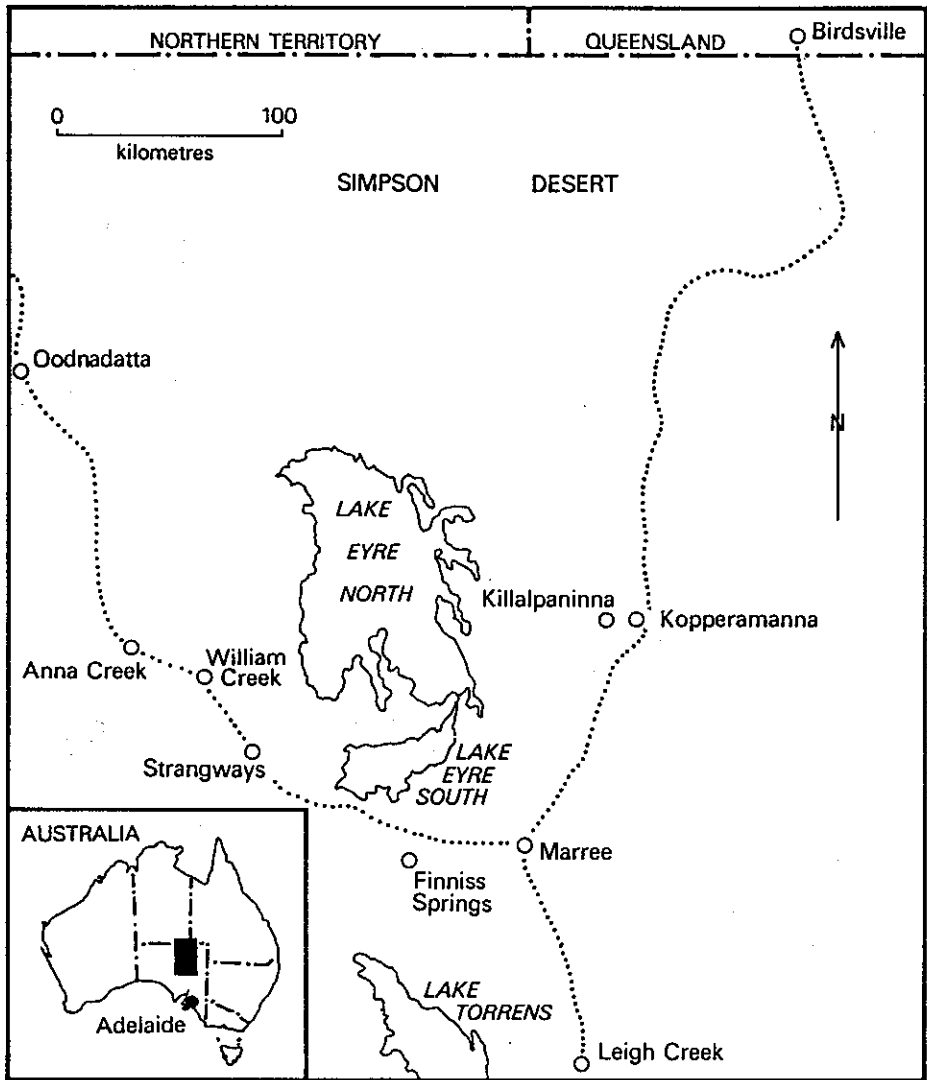
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Finniss Springs Region, South Australia [John Heyward, Cartographic Unit, RSPacS]

LEARNING TIMES

An experience of Arabana life and mission education

Reg Dodd and Jen Gibson

Introduction

Mission experiences in Aboriginal history have been diverse and controversial. The situation at Finnis Springs South Australia combining pastoral station and mission brings its own unique variation to this theme. Although the environment was harsh and the situation demanded continual adjustment to climatic extremes of flood and drought, the memories of the children growing up at Finnis from the late 1930s onwards are of 'happy times' and 'learning times'.¹ They are not filled with bitterness and repression as so often is the case. By this time mission approaches had 'mellowed'. The complete removal of children from relatives and culture which occurred in the 1920s around Oodnadatta was ceasing. The influence of one European man, Francis Dunbar Warren, in a position to facilitate his younger Aboriginal friends and relatives receiving a western education within a pastoral environment, complementing that received from their own extended families, was also crucial.

The Warrens and the Hogarths are early pastoral families in South Australia interconnected by marriage. They first acquired a pastoral lease at Strangways Springs between Marree and Oodnadatta in 1863 and then shifted to nearby Anna Creek Station.² When the family sold Anna Creek in 1918, Francis Dunbar Warren who had been the manager for his uncle Hogarth was forced to leave. Warren already had several children and was determined to keep them and Bralda their mother, with him.³ To do this he realised he would have to find another pastoral station in the inhospitable inland areas.

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- 1 Personal communications 1987 and 1988, Reg Dodd, Jean Wood nee Arkaringa, Norman Wood, Lance Warren, Merna Merrick, Doreen and Laurie Stuart, Robert Pearce and others. Also see Rhonda Dodd's memories in E. Kwan 1988:79-82.
 - 2 Warren 1930:17 gives the year for the settlement of Strangways as 1863. The Adelaide Advertiser Saturday, October 29, 1988 states that with 32,000 square kilometres Anna Creek Station in the far north of South Australia is the largest cattle station in the world. Aboriginal stockmen have always been vital to its survival.
 - 3 Basedow 1921:23 list her as Barralda a half-caste whose European name is Laura an Arrabanna from Finnis Springs. None of her descendants remember the name Laura and only very few her Aboriginal name.

Mrs Merna Merrick,⁴ Francis Warren's oldest surviving child, was a young girl of about eight years old at this time. Her father resolved that at all costs they should not be taken away. South Australian government policy of that day as elsewhere in Australia called for the removal of 'half-caste' children.⁵ In partnership with William 'Bill' Wood (a former book keeper at Anna Creek), Francis used his share of money from the sale to purchase Finnis Springs Station near Lake Eyre South and sixty kilometres west of Marree.⁶ Warren and his family first stopped at the site of the ruins of original Finnis Springs homestead built in the 1860s. Within a few years the sand flies and mosquitoes drove them away from the springs. In 1922 Warren built a lovely stone house at Deep Creek and made it his head station. This was originally called New Finnis but it is what Reg and people in the area today refer to as Finnis Springs Station or simply Finnis.

Many Aboriginal families moved to Finnis with Francis Dunbar Warren who managed to survive on this economically marginal property distributing rations and occasionally fresh meat to them.⁷ Apart from the general coming and going associated with outside jobs, most of these families stayed there until his death in the 1950s so great was their attachment to the family and subsequently the place.

By the mid-1930s there were many more children being born and living at Finnis Springs. The German missionaries particularly Hermann Vogelsang formerly from Killalpaninna made several visits between 1934 and his death in 1940 the most extensive being in 1937.⁸ Many of the Diyari people from Killalpaninna had moved there following the closure of these Lutheran missions on the Birdsville track, including Merna's husband Alf Merrick.⁹ The children were not receiving a western education. A subsequent report by Mr Telfer a Methodist missionary to the United Aborigines Mission in Adelaide expressed a perceived urgent need for a Christian education for the children at Finnis.

Since 1924 the United Aborigines Mission had had a presence in the north of South Australia firstly at Oodnadatta. From there camel expeditions had travelled northwest to contact Aboriginal people. A mission home at Oodnadatta had moved to Quorn in 1927 where it continued throughout this period.¹⁰ Older siblings of some of the Finnis Springs children were educated at the UAM's Colebrook Home in Quorn. Here they lost their own

4 Mona is an equally acceptable anglicising of this name which comes from the Arabana word *mana* meaning mouth. Mrs Merrick herself had no preference, personal communications April 1988. However, after a night's thought she did recall that her given name by her father was Lena.

5 'I think that all "half-caste" children at least could be gathered in, instead of being left in the camp', S.A. Protector of Aborigines Annual Report 1908:107. Compare the circumstances of Molly Lennon in Gibson & Sennon 1989:23f.

6 Pearce, 1980 p.188f.

7 Most of the Aboriginal people who moved with him were of Arabana descent from around Strangways, Anna Creek and Macumba stations. They were intermarried with Lower Southern Aranda from north of Macumba Station, Antakarinja from further north east, and Wangkangurru from the west.

8 Proeve 1945:22-3.

9 cp. Hercus 1977:53.

10 For further details see Turner 1936.

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language and any regular contact with Aboriginal relatives and their way of life. The UAM also established missions at Ooldea, Swan Reach, Nepabunna and Gerard. These are all discussed by Gale 1964.

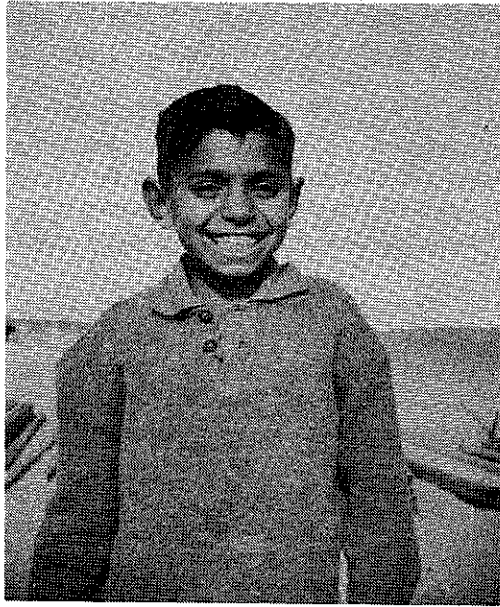
In 1938 the UAM wrote to Mr Wood and Mr Warren for permission to open mission work on Finnis Springs Station. According to mission records the station owners were reluctant.¹¹ Following a visit from Pastor Erskine, the acting president of the UAM, a letter was received from F.D. Warren in 1939 consenting to the opening of a mission at the station.¹² There followed approximately twenty years of mission education on the pastoral station.

In the 1940s the average school attendance was thirty. Some of the families with children attending school were Arkaringas, Warrens, Strangways, Stuarts, Dodds, Merricks, Buzzacotts and Murrays. In the camps which were on both sides of the creek there were about seventy-five Aboriginal people. At times it was well over 100 people and sometimes about 200 people on Finnis. By the end of 1942, sixteen square miles was set aside from the station and became the property of the UAM. On this, with the help of children, parents and station hands they built a school, a church, a mission house, a store, a small hospital room, a 'free lite' for wind generated power, and two below ground water tanks. This is the period covered below in Reg Dodd's childhood memories.

Gradually as more children moved away from Finnis Springs the school population dwindled. In the mid-fifties with the death of Francis Dunbar Warren and the gradual movement of more people to Marree for work the school at Finnis ceased.¹³ The United Aborigines Mission established a presence in Marree in 1965 replacing the mission services at Finnis.¹⁴ Children then attended the local state school.

Reg Dodd one of Francis Dunbar Warren's grandsons and Chairman of the Marree Arabanna People's Committee, recalls his own education and early life on Finnis Springs as follows.

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- 11 Mattingley 1988:250 quotes lack of water as the reason given. Despite repeated requests I have not been able to gain access to these records now presumably housed in Melbourne. This was no doubt one genuine reason for reluctance. Another would have been initial suspicion of a mission presence. The missionaries subsequently sent to Finnis with few exceptions were very pleasant and kind people. Friendly and helpful relations were established and generally maintained between station and mission throughout this period. See Pearce n.d. Warren himself had strongly desired education for his children since c.1920 according to his eldest living daughter Merna Merrick (personal communications). He was very pleased that his youngest children and grandchildren could receive this without leaving Finnis. In return he was evidently prepared to accept a mission presence even deeding them part of the station.
- 12 Gerard 1945:48.
- 13 Gale 1964:113 & 370, discusses problems faced by the missions at Finnis and elsewhere.
- 14 Mattingley 1988:252.



Above: Reg Dodd, 1949 [Andrew Pearce collection, negative held by Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Dept of Environment and Planning, SA]

Below: From left: Norm Ward, with daughter Sharlee in lap, Jean Wood nee Arkaringa, Merna Merrick, nee Warner (rear) Gladys and Reg Dodd with grandson Waylen; on the verandah of the 'new' house built in the 1930s after Wood won the lottery, at Finnis Springs Station, via Marree, S.A. [Photograph by Jen Gibson, Easter 1988]



Learning Times

I was born on the 29 November, 1940 on Finnis Spring. You remember things that happened when you were small, in your childhood days, there's so much you can say but you don't know where you can start. Well going back as far as I can remember is my school days at the Finnis.

I'm Arabana. My old man was Lower Aranda.¹⁵ I go under the name Dodd even on my birth certificate. The certificate is Dodd but my old man's name was Alan Buzzacott. He probably would have had an Aboriginal name but I wouldn't know. Mum, well her mother was Arabana and her father was an old Scotchman, Francis Dunbar Warren. My grandfather's father was titled the Honourable John Warren. He came over from England. You'll find out that all these Murray River and Barossa Valley Warrens are tied in with the Warren family. I think the great grandfather owned the first brewery on the banks of the Torrens.¹⁶ That's on my mother Amy Buzzacott's side [nee Warren].

Mum was born in a big family. She was married to Thomas Dodd before. I would say just off the top of my head there would have been about a dozen of us in the family. Percy Dodd he was the oldest. He passed away now. There's Percy, Norman, Don, Arnold, Ronnie, myself and Philip, Kenny, Kevin and Trevor. That's not in order. Then there's three girls. One that passed away now. That's Sissy. And then Nancy and Esther. Most of the Warren families they were really big families.

My mother was born on Anna Creek Station and my father way up out of Alice Springs somewhere. Anna Creek was Arabana country. I've been told by some of the older people that the old grandfather Francis Dunbar Warren had shares in Anna Creek Station and I think someone older used to own Anna Creek Station. After John Warren's death they sold Anna Creek.¹⁷ By this time my old grandfather had three daughters, Amy my Mum, Mona, and Flora and two sons Arthur and Angus.

The government was taking these kids away, off their parents, and taking them into homes. That's what they used to do in the past. Well, he could see this was going to happen so he packed up his gear and came down to the Finnis from Anna Creek. There's so much that happened, there's a lot of stories in between. To cut a long story what happened he set up the mission. He set up a mission there and a school, a hospital and a shop. There were big mob of families all educated there, a big school. That's part of the Arabana family tradition.

The Aboriginal people built the place up themselves with assistance. I think they got a carpenter up from down south and they built their own concrete bricks and built the house themselves. They made the bricks, they built the church and built the school. I

¹⁵ Arabana like the associated Wangkangurru and Diyeri peoples and the Adnyamathanha in the Flinders Ranges traced descent matrilineally having a moiety system of social organisation.

¹⁶ In his typescript 1930, John Warren the elder brother of F.D. Warren (Reg's grandfather) documents his grandfather John Warren's arrival in South Australia in 1838 and his establishment of the first brewery. He also mentions an early English family title now lapsed. This detailed documentary source provides support and expansion for Reg's own oral memories at various points.

¹⁷ John Warren (F.D. Warren's father) died in 1914 *ibid*.

remember when I was a kid going to school - of course I was only small then - I remember hearing this bloody dynamite going up and all these rocks coming out of the sky.¹⁸

Drought and Flood

Through the drought years there wasn't any permanent drinking water there.¹⁹ The well was salt water and you could wash and cook in it. They used to cart water in a hundred gallon tank in an old two-wheeled dray the station had pulled by three horses. They used to cart it from about fifteen miles. There was an old pond soak. Then they would go back to the station. You'd have a shaft and have one horse in the shaft and one horse on either side. The blokes would go off from there. It would probably take all day to go from the station to the soak, fill up with water and then you'd have to come back to the underground tank.

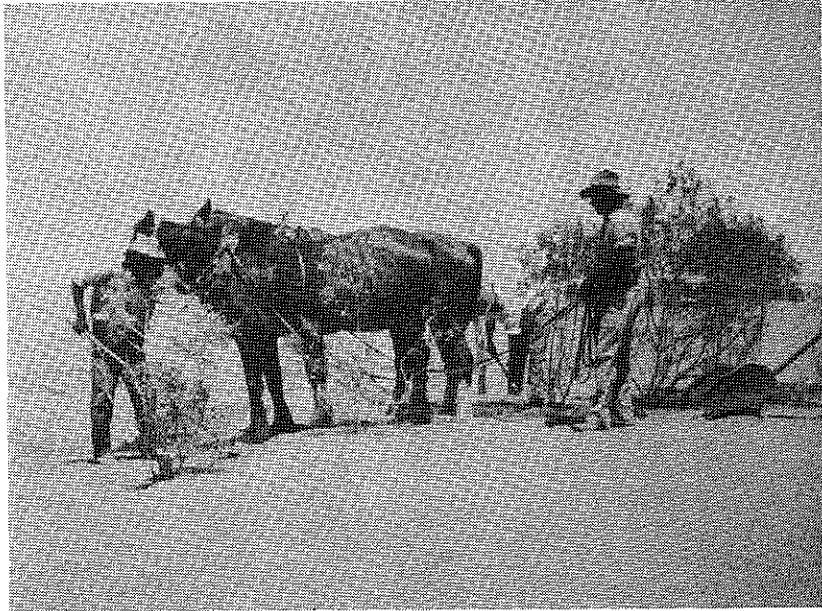
One of those underground tanks they used to call 'Mr Nelson's tank'. The other one was the station tank and the other one was Mr Pearce's tank - just from the names. You had the station tank from the station, then you had Mr Nelson's tank and then Mr Pearce's tank. The first one was probably made in Mr Nelson's time. That's how the old people would have referred to it, 'Go and get water at Mr Nelson's tank.' I remember that. I remember they all used to cart water from there. I used to carry two ordinary four gallon kerosene buckets on a yoke from there back down to where we were living. Ordinary four gallon buckets, kerosene buckets. I thought I was really Samson carrying them. Probably I was around about ten, I couldn't put a date to it. You were always working all the time. You were doing that even at a small age. You tend to build up strength all the time. It was a really good life. Great!

Sometimes you'd get droughts. What would happen then the tanks would go dry. Then half the people would go from there and walk from Finmiss over to the soak fifteen miles. They would live there until such time as it rained and the dam would fill up again. Then you would go back to the station.

As a kid I remember we were there with Mrs Strangways. Then we lived there for ages till the rain. We got a bit of flour and jam and sugar and tea that's all. Apart from that you lived off the land. We didn't go to school. That would have been the families that didn't have any bun cart to cart water. There would be the people that worked on the station, they would remain on the station. Their husbands or their sons worked on the station, there was no need for them to go. They need to stay there on the station and do the work. The people that didn't, they would move over to the soak. There would be thirty or forty people or more. Then they all had horses or dogs and whatever animals to water. They were good times. They were learning times.

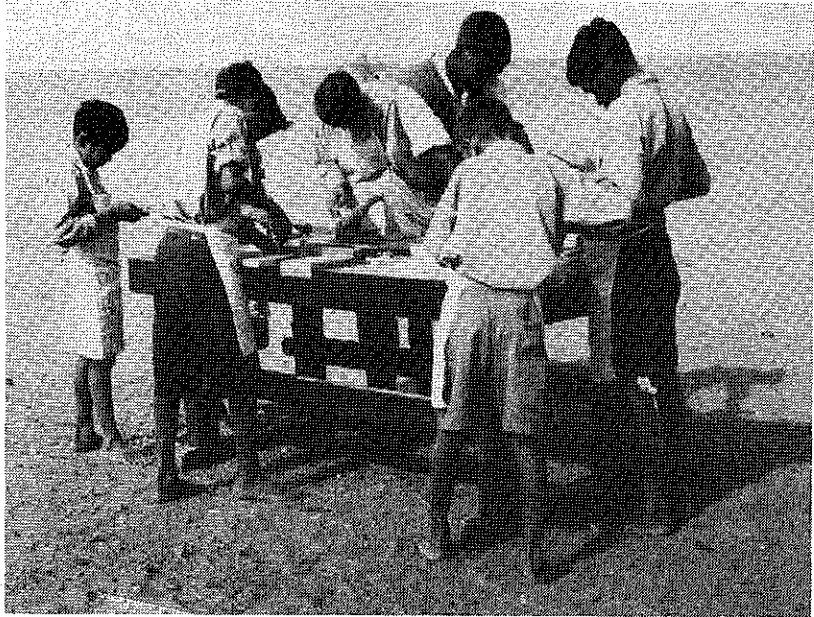
¹⁸ Arthur Warren, Reg's uncle, recalls participating in the construction of the mission buildings. 'I was the one that worked on that church [making] bricks and that roof. I put that roof on. Me and old Thompson.'

¹⁹ Water was always a problem at Finmiss. The average rainfall was only 500 points. The only permanent water came from a thirty metre well put down by Warren and Woods just prior to moving in. When the mission started, new wells also called tanks had to be made. These were named after the missionaries present at the time they were constructed.



'But 1944 was awful – drought'

[Andrew Pearce collection, negatives held by Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Dept. of Environment and Planning, SA]



'Woodworkers', 1945

[Andrew Pearce collection, negatives held by Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Dept. of Environment and Planning, SA]

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Mrs Edie Strangways was strict.²⁰ My God she was really strict. But now I look back at it she knew what she was doing. You would be allocated work. You had to wash up or chop wood or rake the yard or something like that. You had to do your work - no argue the point or back answer! It was really good. She was really strict.

I remember when they were going. They were starting to walk off. I was bellowing my eyes out to go with them. You walked and you didn't have anything. Your swag on your back and your billy can and tucker. The old people wouldn't let me go there for awhile but I cried so much they agreed to let me go. So I went [with] Mrs Strangways and stayed with her. Most of the time I stayed with her family anyway. All our family were fairly close. You were classified as brothers and sisters and whatever may be. You just had that inbuilt thing of Aboriginal people.

I went back there early in 1987. We had built these little humpies. I had a look at the area where we were camping. You could still see this complete circle of round stones where the humpies used to be. When you camp you put out the stones and that to get a better camping area. That's over where the soak was. I would say it's probably about ten miles not fifteen. It would be about four or five say six miles at the most off the main road.

That was the drought years when you had no water but then you had floods too. I remember when we had the floods. Jingo! There was water. There are some good photos of that. Pearce was here then when we had the big floods and all the people shifted from where they were camping in their humpies. They all went into the church and stayed in the church. Apart from old Arthur most of the other people related to old grandfather lived around that area. The other people lived on the other side of the creek.²¹ Old Arthur lived there too. There was a good few like old Pop Strangways' brother, they stayed there. Some of the old old, really old people they lived on the other side of the creek too but they still had that close tie. All the Aborigines would cross over.

Arabana Life

The marvellous thing about it, you'd be sitting there and then somebody would come along and without even talking they must have communicated.²² the visitor wanted. It was just one of those things Perhaps they'd lived together that long and they knew. But I always tend to think it's mental telepathy. They contact somewhere. But they always

²⁰ Mrs Edie Strangways mentioned by Reg was a Lower Southern Aranda woman who married Henry an Arabana man and one of four brothers taking their surname from old Strangways station. Their mother was old Tilly from Macumba way [personal communication Doreen Stuart].

²¹ The mission buildings were across a small tributary creek bed from the station homestead. The houses of the families with children attending school and Bralda's own camp were on the mission side. The older Aboriginal people lived on the opposite side of the main creek to both the station and the mission. This threefold physical division reflected social divisions within the community between the older more traditional Aboriginal people, the two station owners at the homestead and the mission's 'sphere of influence'.

²² This group identifies itself as predominantly Arabana. Traditionally the area of Finnis Springs belonged to the Kwiyani people. As indicated above many people were of mixed descent.

taught us that you always fed the other people before you fed yourself. It was always a thing with the old people. You always gave the visitor the food or whatever it may be, a drink of water, but whatever you had there, you always gave. You were the last. It was just that way.

There was so much they had in good will. There was none of this thinking of yourself before the other person. All sharing. I think it was there all the time. It was that close thing. That's why I think most of the older Aboriginal people have taught that. One person didn't have more than the other person. They all had equal shares or whatever it may be. That's how it was. A lot of people nowadays call it communism. But that's how it is. There were never any problems there no problems at all.

There is so much! You go out there and start talking things just come back to you normally, you can relate to it a lot easier. 'This is what happened to me over there. This is the time this tree fell off here.' Things like that. In the old days you would never light a fire or a smoke without something being wrong. Seeing the smoke they would know straight away there was problems there. Somebody would ride up on a horse. It happened a hundred times. Yes, you could be bogged or you'd broken an axle or a puncture or something. With the smoke, that's why they lived by smoke signals. There was always something, some reason for it.

On weekends, it used to be Saturday morning, we'd go to the dam where all the tanks are, to do the washing. We'd get a four gallon bucket, take it down there and set up a fire. This was when there was plenty of water in the dam. We'd fill up the four gallon bucket, light a fire and get the water boiling. Then you'd get a bit of camp sheet, like everyone used, for the purpose of washing. You'd dig a hole in the ground then put a camp sheet over it, make a hollow, put your water in it then wash your clothes in it. Wash our head and that in it. Just tip the water out when you'd finished and put the camp sheet back in the bush. That was rain water. They'd experiment too, like in the good season you could dig in the creek there and you'd soak water from the creek. That sort of thing happened. All those things you look back on.

When the dam did go dry what they used to do was they'd have these barrows, the horse used to pull. One bloke would hold the old hand plough. The other bloke would go on the plough. One horse would pull it. We'd drive the horse along and the men would hold the thing. We were only kids of seven or eight and you'd have the plough. Once you'd dug it up so much you'd disconnect, take the horse from the plough and hook him on to the scoop. Then the same thing would happen. You'd tip it up on the bank. You'd go from daylight to dark, you'd work. Then when you got rain you'd have more water in your tank.

The biggest thrill used to be when the hawker came along in the old camel cart. We didn't use camels - more horses and bun cart. Old Jack Clark, he was an old white bloke, he was a good friend of the old grandfather. He used to come up every so often to visit. Say once every twelve months. He'd bring these lollies, liquorice and those brown toffees. He used to be an old dogger from the other side I think from Oodnadatta or somewhere.

Then you'd get the hawker, old Harry Monsoor.²³ He'd come along. Old Afghan hawker. He'd have this big old white van, he'd drive. It was probably one of the first trucks to be going in the area. He'd have all his cloves and almonds and lollies. A big bag of

²³ For further details see Rajkowski, 1987:151-2.

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almonds one shilling. I think he had some growing at Copley. He'd have these wheat bags full of them. Two bob and we'd get a big pack of that. We would tend to spend it if they were around on balloons or chewing gum. The old people used to say they were no good because balloons will be blowing up, it's a waste of money. They didn't like you chewing gum. I suppose it was messy and you chuck it around. P.K. chewing gum, Arrowmint, Juicy Fruit. Oh!

There were no ceremonies around Marree. Even up at Finnis there weren't too many there. Oh there would have been in the past. More or less I think you had the Lower Aranda and the Antakarinja and the Arabana and the Diyeri, Wangkangurru and Kwiyani. I can't define that southern boundary because I don't really know. Some say it's here and some say it's up at Curdimurka. Apparently somewhere along the line the Kwiyani is tied into the Arabana some way. Apparently one of the old blokes married a Kwiyani lady and that's the sort of tie up the Kwiyani and the Arabana. Adnyamathanha, that's only a flash name for them, the Kwiyani. I think they're the same.

They used to make the old houses out of the old bitumen or tar drums. There used to be a lot of tar around in those days. They used to get the drums and we'd cut the ends out of them and split them down and flatten them. It was a horse trough. Any tin at all that you could make flat. Then you got your sides or make a bough shed and just a dirt floor. I remember we got an Army tent from somewhere. It was nearly as big as a house, I thought it was a palace.

But still an all you still wasn't happy [living indoors]. We'd still get our blankets, we probably had one blanket, two blankets or something and went and laid down on the outside. Most times only us kids slept outside because we'd yack all night. The greatest thing, sometimes you'd get about ten or fifteen kids lying around in a line and the game we used to play was 'Riddle me riddle what I can see.' It starts with 'A' and finishes with something or other. That was the great thing! Like the saucepan in the sky or a star or anything.

Although they weren't flash houses, they weren't even houses, just old bough sheds and that, I don't recall ever being ill or unhappy at any time. You could get up and walk for miles and miles. If you saw a rabbit you'd chase it until you got it. Sometimes the rabbit would knock up before you would then you'd get it, that's if it didn't go down a burrow or something. We would walk for miles and miles on end. You might grab a feed once a day or something. It was all right. The system they had out at Finnis you wouldn't get it anywhere else I would think in the world, the way it was set up. The people had their lives and they got the education and they lived their own [way]. The families were there anyhow. They weren't taken away by the Home, they were there. You've got your teaching and you had your family. Most of the other missions took the kids out of the homes and then placed them into Homes or whatever. When they lived in the mission they were living away from their parents anyhow. Even the mission at Oodnadatta, they'd take the kids out of their homes and they were living in the mission. They were restricted. Parents weren't allowed to go near them. But there you were living in your own homes. You could come and go as you pleased. Then you had the benefits of the towns say Port Augusta, you had your hospital and your shops and so on. The lot.

The Environment

The seasons were different too. At certain times of the year Mrs Strangways would take us down the creek. We'd go down with old milk tins. We used to make them into billy cans. We'd go down there and pick these like sultanas they were of the wattle trees. At another time of the year we'd go out and get some other thing like mulga apples or those beans that grow. We call them *aritji* on the mulga tree. The mulga apple that was *artigula*. Then you had *aritji* that grew on the mulga tree too but that was different. There is a difference in the mulga trees. If you don't know the difference you wouldn't know.

I often go out now on my own. I get that urge to eat this stuff. I have that feeling that Aboriginal people must have Aboriginal food because their system is different to the European people. That's my belief. I might be wrong. You must have that real natural food to keep up whatever it may be inside. They must have had some type of protection against bacteria to counteract any sickness. That's my feeling. Although we look the same our system is different somewhere along the line. It's got to be because you are living on two different types of food. I always go out and have a good feed of bush tucker now and then.

It would be great if students and others could go out to the bush for a week. By setting up camps that could happen. Once the areas are set up you could approach schools or colleges or teachers and say 'We've got these areas set up for camps and you are interested in coming out and seeing Aboriginal tucker', or whatever it may be.

Mission Influences

Norm²⁴ was telling me how at first they used to go to school in the tent. That was the first school. He knew Nelson. From Norm's age group - fifties getting close to sixty - you would start to speak the European language and read and write. He would have been at the turning point from Aboriginal style to get a good education.

We used to have church in the mornings, Sunday mornings. We had to go to Sunday school. There was no release. If you weren't at Sunday school you were in for it. You were in for a hiding on Monday morning at school.

They'd teach you at school about Easter when Christ was killed and all that. Then you'd be looking forward to that because you'd get these Easter eggs. They were caramel eggs but two halves stuck together with caramel things. They probably bought them. Easter had this purpose and Christmas and so on.

That's what you were taught at Sunday school and church. You got a lot of respect from that too. You'd go to Sunday school and you'd have a little booklet and you'd get these little stamps you'd have to stick on certain areas. Something about shepherds shepherding sheep and you'd paste that onto that there. This area would be left for the stamp. You'd paste your stamp and on the bottom you'd have the story relating to that.

I remember Jean Wood's oldest sister Nora getting married at the church. She married Hector Murray. Then they took off on a honeymoon in an old buggy. They went down the creek. That was a big occasion. Everyone came up. They were married at the church. Mr

²⁴ Norman Wood is Reg's eldest living half-brother. His father was Bill Wood the co-station owner and his mother Amy was F.D. Warren's eldest daughter.

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Pearce was a Justice of the Peace. I think he was Church of England or Methodist. The teaching was all combined.

He used to be able to take out teeth or stitch up your legs or whatever it may be. I remember once climbing up a tree and I ripped my leg [right thigh - there is still a scar]. Esther [Reg's oldest sister] carried me back to the camp and took me round and they stitched it up. He wouldn't have had any needles for anaesthetic. The tree's not there now but I know exactly where it was. It was only a couple of years ago that it was washed down or pulled down for firewood. Mr Pearce used to rip out teeth, he could do anything.

He had the set-up and he was in contact with the Broken Hill base by radio on the pedal wireless. Broken Hill was the flying doctor base. It used to service all those stations. Even Muloorina Station up until recently, they used to service that. If someone got hurt or sick you'd be on the pedal wireless. The plane would come over, a double winged thing. You didn't have any contact at all with Alice Springs. That was all fairly well isolated up in that area.

The move away from Finnis Springs.

That time [when I was growing up] on Finnis there were more Aboriginal people than in Marree. You had to be on a station to get that government ration. If you weren't on a station you wouldn't get any government rations. Then most of the Aboriginal people, like stockmen were people who worked on the stations. In the early days I think the only person who went away to work was Angus Warren. He was a shearer. People started to move away searching for employment. [One man] went to Marree as a fettler then others followed. They all had big families and they had to go out looking for work. As times were changing they were searching for work on the railways as fettlers and so on. Towards the end the only people left were like Stan's [Warren] direct sons of the old bloke.

You finished school at fourteen and got your Progress Certificate. I was living with my aunty because my old man had got a job as a fettler on the railways and he had shifted [to Marree]. You had to go and look elsewhere for jobs because the family was growing all the time.

How Alan Buzzacott, my father came to get the job was we used to travel round on this little bun cart pulled by two horses. We used to go up to Stuarts Creek or come down here [Marree] during school holidays. We were camped up at Curdimurka by the tank and the senior road master Mr Des Dunning came up. He was passing through and he used to patrol the line to Oodnadatta or William Creek. We were all sitting under the tree there. He pulled up and had a talk to us, talked to the old man. We were only kids. Whether the old man asked him for a job or he said if the old man wanted a job, 'You go down to Marree and tell the chap in charge there that I gave you a job fettling. You start there as soon as you get there.' So, he worked on the railway.

He came down to Marree then. There were four younger boys younger than I was. I'd finished at fourteen so he came in here and he got the job and he was given a house, an old navy cottage they stayed in. Then from there they shifted to a house in the back there and the kids went on to school here.

That's when I came in here one day and the bloke from Stuarts Creek came in a couple of days after and picked me up. He took me out to Stuarts Creek. That was my first job. Oh, I'd been working a couple of days as a butcher's bloke working there. They had a hand

to put a couple of fences up here. I wasn't taken in to the fettler's job. I was only as skinny as a boomerang.

So this bloke turned up. He was Cliff Warren's father Roy Warren. The old man came back in here and said 'Right, pack your swag an you're going with him.' So it was hard on me. We got back to Stuarts Creek. I woke up next morning and all these Antakarinja blokes were around me. I couldn't even talk language then. But they were really good to me. I stayed there for about five years I think working on Stuarts Creek and Anna Creek. My language was mostly Arabana. I was just sitting around and these other blokes were talking Antakarinja. I couldn't understand the language but you soon learn to pick it up.

Well Stuarts Creek is only an outstation for Anna Creek. I was there for about five or six years and then I came back down here. I did one droving trip to see what it was like with Arnold my brother. He had a droving plant. We went through to Queensland. Then I came back here and got a job on the railways and that was it. I stayed on that job right through till they said we had redundancy on the 15 February 1986. You can say twenty-five years I worked transshipping. I worked on the same thing all the time. I could have been transferred anywhere. I could have gone anywhere I wanted to go but with this community setup²⁵ but I thought I had more to do here in Marree.

Finniss In Retrospect

I left [Finniss] in 1954. When the old [grandfather] passed away [later] in the 1950s that was a tragic blow. He was a key person, holding the community together. Then the people went away. He was the salt of the whole thing that held the community together. Everyone loved him. He wanted to be buried there. I wasn't there during the last weeks or months. Apparently he was suffering towards the end and he just wouldn't go away. He wanted to stay there with his people. He didn't go away.

He could foresee that as in every family business there is always some dispute which did happen. As a kid I remember there used to be no blues or ill feeling in the family at all. Not the family, the whole community. There was no trouble. I think he wielded a steel hand and he controlled them fairly well. I remember he liked working with the station, he'd have one bloke to do one job and that was his responsibility. Say he used to look after the sheep. Then on the other hand he'd have one bloke, his responsibility was to look after the men working the cattle. Then he'd have one just training his race horses. Then he'd have one doing the mechanical work.

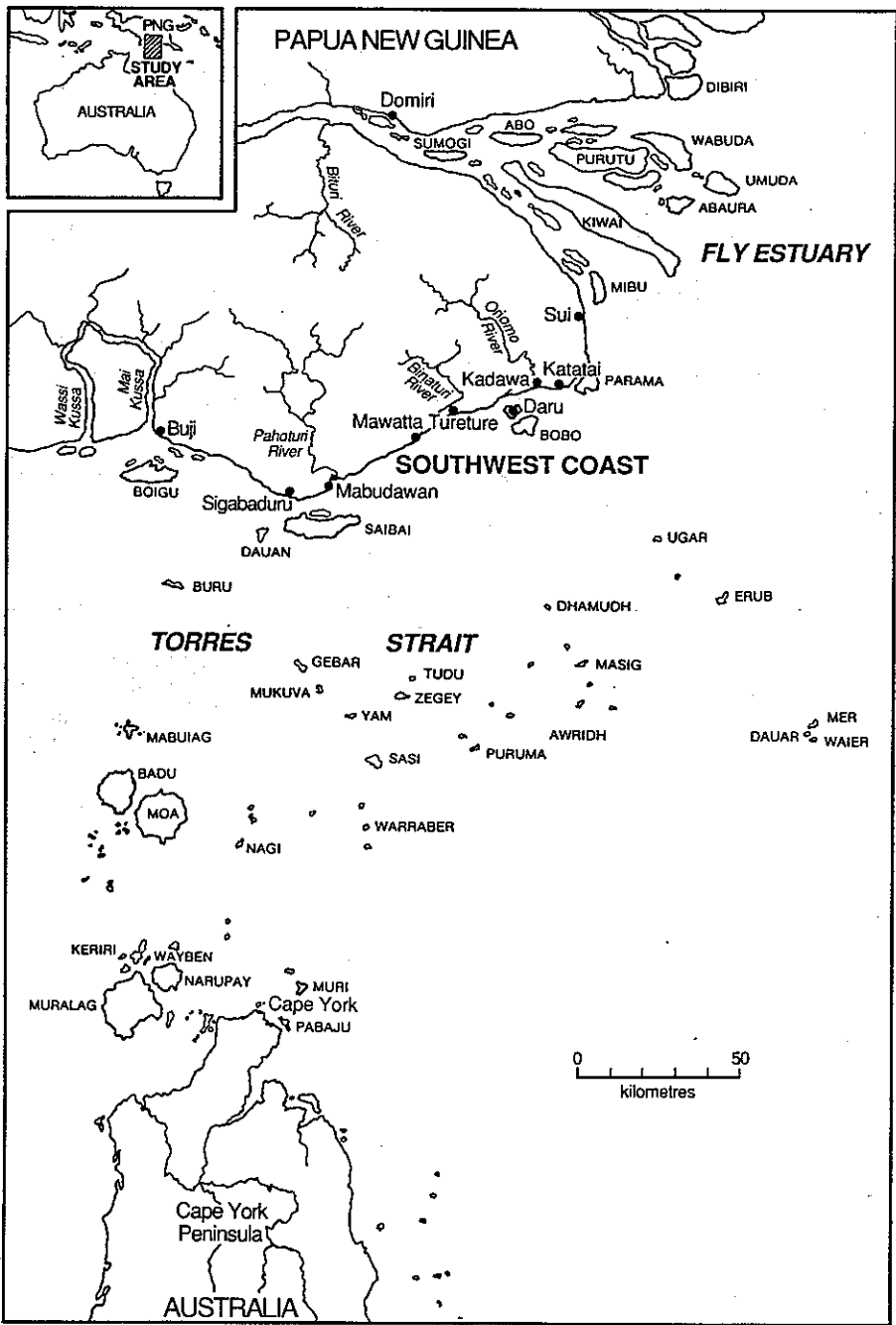
As I recall my early childhood memory of growing up on Finniss Springs mission station I realise how fortunate I was. I was living in an Aboriginal environment and sharing with my tribal relatives our traditional culture. I was also taught by the missionaries the European life style and culture. I experienced the changing of Aboriginal tradition towards the European life style and living. Many of our Aboriginal children who were removed from their families and Aboriginal environment and placed in homes were isolated from any Aboriginal involvement losing their Aboriginality.

²⁵ In 1987 Reg worked for the state government's Department for Community Welfare at Leigh Creek.

LEARNING TIMES

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Torres Strait, Southwest coast and Fly Estuary Region.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Recently collected oral evidence of contacts between the Torres Strait Islanders and the Papuan peoples of the southwestern coast

David Lawrence

Although the folk tales of the Papuan people of the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea were first collected by Landtman¹ and similar collections of tales were made in the Torres Strait by Haddon,² Laade,³ Beckett⁴ and Lawrie,⁵ little attempt has been made to collect the oral evidence of the long and continuous history of contact between Islanders and Papuans who collectively share the Torres Strait region.

During fieldwork in 1985 in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, as part of research on the material culture of the Torres Strait and Fly River estuary canoe trade, the author collected a number of oral accounts which specifically document this history of contacts in the daily life of the people of the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea. The aim of this article is to present, with annotations, a number of these recently collected oral accounts from the Papua New Guinea side of Torres Strait.

All these stories collected in the field were recorded in the local language or dialect. The name of the storyteller, village language and dialect are noted at the beginning of each transcript. This recording was then replayed in full to the storyteller and, in some cases, additional material was added and changes made. Translations into English were made in the presence of the storyteller. The author wishes to thank Nano Moses and Robin Baiu for their assistance in translating from Kiwai and Bine languages. The following village elders are remembered with kindness for their courtesy and willingness to recall their oral history: Moses Somogi, Image Matai, Magermo Mereke, Side Saiade Ben, Kubu Ag, Zate Nog, Sair Buia, Jawagi Maru, Kanai Tura, Pomame Buji, Ibaji, Gadua, Abaim Mergor, Sarawa Jugu, Mundar Kaus, Sagare Kaus, Bisai Kaus and Birige Kugei.

The oral evidence presented in this article has been re-edited from the original field notes. It has been the author's intention to retain, as closely as possible, the original style and content of the story.

The research for this paper forms part of David Lawrence's PhD thesis dealing with the material culture of customary exchange in the Torres Strait and Fly Estuary region. At present he is librarian in charge at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville.

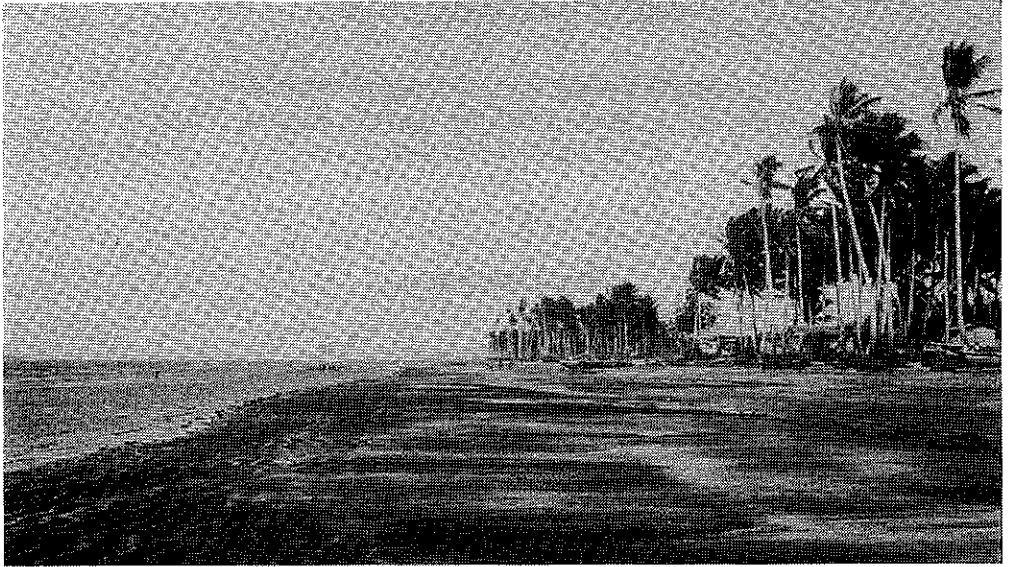
1 Landtman 1917.

2 Haddon 1908, VI: 1904, V: 1935, I.

3 Laade 1971.

4 Beckett 1975.

5 Lawrie 1970.



Above: Kadawa village, showing typical southwest coastal environment [photograph by David Lawrence, 1986]

Below: Men and women from Kadawa village (with author) preparing for long distance exchange voyage to the upper Fly estuary [photograph by Nano Moses, 1986]



FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Contact with Europeans began in 1606, when Torres sailed through the Strait which now bears his name. Because more sustained contact commenced during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, oral accounts of the impact of the European way of life are still a vital part of the oral history of the Torres Strait peoples. This article concludes with some recently told stories concerning the coming of the 'white man' and his impact on the patterns of inter-ethnic contacts.

Torres Strait.

The Torres Strait consists of a reef-strewn passage between Cape York and the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea, west of the Fly River delta. A little over 150 kilometres wide it contains over 100 islands, islets, coral reefs and cays lying between longitudes 141°15'E and 144°20'E, and latitudes 9°20'S and 10°45'S.

Geographically, and to some extent ethnographically, the inhabited islands can be divided into four groups. The high western islands, particularly Badu, Moa, Muralug, Mabuiag, Waiben and Dauan, are the weathered granite peaks of a drowned mountain range which extended from Cape York Peninsula to the hill at Mabudawan on the Papua New Guinea coast.

The northern low islands of Saibai and Boigu were formed by effluvia of rivers in Papua New Guinea and the alluvial accumulation of organic, inter-tidal and mangrove sediments on top of reef limestones and clay.

The central islands, particularly Yam, Masig, Warraber and Puruma are generally low sandy cays formed on coral limestone. Basically they appear as typical coral islands surrounded by extensive fringing reefs containing much fish life. Yam Island is the easternmost island with geographical characteristics of the Western Group.

The eastern islands of Mer, Erub and Ugar are high volcanic formations with weathered, rich brownish soil and contain steep, well vegetated slopes and exposed rock. Although the islands show signs of deforestation and soil erosion, they are fertile and picturesque tropical islands.

The peoples of the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea, which extends from the Fly River delta to the Mai Kussa River share with the Torres Strait Islanders the reefs and waters of the Strait.

In contrast to the other parts of Papua New Guinea, most of the Western Province is a vast lowland region with mountains only in the north and north-west. The largest river in Papua New Guinea, the Fly River, effectively divides the Province. South of the Fly River is the Oriomo Plateau, a generally featureless undulating ridge extending from the lower Fly River to Irian Jaya, bordered on the south by a narrow coastal plain, the most prominent feature of which is the hill at Mabudawan. This narrow plain, intersected by widely spaced slow moving muddy rivers is subject to seasonal flooding and the shallow coastal waters are muddy, with reefs, mudbanks and shifting sandbars.

Along this coastal plain, extending from Parama Island to the Mai Kussa River, are small villages of the Kiwai, Gidra, Bine, Gizra and Agob speaking peoples. They combine swidden horticulture with gathering bush foods, sago making, hunting and fishing. Dialects of the coastal Kiwai language are spoken in the villages of Mabudawan, Mawatta, Tureture, Parama, Katatai, Kadawa and Daru; Gidra is spoken at Dorogori; Bine at Masingara and Kunini; Gizra at Waidoro and Kulalai; and Agob at Buji, Ber and Sigabaduru.

This paper does not seek to provide evidence of linguistic affiliations across the Torres Strait, for this has been the subject of other research, notably by Wurm,⁶ and Wurm and Hattori.⁷ Wurm has stated that the prehistory of linguistic influence across Torres Strait has not been fully explained, but suggested that a southward Papuan linguistic influence into the Torres Strait may have taken place between 2000 and 3000 years ago. Alternatively, this southward move may have been a more recent result of raiding by the Kiwai people of the Fly River and the Marind (Tugeri) people of the Morehead River which forced coastal peoples to seek refuge in the interior or on the islands of the Torres Strait.⁸

However it appears that an Australian linguistic influence spread northward and probably predated the southward Papuan linguistic influence.⁹ It is apparent that linguistic influences moved in both directions across Torres Strait. This theory does not conflict with oral accounts for, as this oral evidence indicates, the movement of people across the Torres Strait commenced with the journeys of the culture heroes and ancestors and continued with the travels of village leaders and the people themselves.

Origin Myths.

According to Haddon¹⁰ and Laade¹¹ the original settlers on the Murray Islands were said to have been Pop and Kod, who came from the Fly River to Zaub (presently the central area of Mer village). Laade¹² noted another story which stated that three women from a shipwrecked fishing party swam ashore at Erub (Darnley Island) and Mer (Murray Island). These women were later seen by men from New Guinea who settled with them on the islands where they were subsequently joined by other New Guineans.

According to Laade,¹³ Maida was the first Yam Islander. However, stories relating to contact between Tudu and Yam Islanders and the people inland of the Binaturi River (Bine speaking people) are known. Tudu and Gebar people are said to have been the ancestors of those people who moved to Yorke Island (Masig), Nagi Island and Warraber Island.¹⁴

Laade¹⁵ also stated that the first settler on Saibai Island was Melawal who lived underground in a bailer shell. Two others, 'bushmen' from Papua New Guinea named Nima and Poipoi, came from the east to the area where Melawal and Budia (a man from the west who moved around in the shape of a willy-wagtail) were living. Originally Saibai contained two settlements. The site of the present day Saibai was the area of Melawal and Bugia's home. Ait, the eastern point of Saibai, was the home of the Ait people from Papua New Guinea, perhaps from Togo up the Pahoturi River which can be seen across the passage.

The principal origin myth of the Kiwai speaking people is the story of Sido. The journey of Sido from U'Uwo on Kiwai Island to Saibai as told to the author is long and

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- 6 Wurm 1972: 1975.
 - 7 Wurm and Hattori 1981.
 - 8 Wurm 1972: 360-366.
 - 9 Wurm 1975:361.
 - 10 Haddon 1908, VI:19.
 - 11 Laade 1968:141-142.
 - 12 Laade 1968:142.
 - 13 Laade 1968:145.
 - 14 Laade 1968:149.
 - 15 Laade 1968:142.

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complex. It concerns the creation of Sido at Dibiri, near the mouth of the Bamu River. Sido was expelled from Dibiri because of the power of his magic. He then journeyed to U'Uwo on Kiwai Island where he was reborn through the body of a woman joined at the waist to her sister. These women taught Sido the magic of food and hunting and in return he split them apart so that they could live in separate places.

During his journeys around Kiwai Island, he met an old man who showed Sido the magic of making drums and small canoes. From the sound made by his first drum Sido learnt the name of a woman who lived at Iasa on the western side of the island and, using a magic tree, Sido transported himself to Iasa. With this woman, Sagaru, Sido sailed around Kiwai Island using a canoe fitted with a pandanus mat sail. However, Sido and Sagaru quarrelled over Sido's sexual abilities and she fled from Sido to the mainland. So Sido followed her aided by his magic children, the birds.

Sido made canoes from various trees, such as nipa palm, but these were unsuccessful. Finally, he made a large canoe from a strong tree. This canoe was in the form of a partially hollowed out (not dugout) canoe, and in the canoe Sido made room for his food, bows, arrows and his bird children.

Sido sailed to Mibu, where he met Sagaru again. Again, she fled, and Sido eventually followed her along the coast to Mabudawan. At Mabudawan, Sido climbed the hill and when he jumped down, his feet made an imprint in the rocks which can still be seen.

From Mabudawan where he met Sagaru, Sido went to Boigu Island, but they were followed by a man named Meuri who desired Sagaru. On Boigu, Meuri and Sido fought and Meuri cut off Sido's head. Meuri gave Sagaru water in the decapitated head but she threw it away and the place where it fell was turned into a deep well, which still exists on Boigu.

Meuri caused Sagaru's accidental death, but the spirits of Sido and Sagaru returned to U'Uwo where Sido's grave can still be seen in a place that stays green and fresh during all seasons. Sagaru's grave is not known.

Early versions of the Sido myth were also collected by Landtman¹⁶ and Beardmore¹⁷. According to Laade¹⁸ and Haddon,¹⁹ Sida or Sido, a Kiwai culture hero, was credited with introducing certain plant-foods into the Torres Strait, and Laade stated Sido journeyed as far as the Murray Islands before returning to Kiwai Island. The story can be interpreted in another way. The movements of Sido reflect the movements of the Kiwai people themselves. Although Sido journeyed to Boigu, in this story, told by one of the leading men from Iasa village, no mention is made of contact with the Murray Islands. However, the importance to the Kiwai people of the Sido myth is that it links their movements from Kiwai Island along the southwestern coast of Papua. Mabudawan is the western-most Kiwai speaking village.

Beckett,²⁰ discussing the Sido myth, stated that the saga incorporates elements common to most creation myths in Oceania. These elements include:

the primeval killing; reincarnation through rebirth and through the shedding of the old body, followed by the acquisition of a new one; death becomes

¹⁶ Landtman 1917:95.

¹⁷ Beardmore 1890:465-466.

¹⁸ Laade 1971:1-8.

¹⁹ Haddon 1904, V:28-38.

²⁰ Beckett 1975:177-178.

irreversible; the separation of ghosts and mortals; and the establishment of a ghostly world.²¹

In Melanesia, oral traditions form a record of the patterns of journeys of people as both traders and migrants:

These traditions of migration are significant to people's heritage, for the knowledge transmitted through generations in legend, song chant and dance constitute their basic legal, political, social and economic charters. It is on this basis that the rights and obligations of lineages are defined within communities, and both access to and use of specific resources and territories are defended.²²

The legendary journeys of culture heroes, the movements of traders, and village migrations become intermeshed. The colonial era opened new opportunities for movement.

Lacey²³ has shown that oral traditions support the claim that between the 1880s and the 1930s the impact of pacification and the establishment of foreign enclaves on the coast after the 1870s and 1880s resulted in a complete alteration of customary village life in Melanesia. The spread of the European ways is profoundly reflected in oral accounts of cross cultural contacts and village movements.

Oral Traditions of Pre-European Contacts.

Laade²⁴ argued that a series of statements concerning contact between Islanders and Papuans could be made from oral tradition:

- (1) The eastern island traditions tell of people coming from the Fly River.
- (2) The Muralag and Daru tradition tells of the Hiamo people who fled from Kiwai raiding.
- (3) The Yam-Tudu and Papuan tradition tells of contact with the Papuan people of the Binaturi River region.

The following stories will show that this argument is correct.

Contacts between the Fly River people and the Eastern Islanders was possibly established by accidental voyage. Stories such as the following are still told:

Kadawa Village

Kiwai Language
East Coastal Kiwai Dialect

Story of a small boy who was swept from Kiwai Island to Murray Island

Told by Moses Somogi

While the small children were swimming in the river off Kiwai Island, they saw a big log and started jumping off it. When they saw the log drifting out from the village, they all jumped off but the smallest boy could not swim far and he just stayed sitting on the log.

The current took the log out from the village to the sea. Day and night he sat on the log until it came to Murray Island. When the log came there the boy stayed sitting on the log until one man and his wife, going out to their gardens, found him there.

21 Beckett 1975:178

22 Lacey 1985:79.

23 Lacey 1985:98.

24 Laade 1968:150.

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The man and his wife asked him what had happened, but he could not talk. He made signs to tell them what happened. The man and his wife took him to their gardens with them. Then they hid him in their house because they did not want him killed. Both of them went to the headman to tell him about the boy and ask that they could keep him as their son.

The headman told them to bring the boy to him. He said that they could keep him in memory of the Fly River. The boy grew up and they gave him a wife and he had children. On Murray Island his big family can still be found.

A similar story, told by the people of the village of Sui, serves to link the Ipesia people with the Murray Islanders. In this story the children are swept from Murray Island up into the Fly River delta.

Sui Village

Kiwai Language
Coastal Kiwai Dialect

Story of two children swept from Murray Island
Told by Image Matai

When two children on Murray Island were swimming one day they fell asleep on a log. When the water rose it took the log and the children away. When they woke up they saw that the village was far away and they could not swim back. They had nothing to eat but small fish which they caught and dried in the sun. The water took them all the way to Ipesia. Here, they jumped off the log and hid in the nipa palms. Other children were playing at throwing toy arrows and one of these arrows went into the nipa palm near the children. One small boy went into the palms and saw the children hiding but he did not tell his friends. Instead, he went and spoke to his father, the headman. In the night, the father and mother of this boy went to the palms and took the children to their house where they built a small shelter and hid them. In those days they were still fighting and strangers could be killed. The parents tricked the other village people by saying that the shelter was for the man because he had a boil on his side and rested there. This headman told the village people that he wanted them to return early from their gardens that day as he had something to tell them.

When they returned in the evening he and his wife had dressed in their fighting gear. They took the children and showed them to the people, telling them that if they wanted to kill the children they must fight them first. The village people all said not to kill the children and allowed the headman and his wife to keep them as their own. After one month - when they could speak Kiwai - they told their story.

The Ipesia people later took their canoes and took the children back to Murray Island. Some of the people stayed at Murray Island, and others returned to Ipesia.

It is well known that the strong winds, tides and currents in the Fly River delta can carry large logs and even canoes across the Torres Strait and, as Landtman²⁵ stated, floating tree trunks suggested a means of river transport, and he illustrated this by recounting a Kubira

²⁵ Landtman 1927:206.

village story of accidental voyaging. The story of how the original inhabitants of Daru, the Hiamo-Hiamo people, fled into Torres Strait and settled on Muralug was told by Landtman.²⁶ Although Laade²⁷ stated that the origins of the Hiamo-Hiamo were obscure the following story serves to illuminate their Torres Strait rather than Papuan origins.

Kadawa Village

Kiwai Language
East Coastal Kiwai Dialect

Story of Daru (Yaru)

Told by Moses Somogi

At first on Daru Island, there were no mangrove trees. It was only a sandbank. The first man to come to Daru from Torres Strait was Gaidiri from Yam Island. There were Hiamo-Hiamo people on Daru. The people at Daru - the Hiamo-Hiamo - originally came from Yam Island. They were called Hiamo-Hiamo by the Kiwai speaking people. Gaidiri married a Hiamo-Hiamo woman, called Bobo. Kiwai Island people and people from Katatai went from the mainland planning to kill the Hiamo-Hiamo people. Gaidiri and Bobo had died by this time, but their son was Damabe. When the fighting started Damabe was making his dugong harpoon. As there were no trees, the Hiamo-Hiamo could not hide and so they were killed. Damabe escaped by covering himself with a turtle shell. People jumped over the shell while he was hiding under it. When the fighting finished they searched the island for other people. They then returned to their canoes, sounded the conch shell and returned to the mainland. Damabe came out from under the shell and swam to Goli (a river on Bobo Island) where he lit a fire. The Katatai people saw the smoke coming from the bush. The Katatai people came to Goli, but told Damabe not to be frightened as they only came to get him (not to kill him). When they took Damabe back to Katatai they told Bani (a Boigu man) that they would give Damabe Bani's sister Makere in marriage. Damabe had children. The first was Ausa, the second Daida. Ausa's son was Daida Ausa. This man still lives at Kadawa.

This story serves to link the people of Kadawa with the people of Yam Island in the Torres Strait, a link also noted by Beaver.²⁸ Landtman²⁹ also collected stories concerning cross cultural links between Yam Island people and Daru people although in Landtman's story concerning the flight of the Hiamo-Hiamo from Daru he stated that the final home of the Hiamo-Hiamo was Muralug (Prince of Wales Island) and not Yam.³⁰

In pre-contact times, the peoples of the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea were subjected to repeated intergroup warfare and head-hunting raids, and it is probable that the Torres Strait Islands were used as places of refuge from the coastal people.

The following Kiwai story relates how the Torres Strait Islands came to be inhabited by people fleeing the uncertainty of mainland life.

26 Landtman 1917:366.

27 Laade 1968:145.

28 Beaver 1920:49-50.

29 Landtman 1917:361.

30 Landtman 1917:366.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Daru Town
Iasa Corner Village

Kiwai Language
Island Kiwai Dialect

Story of the Torres Strait People
Told by Mageramo Mareke

The people of the Torres Strait and the coastal people all look like the same people. The islander people ran away from here and settled on Darnley, Murray, Yam, Badu, Coconut, Dauan, Boigu, Masig. They ran away from here. The people in the bush, when you hear them, their language sounds the same as the islanders. The people who were strongest fled to the Torres Strait islands. The weaker ones went into the bush. Some of the weaker ones sank into the water, the stronger ones made it to the shore. There are people at Kerema, also Goaribari, Kaima (Gaima) and Komite. They are the same people also. Those people living in the Torres Strait - they were from the bush. They separated and some went to the islands. That's how the story went in the olden days.

The Kiwai speaking people were not the only group to maintain cross cultural contacts for kinship relations between Yam Island people and the coastal people of Papua New Guinea established the primary basis for continuing cross cultural contact. The following story details contacts between the Bine speaking peoples of Masingara village and Yam Islanders. The Bine people inhabit lands along the Binaturi River, and the coast to Kura Creek. They are excellent horticulturists and provide the administrative centre at Daru with garden produce. They exchange, with the coastal Kiwai, produce for fish, turtle and dugong.

Masingara Village

Bine Language
Masingale Dialect

Story of the Masingale People
Told by Side Saiade Ben

In the beginning, when we were living together, war broke out and we scattered, and looked for places to settle the clan. Udidariem clan settled and named the places, Ugri and Bullawe, but from there water disturbed them and they moved. Tiburi, our grandfather, when they were about to leave, left a wife pregnant there. They built a house in a big tree. There were bamboos near that tree. He told her to stay there. 'If you give birth to a girl, name her Kie, if it is a boy, name him Omebwale. When he gets big send him to see us', he told her.

From there, they made bamboo rafts and they came to a creek they called Omebwale-Mope-Gome (which flows to the Binaturi River). As they came they named the places Ablepupu, Gurewal, Casanbale, Eagibade, Sair, Gulpupu, Tabern, Uliwainglesai, Kuremomo, Topitaromi, Dipemaura and Gaigome.

Near the creek junction called Wome, some rafts sank and these people drowned.

They continued past the creeks called Ugenarame and Trimaarame. From there they came to Iairue and settled there. Later they moved to Wobede,

Merinea, Siturangu, Binaturi and Busepuli. When they went towards the coast from the river they came to the east to Bulagabe on the coast, to Jomigape, to Guriwale, and to Magibade and Casambade. They used the same names that they had used along the river. Magibade is where the present village of Tureture is situated on the beach.

Between the coast and the inside, the places are Tuageu, Masingle-Gabe and Gluiasamiware. They were moving, trying to find a place to settle. They had to move to Iairue again because at Jomigape the water was salty. At Iairue they made a raft and followed the river down to the sea.

They journeyed by raft to the reefs and islands. To Guriwal, Casambade, Magibade, Tudamomo, Tabeani, and Garubui (Moon Passage), also to Iame (Yam Island), and Tudomo (Tudu Island).

When they returned from Tudomo they left behind a woman with a pig. From Tudomo, they went to Iame and settled there, and named the places with names from the mainland. Sugisugi (water well), Apala, Bullawe (river name). The people settled there and those names are there.

The pregnant lady (Tiburi's wife) gave birth to a boy whom she called Omebwale. When he grew up his mother told him that his grandparents and father had gone out from here and he should go and try to find them. When he was small his mother had fed him a special kind of sour taro called oge which made him sleepy and he had a vision. In the vision the sea spirit woman told him that he should find a canoe called 'Tibai Gul', and go in search of his people. A pig tried to kill people near his home so he killed it and cut it up and divided it. He got into his canoe and set off down the river. When he reached the ocean, near the reef, he threw the pig's head into the sea and it turned into a dugong. He threw the pig's leg into the sea and it became a turtle, the skin on the side became a stingray.

The other parts of the pig changed into fish. The sea spirit woman had given him a harpoon, which he used to spear those animals. He arrived at Yam Island in the night, and took with him those animals which he had caught. Secretly, he went to the house of his father, and fell asleep between his father and his eldest brother. His father awoke in the middle of the night, and wondered who this young man was, so he woke his eldest son and asked him but he did not know. The young man smiled to himself then woke and said to his father: 'I am the son of the pregnant woman left behind. I have come to find my family'.

They gave him a young girl without brothers as a wife, and he brought her back to Ugri where his mother lived. He showed his wife to his mother and she was proud. They had children and their names were Maza, Dese, Yange, Gine and Tiburi.

He lived there, and when he died, was buried at Bullawe near the men's ceremonial ground. The sons scattered among the Masingle people.

The people on Yam Island thought of their relatives on the mainland. Saika was told that if he wanted to, he could travel back to the mainland. He came back to visit people and to travel around the land. When he came he brought fish from the reef, dugong, turtle, coneshells, bailer shells, shellfish, and trumpet shells. The villagers met him and he gave them these things from the reef. They brought him to the village, and he slept there. At that time they used counting sticks to tell the number of days. They gave him seven sticks,

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and told him to come back when the last one was thrown out. They held hands and took him to the canoe and gave him foods. They then said farewell. We now have relatives on Yam, Massig, Coconut, Boigu and now other islands as well.

This can be proved. The bones of the dugong, turtle and fish can be seen opposite the village near the creek behind the village of Masingara.

Rights to the use of Bine land by the Yam Islanders was also noted by Beaver³¹ although he failed to understand the history of Bine and Yam Island contacts.

Clan stories of the Agob speaking peoples who lived on the coast between the Pahoturi and the Mai Kussa naturally centre on contacts with nearby Torres Strait islands for, while the Agob people maintain close contacts with Boigu and Saibai islanders, the small size and isolation of their villages means that the economic basis of Agob life is generally underdeveloped.

Sigabaduru Village`

Agob Language

Samogvad Clan Story

Told by Rubu Ag

A man called Wagebau came from Saibai to Guiar (near the village between Sigabaduru and Buji). There he met with Pala, and Pala asked him, 'Why did you come here?' Wagebau said, 'I have some to visit friends'. Pala pulled a lump of grass and said if Wagebau killed the Guiar people, Pala would pay him with the woman Mogai from Guiar. There was a patch of jungle at Guiar and some of the young girls were living there. Their names were Basau, Abar, Podenen and Dauar. Wagebau went back to Saibai without a woman. He later heard that Pala had died. He returned to the coast on the canoe 'Melauar'. When he got to the village called Mogai, between Buji and Sigabaduru, he began to kill people. One man, Kua, the younger brother of Pala, survived and said to Wagebau, 'You have killed enough already - leave the rest alone'. As soon as he heard this Wagebau decided to make friends. Wagebau took some coconut leaf sticks and gave them to Kua, and told him that he should throw one out every day. 'When there are two left you will know I am returning from Saibai', he said. Wagebau returned to Saibai, and later came back to the mainland. The villagers covered themselves with mud, and took their bows and arrows to meet with Wagebau. Kua said to make friends and have a feast, so he took Wagebau to the place where they slept. Kua then got all the girls mentioned and dressed them all the same in grass skirts, and sat them before Wagebau, and told him that 'the girl in the middle will be your wife'. Wagebau took the girl and sat next to her during the feast and told Kua, 'I will be going back to Saibai tomorrow'. Wagebau sang this song:

'Koidirim mau rawai
Tari napa koidaudaia muyagar
Ah - oh - rawakutaiyanoue
Mapanaga uzu paganue.'

meaning

'Big Cassowary (the girl) is going to the place (Saibai)

³¹ Beaver 1920:85.

When this man shook the Uzu tree, the seeds fell down
He got his prize and now he is going back.'

Wagebau then slept, he got Mogai and took the grass skirt off her, and hung it on a tree near the shore at Gulal-Gulag Toai (creek). As soon as he left this creek, he and Mogai sailed to Saibai. The people did not know where she was going as they did not know Saibai.

When Wagebau and Mogai settled on Saibai, they had children and some of the descendants are: Barnaga, a town on Cape York is named after him; Wagea, a former Council Chairman; Kala is living on Saibai. There are now many grandchildren.

Laade³² emphasised that the strongest and most sustained contacts between the coastal Papuan peoples and the Torres Strait Islanders were centred on Mawatta. Laade and Beaver,³³ both stated that the Kiwai speaking peoples at Mawatta acted as intermediaries in trade between the Torres Strait Islanders and the people living inland from the southwestern coast. This fails to account for a number of facts brought out in oral evidence. The 'bush-people' established the earliest contacts emphasised by cross cultural marriage, adoption and trade. Oral evidence will show that it was after the establishment at Mawatta of the mission by the London Missionary Society in 1872, and the development of the commercial pearl shelling and *bêche-de-mer* fishing industries around the Warrior Reef, that the Kiwai managed to secure a more permanent place on the southwestern coast past the Oriomo River. The Kiwai were then able to move further along the coast to Mabudawan after the establishment of the administrative post in 1891.³⁴

The story of early contacts between the people of Kulalae, along the Pahoturi River states:

Kulalae Village

Gizra Language

Story of contact with Torres Strait Islanders

Told by Zate Nog

Our relationship with the Torres Strait Islanders began a long time ago, when we lived at Basirpuk (now called Mabudawan). The islanders saw us there. At that time we wore only our traditional clothing, we had no knives, plates and other things. Our only method of transport was bamboo rafts. The islanders, seeing our way of life gave us *turik* (iron, also knife), saucepans, etc. At that time our language was Saibalgan Yamukud (Saibai Island language). Today our language is similar to the Eastern Islands language. From that time, the islanders returned with gifts and our relationship grew stronger and stronger.

At that time, our method of fishing was the use of baskets, and the islanders taught us how to use fishing spears. The islanders told us to fish at Ait Reef. This area was free for all to use. From then some young men went to work for the islanders in order to strengthen our relationship and this practice still continues. Soon after we made contact with the islanders there

³² Laade 1968:152-153.

³³ Beaver 1920:75.

³⁴ Beaver 1920:117

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was another migration of Kiwai people from the Fly River, and they pushed us back inland by tribal fighting, and now they live at Mabudawan.

Since the Kiwai came we have had trouble maintaining the relationship with the islanders which was really working. This has had some effect on the language for now we learn the Kiwai language. But it still did not completely stop our old relationship. Today we trade regularly, and some still know the language very well.

Intermarriages have taken place, and our men have married Torres Strait Islander girls. Today we have people from the village living over there, who have become Australian citizens, but they come back for holidays, especially at Christmas.

Somewhere between first contact and now, we were living about 20 minutes west of here at Togo, an islander named Tanu Nona from Badu came in a fleet of luggers to this place, Kulalae, and brought flour, turtles, kerosene, tin drums, rice, clothes, saucepans, etc. In return we gave them yams, mats, bananas, taro, etc. The name Kulalae, is a Torres Strait Islander name. Today, because of the restrictions, we do not see each other as much as we want to, but we do go to see them by getting permits from Customs.

Contacts between the Gizra speaking people and the Meriam speaking people were also established before the coming of the Kiwai.

Kulalae Village

Gizra Language

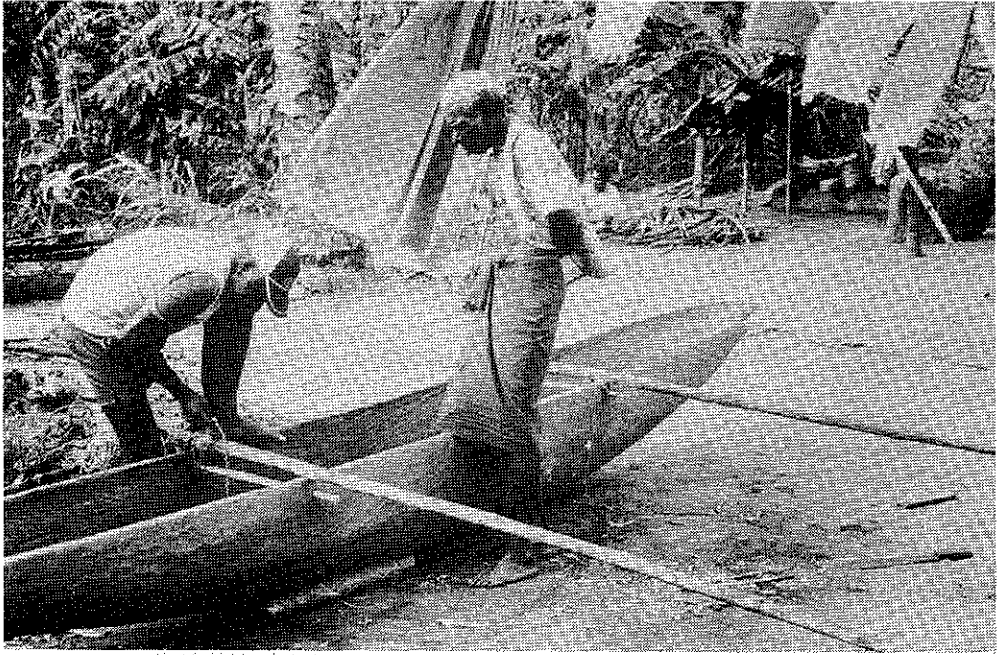
Story of Relations with Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait

Told by Sair Buia

Our people were going to Gida for initiation ceremonies on the land where we learnt our lore. During this time people used rafts to cross rivers and at this time the wind was blowing from the northwest and the current was very strong. On the raft were many people, including a pregnant woman named Agor. They could not cross the river, and began to be washed down the river. They had fruit and nuts from the bush, because this was the lean time for food, before full fruiting and before the good taro and bananas were ripe. The wind and current took them out into the sea and right over to Murray Island. Their fire went out while they were travelling. There were other people on Murray Island, and they asked these people: 'Where have you come from?'. The people told them that they were Gizra people. The pregnant woman gave birth there, and the raft people mixed and married into the Murray Island people. On Murray Island there were no breadfruit trees, or nuts, etc., but now these islands are full of fruit trees that the Gizra people took with them. Today there are similarities in the language, eg *turik* (iron), *yao* (come) etc.

Wurm³⁵ noted this linguistic affiliation stating that not only was Gizra the closest linguistic relative of Meriam but that Meriam had also been heavily influenced by the southern Kiwai language.

³⁵ Wurm 1975:349.

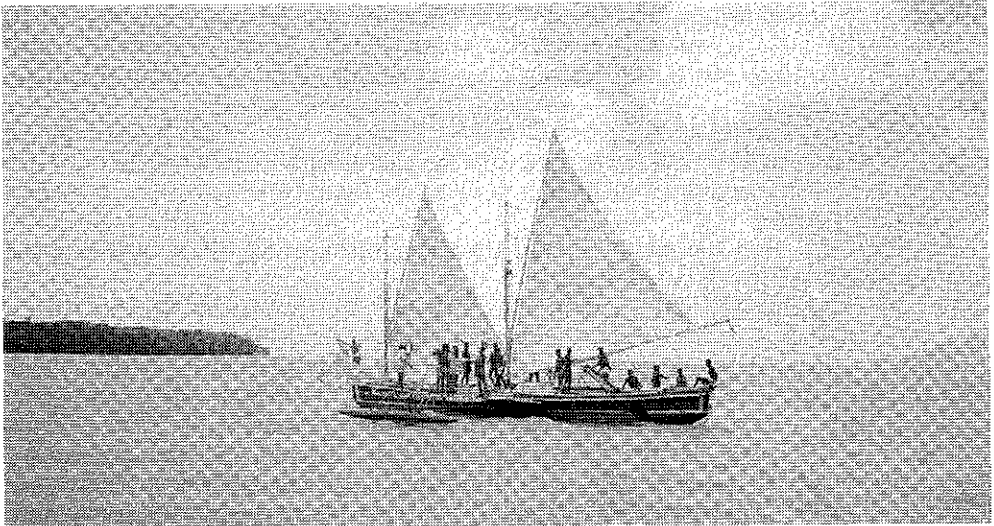


Above: Moses Somogi (left) repairing small canoe, Kadawa village.

Below: Kulalae village, Pahoturi village, showing large canoe (puputo) used for fishing and market trips, and for long distance voyages (See: stories by Zate Nog and Sair Buia)
[photographs by David Lawrence, 1986]



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Canoe (motomoto) from Mabudawan village sailing to Saibai (left) and Dauan (right) before undertaking long distance fishing trip into Torres Strait (See: story by Jawagi Maru)



Kadawa village showing single-outrigger canoe (tatau) and typical coastal Kiwai houses. (See: story of Kadawa village by Moses Somogi) [photographs by David Lawrence, 1986]

Landtman³⁶ stated that the Kiwai speaking people at Mawatta maintained regular contact with the Torres Strait Islanders. Intermarriage, cross cultural adoption and regular trading expeditions served to strengthen kinship ties and facilitated the exchange of cultural practices.

It is the story of Bidedu and the establishment of contacts between the Kiwai speaking peoples from the Fly River and the peoples from the land along the southwestern coast that is crucial to an understanding of the linkages between the Papua New Guinea people and the Torres Strait Islanders.

The story of Bidedu was told by Jawagi Maru from Mabudawan village. It is long and complex and the first part is paraphrased here.

Bidedu lived originally in the bush near Kuru between the Oriomo and Binaturi Rivers. One day an eagle dropped a bone in his garden and Bidedu realised that although it was a fish bone it was unlike any that he had seen before. He resolved to travel to the coast and took with him his fighting weapons and seeds from his garden. He finally reached the shore opposite Daru Island and although he saw smoke rising from the trees on the island he could see no one. He heard sounds from inside a fig tree that was covered with vines and realised that people must be living inside the tree so he took one of his cassowary bone daggers and broke the vine. The people were released and Bidedu named them one by one making them his brothers and cousins. He showed them how to make fire, how to wash, how to cook, and he taught them the right foods, such as bananas and sago, for he had brought these things from Kuru. He taught them to plant foods and they established gardens at Dudupatu, near the mouth of the Oriomo River. It was Biza, the first man from out of the tree, that Bidedu instructed, by magic, in the ways of gardening, hunting and making bows and arrows. It was Biza who settled along the coast and named the area Mawotto-Dodomea meaning 'to cross over to a fine beach'. The people who came to the beach were the Kadawarubi (the Kadawa people).

These people crossed to Daru on rafts and there they met the Daruowera and the Hiamo peoples who instructed them in making canoes and hunting the dugong and turtle.

Generations passed and the people remained settled at the beach until Gamea grew to be a man, and it was Gamea who led the people along the coast in search of new land.

Mabudawan Village

Kiwai Language

South Coastal Kiwai Dialect

Story of how the Kiwai settled along the Coast

Told by Jawagi Maru

Gamea thought that he must build another house/village. Many children had been conceived from the one woman who had lived in the vine tree. So from there Gamea started down the coast looking for people. He started collecting people from Kiwai Island, Parama, Sui, etc., and some from this side down to Saibai and Boigu. As he was travelling the coast there was no fighting because he made magic while he was travelling. When he collected the people he took two other men named Kaiku and Parema from Daru and the village started to grow. Today that family is all here at this village called Unumere clan. They stayed a long time at Mawatto, and then moved to Gireturi (also called Necture), which is the bay at the point of Katatai, called Koipomuba (Sandbank Point). Bidedu moved to this side of Mawatto called

³⁶ Landtman 1917:86.

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Wiomuba (*muba* meaning sandbank), that is the point of the Oriomo River. He would look after the people there and after he would drink Otagamada (kava drink), and tell stories and listen to people talking to each other. They also started making gardens, but because there was no water, and many mosquitoes, they decided to move to a better place. Also there were many people there. Gamea took some men: Mabul, Gagare, Herepe, Maiope, and his son Wasomo, and journeyed down the coast. Between Dauan and Boigu, near Buru Island, their canoe turned over and Wasomo drowned. Gamea journeyed a second time from Daru, taking Maru as his son from Daru. When they left Mawatto they came to Kaparo, a place near Oeabina, where there is a big tree. He found a good place there, and cleared the land and camped there. There was no-one there - not even a footprint - only a sandy beach. From Oeabina, he found the Binaturi River. As he travelled the coast he named the rivers and places: Binaturi, Kura, Ramezi Creek, Augaramuba, the point near Mabudawan, Gugihi Creek, Marukura Island, Paho Island, where the dead are buried, Pahoturi, Minimini Island. Gamea named them all. From Mabudawan he went to Saibai, Dauan and Boigu in the canoe with a pandanus leaf sail. He learnt to make this canoe from the Daru people.

On the second trip along the coast, Gamea put the canoe at Mabudawan. There was no fighting or cutting of heads, only peace and friendship. That is why the islanders are friends. When he went to Boigu other people started visiting the island then. For the second trip they got a canoe from Kiwai Island, and used a coconut leaf sail. When he went to Saibai and Boigu he found people there. Gamea was taken care of by the people of Boigu and one Saibai man went back to Mawatto.

Gamea invited this man Dagai from Saibai to teach his people in Mawatto how to make dugong harpoons, and how to hunt the dugong. Dagai started making spears to go fishing, and dugong platforms. Dagai said that he would tell his brother Wusuru from Boigu to come and help him make spears. Wusuru came from Boigu straight to Daru, and he and Gegera and Iwoimo made a house at Mawatto. They later moved to Binaturi, when Mawatto grew. There they married and the village grew. There was no Tureture village, all the people were Kadawarubi. From Binaturi they went to Oeabina. They made a small house there, but moved to Old Mawatto (real name Kadawa).

Where the houses are now was the garden place before. They stayed at the shore, but made good gardens. There were plenty of women at Kadawa, they married there. Each man had two wives, because there were few men. The first wife helped with fishing and gardening, the second wife only had the children. This was how they lived in the old times.

This state of intergroup conflict was noticed by Chester³⁷ in 1870. Discord between the Kadawarubi and the Turetureubi was caused by the discovery of an abandoned illegitimate baby. The second part of this story documents the divisions within the community which caused the Turetureubi to move away with their headman Kuke.

³⁷ Chester 1870.

One Tureture man speared a Kadawarubi man with an arrow. The man who was killed was called Garibu. This caused fighting between the people. The big men, Gamea and Kuke, tried to stop the fighting, but the young people wanted to separate. Now the Kadawarubi and the Tureturerubi live apart. First the Tureturerubi went to Yomuso, then to Kuokawa. Then they went to Doika. They wondered how they could make friends again. One woman was given by the Tureturerubi to the Kadawarubi to stop the fighting. They put their fighting equipment around her, and on a stick, called a Nunaota. She was dressed at Doika and taken to Binaturi. They planted the stick in the ground, and left the woman there. Women were exchanged in this way with other places such as Boigu, etc., in order to stop tribal fighting. This woman was given to the Mabudawan section of the village to make peace. Her name was Erema.

Bidedu had taken the seeds of plants to Tureture and he had spoilt the other gardens with his magic. Biza was not aware of this. The Kadawarubi did not harvest food for about three years. Samuki Gamea said that he would cross to Tureture and bring Bidedu back. Bidedu refused three times to return. He sent for one of his three sons. This son, Sobi, brought his magic basket, and Bidedu shared his magic. Bidedu told Samuki Gamea that he was to stay with him and be taught the garden magic. Bidedu asked where the gardens were placed and he was told at a place called Poponatatio. Bidedu's second son had burnt a garden place at Anaipodo. Bidedu had taught his sons the garden magic. Early in the morning Bidedu shouted to Biza that Samuki Gamea would look after the gardens. He also told Biza that Bidedu (the second son), Gagari, Herepe, Maburu and Maiope must also stay with Biza. The people took Bidedu's son to the village and made Otagamada for him. Bidedu's son stayed and they planted the gardens the next day. First they burnt the garden place, then they filled a bowl with seeds and covered them with water and then they scattered the seeds on the ground. The man making this magic was decorated with flowers. They are still using this garden place at Old Mawatto. Bidedu was left at Tureture.

The movement of the Kiwai down the Fly River and along the southwestern coast from established villages on Parama and then Katatai is evident from the oral history. The journey of Gamea and Kuke, estimated by Beaver³⁸ to have occurred about 1800, parallels the journeys of Sido, and it was through the Sido myth that the Kiwai made claim to the coastal lands, reefs and waters of the Torres Strait.

Kadawa Village

Kiwai Language

East Coastal Kiwai Dialect

Story of Kadawa Village

Told by Moses Somogi

The people of Kiwai Island lived at Iasa. There were no people on the coast. When the Iasa people began moving some went to Manowete, the north bank of the Fly River. One old man named Sewota crossed from Iasa to the mainland on his canoe. He took his son with him but on the journey the fire

³⁸ Beaver 1920:61.

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went out. At that time there was no Mibu Island. He came to past Sui on the coast. His son began to cry because he was hungry, so Sewota stopped and went looking for fire, but was unable to find it. He finally came to Gibu, a small creek north of Gewi. Here he left the canoe and went up this creek. He shouted but found nobody. He came out from the creek, found Gewi Creek and came to Hubo near Toro Passage, opposite Gaziro. His son was fainting from hunger. He left the canoe at Hubo, made a shelter and left his son there. He told the boy to stay there while he went looking for fire.

He came all the way from Hubo to the river named Urugowoturi near Old Katatai Point. He saw one man here who asked him: 'Who are you?' He replied: 'My name is Sewota and I am looking for fire'. The man told him to stay where he was and he would go and get fire for him and bring it back. This man's name was Bagari. Bagari got the fire stick, he threw it to Sewota from the other side of the river. Sewota ran after the fire stick and in doing so made a creek called Magumuba. Sewota got the fire, and made a fire for his son at his camp at Hubo. He fell asleep. Later, he wondered why Bagari did not want him to cross the river, so decided to look for his footprints and follow him into the bush.

While looking for Bagari's footprints he met another man named Biza at Wiomuba, the western side of Dorogori, and he made friends with Biza. He stayed at Biza's longhouse. He was told that there was one man on Daru Island named Damabe. While this Damabe was staying at Daru a man named Bani came from Boigu Island. Damabe told Bani that he could not stay on Daru, but that there was a man on Hubo and he could stay with him. This man was Sewota. Sewota told Bani that he was to go to a place called Doridori and to look after that place. He said to Bani: 'Here is my small son. Take him with you and teach him how to fight as I am getting too old.' So Bani took the boy and settled at Gibu but named it Daridari (*dori* in Kiwai is *dari* in Saibai language and means man's headdress).

People from different villages came to form two longhouses called Kudin and Wasigena at Arimaturi, near Gewi. While they were staying there they found a large sandbank was coming up at Parama. The people had seen the sandbank but they thought that it was a sea monster. When they sailed near there they stayed close to the mainland. Whenever they went close to the sandbank, the crashing waves frightened them and they would return to Wasigena. They decided to find out if it was a real monster so they went and planted a stick in the sand, they saw that it was land and called it Oweaparama (*owea* means found). They planted trees at Arimaturi. Some people left this old village and settled on Oweaparama. While they were living there conflict arose over relationships between men and women and the village decided to separate. They split in the middle and some people stayed at Parama, others went to Gaziro but there was no water there so they crossed over to the mainland and settled at Komako, also called Katatai. They made camp at Komako. One man called Bidedu came from Kuru and cut the vine tree. The Apuapu (vine) people came out. The Apuapu people went to Dawarima, then moved to Neturi and then came to Kadawa. Gamea and Kuke, two brothers, were from the Apuapu people. Kuke was the elder, Gamea the younger brother. Their mother at one time left Gamea on the beach and their father said: 'I have plenty of boy children.' So he gave his son Gamea to the

Mabudawan people. Gamea and Kuke later moved west and Kuke later moved to Tureture. One fellow named Sebea and his wife, Siworu came from Iasa. Sebea left his wife in the canoe. The village men said to him to come to the men's house. They gave him *otagamada* to drink and he went to sleep. While Sebea was sleeping all the village men went and took his wife and assaulted her. They started at night and continued until early morning. When Sebea woke in the morning he went to his wife and she told him of her ordeal. He took her and started back to Iasa. Sebea put a plack palm container under Siworu and when the container was full of fluids poured it over the side.

When he came to Wadaewi he cut cane there for bow strings and later took them to the people at Wasigena. He told them how the men had spoilt his wife. Sebea and his wife later arrived at Iasa, and told their story to the people. They all prepared their fighting gear. They came down from Iasa to Wasigena, and then to Kudin where they decided amongst themselves that Bani should lead the fight. Bani's magic was powerful and before leading the group he made magic and then they sailed down in their canoes. They came to Hubo and left their canoes there. The men told the boys to stay behind with the canoes while they moved to the village. They were told to move the canoes to the village when they saw the first birds flying in the morning. They were told that when they paddled past Gibea headland they were to burn coconut husks to create smoke that would attract attention. The men circled the village longhouse - some from the beach and others from the bush. The men slept waiting for the daylight. At morning, the boys came along the coast. They lit their fires and one woman who was washing at the beach saw them and shouted to the Kadawarubi that the Iasa people were coming. When the men from the longhouse ran out to see the canoes, the men from Iasa encircled them. Fighting started. The Iasa men killed some Kadawarubi, but others ran away. Those who ran were the ancestors of the people who live at Tureture, and Mabudawan. After this fight Kuke and Gamea fled to the west. Gamea later returned to the village (to see if it was empty). He later went back.

When the Apuapu people came out of the vine tree, there were people living at Komako (old Katatai). To form Katatai the old man's great-grandfather came from Iasa and to Hubo. The son of Sewota learnt to fight.

The present village of Katatai was formed by people from all parts - some Apuapu, some from Fly River islands, some from Torres Strait islands, such as Yam Island (Gaidiri, his son Damabe, his son Ausa, his son Daida Ausa), others from Boigu (Boigudai clan), one man from Murray Island (Naimaru), and one from Yorke Island (Warasi). They settled at Katatai, but some moved to Kadawa when water disturbed the village.

The Kiwai hold on land along the coast was only tentative, dependent upon permission by the 'inside people' to permit settlement.³⁹ For this reason coastal Kiwai villages are situated on the narrow sandy foreshore, often backing on to river marshlands, or swamp.

In the oral evidence presented here the common theme is that contact between Islanders and Papuans was firmly established prior to sustained European contact in the Torres Strait region. A commonly held view, though now increasingly disputed, regarded Melanesian

³⁹ see also Beaver 1920:61-62.

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societies as relatively isolated, small, self-contained and static groups prior to European intervention in the late nineteenth century. The evidence presented in oral accounts disputes this assumption.

The lines of communication formed through marriage alliances, kinship ties and trade friendships were set in the period prior to European contact. European penetration into and across the Torres Strait and into mainland Papua New Guinea followed these customary lines of contact.

The stories and legends of Melanesian peoples form a framework of 'mythological topography' within which the movements of ancestor heroes, legendary warriors and, more recently, old men who have become renowned for their journeys, are incorporated. These oral accounts legitimise recent migration movements and serve to consolidate linkages between peoples. In the Torres Strait the disruption to these lines of communication caused by political divisions between Australia and Papua New Guinea has been particularly apparent.

Chester⁴⁰ wrote an account of a trip to New Guinea accompanied by Captain Banner and two Tudu Islanders. Unable to ascertain their exact position due to flood tides and currents, they landed near a village of about 12 houses close to a small river (Binaturi). They later found that the village was called Katow (old name for Mawatta). Another village three miles to the north was Tureture. The villagers were at war with each other. Chester noted that they understood Kiwai.

Men from the Torres Strait pearling stations raided Papuan villages for food rather than obtaining food by fair trade. For example, Gill⁴¹ reported that the eldest daughter of Sauai, headman of Dauan, was stolen by a party of pearl divers who also robbed the plantations in broad daylight. Chester visited Tudu in 1870 on his way to New Guinea and remarked that the island was inhabited by a camp, on the southeast side, of enough people to fill 18 canoes, which he later estimated at 43 men plus their families. Captain Banner had established a fishing station on the northwestern side in 1868 and employed about 70 South Sea Islanders, many of whom had intermarried with local women. Thus evidence for contacts between Europeans and Islanders predates the establishment of the mission at Mawatta in 1872.

Documentary evidence of contact between European traders and sailors in the Torres Strait and the peoples of the southwestern coast of Papua is found in accounts by missionaries and government officials during the early period of contact, particularly after 1870. Early contact history, that is, the history of European contact in Papua can only be described in terms of the establishment and decline of missions and the rather reluctant growth of colonial administration in the Fly River/Torres Strait area. Annexation of Papua was in fact announced by Commodore Erskine of the Royal Navy, Australia Station, from the verandah of the London Missionary Society mission house in Port Moresby in 1884. The two partners, mission and government, were forever, if unhappily, interwoven in the development of a European Papua.

The first European to settle in Papua was the Reverend W.G. Lawes of the New Guinea Mission of the London Missionary Society, in 1874. In 1871, the Reverend Samuel Macfarlane and the Reverend A.W. Murray had founded a mission on Darnley Island and posts on Dauan and Saibai Islands in the Torres Strait and, in 1872, Samoan teachers were landed at Katau (Mawatta) 48 kilometres east of Darnley Island. By 1900, the Fly River area

40 Chester 1870.

41 Gill 1876:209.

was subject to considerable mission activity, mainly from South Sea Islander pastors and teachers.

The impact of explorers, prospectors and traders, and especially the uncontrolled labour recruitment in the late 19th century, on village life in New Guinea, was a fundamental reason for the extension of colonial administration over Papua and the Torres Strait islands

The following is an oral account of the impact of these first meetings upon the people of the Binaturi River and the subsequent introduction of European tradestore goods obtained, not by customary exchange, but by wage labour.

Masingara Village

Bine Language
Masingle Dialect

Story of first contact with men from Somerset

Told by Pomame Buje (Buie), Ibaji and Gadua

The name of the old village was Masingle. The people brought this name with them on their journey. There were four men's houses in the old village. They were: Magamaer (mother of the men's houses); Palemete (red skinned tree men's house); Dibepupu (resting place men's house), and Norawale (red flower men's house). A man, Yange from Damlearme subclan, got married to a woman called Gibua. As he had no land nearby in which to plant banana suckers, Gibua brought him to her clan's land to plant his garden. During the day they would work there at a place called Palegide. One day he decided to go fishing at the junction of the Bullawe and Binaturi Rivers. In those days, when they went fishing, they used fishing line made from coconut husk fibres, hooks made from lawyer cane thorns, and the sinker made from a ball of strong clay. Yange caught some fish including one eel. While fishing, Yange fell asleep against a tree leaning over the river. Suddenly he heard a noise and saw a European boat in the river. He tried to escape but could not, so he tried to hide. The boat came close to him and he heard one man call out 'I see you. Don't hide'. The men on the boat caught him. Yange was frightened and shivering because he thought they were going to kill him. The European man also took the fish, the eel and Yange's bow and arrow. The boat continued up the river in search of other people, but at Iremisiu a tree had fallen across the river blocking it. While the boat crew were trying to clear the tree, the people of Iremisiu attacked the boat. The men on the boat fired their guns at the villagers who ran away. The boat then turned around and sailed down the river. They sailed to Somerset. Yange's wife, brother-in-law and father-in-law searched for him and, believing that he must have been taken by a crocodile, sent a message from Bullawe village to Masingle village. Yange's wife dressed in widow's mourning clothes. Because they had no body to bury they dug a grave and placed a trunk of a banana tree, called Edetane-Doba, in the hole and covered this with dirt. They then held a funeral feast for him.

Meanwhile, Yange was living at Somerset. The Europeans taught him how to cook rice, how to make damper, tea, boil hot-water, eat sugar, etc. He was also taught how to wash calico (clothes), use soap, and how to use towels. They taught him how to use razor blades, glass mirrors, combs, knives, etc. He remained there for a while, some say two to three months. Later they brought him back by boat. They anchored at the mouth of the Binaturi, there

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was no village at Mawatta, and they unloaded all his things, put them on the beach and covered them. In those days the river was only a creek. They gave Yange a set of counting sticks and told him that they would come back at a future date. Yange walked up the road to Masingle and the boat returned to Somerset. The road to Masingle was called Masingle-Gabe and went through the present village site. At Ugular Creek, Yange was seen by some village people, and they thought it was Yange's spirit returning because he was dressed in shirt, trousers and hat. For this reason European clothes were called *abletuglu*, meaning spirit's skin, that is, the clothing is hiding the spirit. Frightened, the people ran away. Yange started called out: 'I am not a spirit, I am not dead, I am alive'. The people heard him and turned around and started walking towards him. They then shook hands with him. They went with him to the Noawale men's house. The relatives of Yange gave him food to eat. They then went to Yange's men's house, Dibepupu. When the message went about that Yange had returned, the people spread mats on the black palm floors and Yange started to tell his story.

He told them that the Europeans who brought him back were *turibiname* (friendly people). After telling his story, he said that all the goods brought were still at the mouth of the Binaturi so they went to collect the stores and brought them back to the men's house, where the people gathered around. Yange showed them how to cook using saucepans. He served rice to the people on plates which he had brought. He also served rice in coconut shells, called *wate*. He opened tinned fish and mixed the rice and fish. He then showed them how to eat using spoons. Some used spoons made from shells called *hinerore* and *geserore*. The people tasted the food and saw that it was good. Yange explained all the European foods such as flour, baking powder, tea, etc. He showed them how to mix tea, wash clothes and bodies, how to use knives, axes, matches, black tobacco (they used to smoke *iasuguba*, native tobacco). Some women thought that soap was for eating but Yange told them it was only for washing. He showed them how to dress in European clothes. He shared everything among the village people but some people missed out. Yange told them not to worry as the boat was returning and they would be given stores then. He showed them the counting sticks and on the appointed time the boat returned from Somerset. This was the second trip.

Yange showed the people the boat. On the boat were also some fowls. Yange explained these birds to them and the children learnt to make the noise: 'oh - ga - oh - i - we - a - i - we - a'. The Europeans told Yange to unload the boat. The sailors went with the people to Masingle village where they shook hands with the village people. They shared stores with the people who had missed out in the first place. The boat then left Masingle and returned to Somerset. Yange remained behind. The Europeans then told the mission at Somerset of this place and the missionaries made a trip with the pastor from Murray Island called Enoke. This man's name was Enoch. The missionary made a settlement near the Noawale men's house. This place was called Aipupu (a type of tree called *oni* or *wongai*), because the pastor worked there for some years. Masingle people and Irupe people were still fighting wars but the pastor called the government to come and make a stop to the wars. William Macgregor took some police and came. He brought trade goods and went up to Irupe with some Masingle people. While he was trying to make

peace the Irupe shot one Kiwai man named Dabu, whose family are now in Mabudawan. They speared him. The police shot some men, the European shot one man. They then left.

Masingle and Irupe people became friends after this. The pastor remained in the village and some people went to Somerset where they worked as labourers.

They then went to work for the government at Malukuwa (also Marukara) Island off Mabudawan. These workers planted coconuts and mangoes at Malukuwa. (These trees are still there). After this the Kiwai people travelled along the coast and settled at Mawatta after the missionaries. This was when Ganea and Kuke came to Mawatta. There was no Kiwai village at Mawatta before the missionaries.

Because there was not enough land and no sea passage at Malukuwa and Mabudawan, the government went to Yaru (Daru).

There the government settled for good.

Following the establishment of the colonial government outpost at Somerset in 1864, European contact with Torres Strait Islanders, and later with coastal Papuan groups, increased.

When the pastor left, some people moved to Bullawe with Muge, others went to Sair, others to Gugumete and to Biabu. From there the government came again and told the people that they were one people and should make one village, so they moved to the old village site near the graveyard. The Europeans changed the name from Masingle to Masingara. At this village the government brought the Union Jack and George (?) Murray came from Port Moresby and gave the people the King's head (photograph). From there the government and pastors continued to come until now.

'I see you'. The family of Yange still use this name, now spelt Seeyou, formerly Siu.

The skirmish between the Irupe people and the police under the authority of Macgregor occurred in 1891. It was also in 1891 that the first colonial administrative post was established near Mabudawan.^{42,43} Thus according to the Masingara people, the permanent settlement of the Kiwai on the southwestern coast occurred after the establishment of the mission.

The unscrupulous methods of obtaining labour in the Torres Strait region were graphically illustrated by Cannon⁴⁴ who described how:

Old Edwards of the 'Blue Bell' used to relate with 'gusto' how he inveigled the men on board, got them down below, then made sail and cut their canoes adrift. They were taken for three or four years, then given a few old muskets, beads, whiskey, tobacco, or cloth, and landed at least anywhere, often amidst their deadliest enemies.

42. British New Guinea. Annual report of 1892:47, and

43. Beaver 1920:79-80.

44. Cannon 1885:30.

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Landtman⁴⁵ also recorded stories of first contacts between 'white' men and Papuans. The coming of D'Albertis and the flag is still told although the story the author collected is very disjointed.

The opening of the interior and the pacification brought by colonial administration permitted the peaceful movement of the 'bush people' to the coast and eventually into the plantation labour force. It also enabled the Kiwai people to move further along the coast and establish a village at Mabudawan. The impact of European ways profoundly altered customary life in the isolated coastal villages of the Western Province from the early 1870s.

Wim Village

Kawan Language

Story of the first lap-lap (European clothing)

Told by Abiam Mergor

Before, in the old days, our great-grandparents did not wear lap-laps. It was during the lifetime of our grandfathers that the people saw their first lap-lap. Lap-laps were first used at Old Mawatta (Binaturi River), and slowly they moved by trade to Masingara, to Glulu, to Sogare, and to Podare. Our parents would go to Podare and get clothing there. At first, the people did not know what the lap-lap was used for. In those days, they did not get many clothes. Once they received the first lap-lap, they tore it into bits and used it to cover their private parts. At first they did not even know that clothing was to be worn. When we were children we started wearing European clothes all the time. In those days, people did not go to far away places. Clothing now comes from shops and friends. They cannot make this type of clothing themselves. It has to come from other countries like Australia.

The first missionaries to the upper Binaturi River area brought more than the Christian religion. They introduced tradestore goods and established new routes for trading from the isolated inland areas southward to the Torres Strait.

Wipim Village

Gidra Language

Story of Wipim Village and trading

Told by Sarawa Jugu, Mundar Kaus, Sagere Kaus, Bisai Saur and Birige Kugei

When the old people lived they did not have clothes or anything. The men were naked, the women had grass skirts to cover themselves. Before they had European tools, they used sharpened bamboo sticks to dig gardens, remove the grass and make drains. Before they had coconut scrapers they used shells. They also used these shells to make gardens by cutting the small sticks and grass to clear the land. Shells were also used to scrape the taro and vegetables. They were also used to make bows and arrows. Shells were the main object used. For cutting sago palm they used stone axes. Shells came from the Pahoturi and were traded with sago.

They do not know where the stone axes came from, perhaps they were just found and someone made them. Axe handles were made from a hard tree. Before it was fitted they made a hole in the wood with fire, then they used cane

⁴⁵ Landtman 1917:538-541.

to fit it to the wood. It would take all one day to cut down one sago palm tree. There were few axes, sometimes only one in the whole village. The axes were not sharp, and sometimes the force of the blunt axe on the sago could force a man backwards. This all happened before the trade in (metal) axes. This is how the old people lived.

Clothing was brought by one of the Europeans. He brought clothes and the Bible. His name was Sare. He came up from the village of Kadawa (now Mawatta on the Binaturi). When he arrived at Kadawa village, because it was the first time that they had seen a European, they were all frightened and ran away. When he found that everyone had run away, he went away but later came back. Before he came again he loaded a boat with all European things, like rice, sugar, clothes, tobacco, pots, saucepans. When the time came he started up on the journey from the coast. As he came closer to the village, people saw the boat and thought it was a very big wild pig coming on the sea, because they had not seen a boat before. Some felt very frightened and took off again into the bush, but others stayed and watched. It came from Thursday Island way to Kadawa.

The man named Mr Sare (Murray) came from the boat and called the men in the village. He told them to unload the boat and take goods into the village. The men shouted to those who had run away, to come and help unload the boat. They took all the goods to the village. The first thing he had was tobacco - he got the cigarettes and matches and lit it and puffed it first. He told them it was not food. He gave it to the village people. After that he taught them how to cook rice in a pot with water. He got a plate and served out the cooked rice. He opened a tin of meat and put it on the rice and showed the people how to eat it. Afterwards, they ate together. After this he showed them how to cook flour, biscuits, and other things. He showed them the foods for eating, and drinks for drinking, such as tea, lolly water and other things. He showed them black tobacco.

After teaching them these things he got a roll of material and cut it and gave the cloth among the people. He told them that the cloth was for them to use to cover their bodies. At Kadawa he told them that he was taking one of these rolls of material inland. Mr Sare asked if there were other villages inland because he wanted to see them. They went up the river to Glulu village with a man named Musi. Mr Sare told Musi: 'Here is a roll of material. You will take it to the other villages'. Musi went to Podare and gave it to them there. Mr Sare and the Kadawa men went back to Kadawa.

Musi spent some days at the village at Glulu. He sent messages to the men at Podare for all the men to visit him. He told them that he was bringing the skin of a dead man. He told them to make a welcome for him at Podare. He said: 'When I arrive, I will bring this skin, and you should hold it and smell it with your nose'. After sending this message he went out and later arrived at Podare village. They made a welcome, and Musi put the cloth down and told them to touch and smell the cloth. He called it *kobargum* or the skin of a dead man. Next day, Musi cut the material into pieces and gave a piece to each clan. This was the first time to see clothing in the Podare area. He showed them how to wear clothing. Musi returned to Glulu. He told them that Mr Sare would come and they should select some men to become the *mamoose* or police constable, deacons, pastors, and other things. The headman was to be

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called *mopiam*. Deacons were called *dekuna*. Pastors were called missionaries in those days. When Musi left, Mr Sare came and he was the first man to bring the Bible. He brought a gun with bullets and shot the branch off a big tree. Some people felt very frightened but he told them it was only used for shooting animals, and showed them how to do it.

For trading, they took a walk from Wipim to the villages near the coast. They traded with grass skirts, headdresses made from cassowary feathers, bows and arrows, drums, and native tobacco. The two villages that they traded with, first was Kadawa at Binaturi, and then with Masingara. For these things they gave them matches, clothes, knives, axes, and hoes to make the gardens.

Nowadays they still trade this way, but also go down to Daru now.

After Mr Sare went back they went to work for the Europeans at Port Moresby. Some of these men's fathers were the first to go to work for the whites.

When they got their jobs they learnt to speak English and how to cook food, cut grass, mix cement and work as *washbois*.

One thing like money was called *apogran*. This was like a big *kina* coin and very heavy. Goods cost one shilling. They could buy from both sides of this coin. They bought things from the boss. They did not have any education.

The establishment of colonial administration in Papua New Guinea and the 'internal colonialism' of the Queensland and Australian governments in the Torres Strait became the main regulators of the customary ways of the Torres Strait peoples. One of the earliest moves by the colonial authorities was the suppression of the headhunting raids of the Tugeri people from the Morehead River region. Raids by the Tugeri were a constant feature of life in the later part of the nineteenth century but it was the death of a European trader that brought police action and the establishment of a coastal station first at Mabudawan in 1890/1 and then later at Daru in 1893. The story of the defeat of the war leader, Para, is still told. Para's death song is also sung, in Tugeri language, at the Kiwai speaking village of Mawatta.

Conclusion

Oral history concerns the relationship of written records to spoken tradition.⁴⁶ The role of oral traditions, within anthropological research, is their use as primary historical records. Collections of myths and legends, songs and chants do not themselves explain cultural history. They need to be interpreted and for this the essential task is to find the right informants versed in local traditions who can act as witnesses to events, thus enabling oral traditions to be assessed as historical records. In a changing society, oral traditions link people to their ancestors and events in the past. The sharing of recent events and experiences from the colonial past serves to orientate a people facing complex social changes towards a common future.

The sense of pride in the past is keenly felt by the people of the Torres Strait and Fly estuary region. However, the dissemination of the collected material is essential in maintaining the enthusiasm for the communal historic past.

Like a living society, tradition constantly changes. For this reason some ethnologists and historians are suspicious of oral history. No two accounts of the one event can be the same. One person's interpretation can distort historical fact. Stories passed by oral

⁴⁶ Ruhan 1981:39.

transmission are subtly changed according to present needs and present communal interests and the recorder can often be seen as an agent for the dissemination of local feelings and grievances. Warfare, disease and sorcery can be eliminated or glorified as occasion demands. If oral traditions can strengthen group solidarity⁴⁷ they can also be used to present a common front in the face of perceived external threats for they can be perceived as means for adaptation and accommodation.⁴⁸

Oral history serves to link people to their important cultural ancestors and to the events of the past which are the possession of the people as a whole or may belong to one clan or group in the society. Oral history is also a record of shared experiences, most particularly the experiences of migration, labour movements, intergroup conflicts, and the impact of the colonial period. These experiences may also be shared with other villages and language groups.

The stories presented here link the Islanders and coastal Papuan peoples to a shared common heritage. Oral evidence states that contacts were established and maintained well before the arrival of the first European traders and missionaries. It was, however, the arrival of the missions and the subsequent establishment of colonial administration that allowed for sustained and peaceful movements of peoples along the coast and into the rich fishing grounds of the northern Torres Strait.

Wage labour became the most important economic resource of the poor, isolated villages from the Fly River to Mai Kussa, and Papuans were employed under contract in the pearling, trochus and bêche-de-mer industries, and later, after the growth of the plantations, the Fly River men moved to other areas of Papua New Guinea as labourers.

The Torres Strait islands, especially Thursday Island, became an important source of desired European goods and many of the items of daily life, such as clothing, cooking utensils and food stuffs, entered the southern villages via the Torres Strait.

It is for this reason that the recently signed Torres Strait Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea recognises the common importance of 'traditional' economic activities between the people of the Torres Strait and the adjacent coastal area of Papua New Guinea.

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AN ADMINISTRATIVE NIGHTMARE: ABORIGINAL CONSCRIPTION 1965-72

Ann-Mari Jordens

Reactions to the attempts to involve Aborigines in the National Service scheme of the 1960s reflected the attitudes of the white community, those of Aboriginal political groups, and the development of government policy over the period in response to pressures from bodies representing both communities. On the whole the difficulties encountered by the Department of Labour and National Service in attempting to meet these demands were caused by the social effects of discriminatory government policy and practice concerning Aborigines over a long period, publicly presented as 'assimilation'. Because Aboriginal society was diverse and culturally different, and because it had long been excluded by legislation, administrative practice and custom from the rights, privileges and duties bestowed on white Australians, it did not fit neatly into the administrative framework constructed for the implementation of conscription.

Aborigines had served in the Australian Army probably since the Boer War. At least 300 Aborigines, including those of unmixed descent, served in the 1914-18 war, and three earned decorations. An estimated 1500-2000 Aborigines and 830-850 Torres Strait Islanders served as volunteers in the 1939-45 war. The Defence Act prevented the conscription of Aborigines on the grounds that, as they did not have the privileges of Australian citizenship, such as the franchise, it would be unreasonable to force them to accept the responsibilities. Although the relevant legislation allowed for Aboriginal volunteers, racially prejudiced Army administrators used Australian Military Orders and Regulations to exclude many of the them, and this practice was never challenged legally during the duration of the Second World War. When the Japanese threat to Australia became more evident the regulations relating to the employment of non-Europeans were interpreted more generously, and special groups of Aboriginal and Islanders were raised in northern Australia. There their detailed knowledge of local conditions, skills at tracking and *Ann-Mari* experience in tribal warfare made them experts in guerrilla fighting and mobile patrol, although they were either unpaid or very poorly paid. Aborigines integrated in the 2nd AIF or Militia received equal pay and conditions and, despite the assumptions of Army authorities, their relations with other soldiers were generally excellent.¹

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1 Precise figures of Aborigines in the Army are unavailable as Army records do not identify soldiers by ethnic origin. Army administrators recorded as explaining the exclusion of Aborigines in racist terms during the war of 1939-45 were the Director of Recruiting and Mobilization and the Chief of General Staff: see Robert A. Hall, 'The relationship between Aborigines, Islanders and the Armed Forces in the Second World War', PhD, 1988. Also by the same author: 'Aborigines and the Army. The Second World War Experience, unpublished paper delivered to the Australian War Memorial History Conference, 8-12 February 1983; 'Aborigines, the Army and the Second World War in Northern Australia', *Aboriginal History*, vol.4, June 1980, pp.73-95 and *Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper no. 121, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 198

ABORIGINAL CONSCRIPTION

By 1964 obstacles to Aboriginal franchise were removed in all states except Queensland, and efforts were made throughout the 1960s to remove the considerable political, legislative and social barriers preventing Aboriginal participation in Australian society. In May 1963 the Department of Labour and National Service had examined Section 18 of the National Service Act, which excluded 'Aboriginal natives of Australia as defined by the regulation' from the requirement to register. An Aboriginal was defined as:

- a) a full-blooded aboriginal native of Australia;
- b) a person who is a half-caste aboriginal native of Australia or has an admixture of aboriginal blood greater than a half-caste; or
- c) a person who has an admixture of aboriginal blood and lives as an aboriginal native or amongst aborigines.²

Nothing substantial had been achieved by November 1964 when the re-introduction of conscription was announced, except for an amendment to the wording of section 18 which enabled certain categories of Aborigines, yet to be determined, to be excluded by regulation from the obligation to register.³

The important contribution Aborigines had already made to the defence of Australia was not recognized and it was widely assumed by the Government and throughout the bureaucracy during the 1960s that the registration of those following a traditional lifestyle would be 'neither practicable nor desirable'. The Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Sir Henry Bland, believed that Aborigines on the whole would 'have considerable difficulty in adjusting themselves to the rigorous training and service requirements of the Army,' that they would not meet its medical, educational and other standards, and that 'the majority of aborigines who registered would probably be rejected following medical examination.'⁴ The practical problems in administering the conscription of Aborigines were, however, the principal deterrent for the Department of Labour and National Service.

In early 1965 the matter came into the political arena. Protests were received from representatives of such diverse groups as the Australian Labor Party, the Aboriginal Advancement Council of Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory Advisory Council, the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the Returned Services' League and the Country Womens' Association of Western Australia; and it was raised in Parliament by NSW Country Party member A. A. Armstrong.⁵

² Secretary, Department of Territories to the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, 28 January 1964. Definition from agenda of Aboriginal Welfare Conference, 22 July 1965. Department of Labour and National Service (hereafter L&NS) file no. SC 67/96.

³ Secretary, Department of Territories to Secretary, Department of L&NS, 26 November 1964 and Secretary of N&NS to P.E. Felton, Aboriginal Welfare Board Victoria, 22 October 1965, L&NS file no. SC67/96.

⁴ H.A. Bland to Regional Directors, 16 August 1967, pp.1-3, *ibid.* His successor P.H. Cook expressed similar views in a letter to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 3 March 1972, *ibid.*

⁵ Protest by Senator J. Fitzgerald, (ALP NSW) *Canberra Times*, 29 January 1965. Letter to Prime Minister from Aboriginal Advancement Council of Western Australia, 2 March 1965, L&NS file no. 65/985. Protest by ACT Advisory Council, forwarded by J. O'Regan, Officer in Charge, ACT sub-office, L&NS to the Secretary, L&NS, 15 March 1965, L&NS file no. SC67/96. Letter to the Minister for the Army from Stan Davey,

Although all these bodies advocated the conscription of Aborigines they did so from very different premises. Labor and Aboriginal-controlled bodies believed that the exclusion of Aborigines implied their inferiority to white Australians as citizens. Groups such as the Returned Services' League, who espoused an assimilationist policy, believed that Aborigines should share in all the responsibilities derived from their enjoyment of the privileges of Australian citizenship.

The conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Welfare, held in Adelaide on 22 July 1965, decided that Aborigines should not be excluded from registration and that those unsuitable for National Service should be excluded by administrative arrangements in collaboration with Aboriginal welfare authorities.⁶

This was a solution the Department of Labour and National Service firmly opposed until the scheme was abolished by the Whitlam government in 1972. Despite all the criticism and unfavourable publicity the Department attracted in trying to ensure that the existing legislation was enforced, it refused to resort to regulations or administrative action to solve the immense problems caused by inadequacies in that legislation. The Secretary of the Department insisted that if changes were to be made regarding the conscription of Aborigines they should be firmly based on an amendment of the National Service Act. This determination to base all changes on legislative amendments set the Department of Labour and National Service at loggerheads with the Department of Territories (renamed the Department of the Interior from 29 February 1968), which throughout the period professed a strongly assimilationist policy and saw itself as the pre-eminent department in Aboriginal matters. Labour and National Service had difficulty in getting its views across on Aboriginal conscription. It was not informed of the Adelaide conference and was represented only by an observer from the South Australian Regional Office, contacted by telephone a short time before it began.⁷ Only state ministers attended the conference and in Parliament Gordon Bryant (ALP VIC.) criticized the Government for not taking it seriously enough to send a Commonwealth minister.⁸

secretary, Federal Council of the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, 2 November 1965, *loc.cit*. Record of the meeting of the National Executive of the Returned Services' League of 3 August 1965, forwarded to Minister for L&NS, 9 March 1966, L&NS file no. 65/4360. Representation to the Minister for Defence from the Country Womens Association of Western Australia, 9 March 1966, Department of Defence file no. 182/1/30. Protest by A. Armstrong, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates House of Representatives (hereafter CPD HR), vol.45, p.260.

- 6 Conference statement 22 July 1965, p.3, L&NS file no.SC 67/96. According to the report on this by the Minister for Territories, C.E. Barnes, these meetings were held every two years. They later became annual, CPD HR vol.49, p.3950.
- 7 W.F. Sharpe, Adelaide Regional Director to H.A. Bland, Secretary, L&NS, 30 November 1965, Dr P.H. Cook, First Assistant Secretary, L&NS, to Bland, 15 December 1965. Bland to Regional Directors, 6 December 1965, L&NS file no.SC67/96.
- 8 The Minister for Territories, C. E Barnes, explained to Parliament in his Ministerial statement on Aboriginal Welfare on 10 December 1965 that the 'business of Government' had prevented him or any Commonwealth Minister from attending the conference. Barnes was represented by the Administrator of the Northern Territory and the Director-General of Health represented the Minister for Health, R.W. Swartz; CPD Vol H of R 49, p.3950. An account of the attitudes prevalent in the Department of Territories on the question of Aborigines is to be found in Chapter 1 of H.C. Coombs, *Kulinma. Listening to Aboriginal Australians*:1-25. Unfortunately my account of the interdepartmental conflict has been reconstructed from Department of Labour and National Service files only, as at the time of writing this article the corresponding Department of Territories file (no.64/107) cannot be located.

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A principal architect of the Government's policy of assimilation, Professor A.P. Elkin, attended the conference. Elkin, who had occupied the Chair of Anthropology at Sydney from 1932 to 1955, had a dominating influence on both government policy and popular perceptions of Aborigines over this period.⁹ He was still a member of the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board and his advice was, as a senior officer of the Department of Labour and National Service noted, 'of quite high political importance in this matter'. Elkin considered that 'many part-Aboriginal youths should have been called up for National Service training and that the authorities have in the past been too soft in this matter.'¹⁰

Although the conference softened the wording of the Government's definition of assimilation, Labor members Kim Beazley and Gordon Bryant complained that, while words had been changed, no action had resulted. They believed that while the discriminatory clauses such as those in the National Service Act remained unaltered, nothing practical had been achieved.¹¹

In December 1965 Bland instructed the regional directors of the Department of Labour and National Service to provide him with information which would enable the Department to determine which categories of Aborigines might be required to register.¹² Although in all states the numbers of twenty-year-old Aborigines were small, the problems of fitting them into the system devised for National Service registration were insuperable. Each state had its own definition of 'Aborigine'.¹³ Even if an agreed definition had existed it was impossible to ascertain their numbers as Aborigines were not included in any census until 1971. State records were not always of much help, particularly with those of mixed race. The numbers of part-Aborigines (excluding those living in tribes) had not been recorded in the Northern Territory since 1953.¹⁴ Aboriginal attitudes towards marriage made the determination of 'admixture of aboriginal blood', made necessary by the Act's definition of an Aborigine, legally impossible. There were no statistics on Aboriginal marriages available. Traditional Aborigines placed no importance on legal marriages and were far less concerned about paternity than white society was.¹⁵ In New South Wales the regional director of the Department of Labour and National Service, possibly influenced by the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board's view, believed that most Aborigines were 'less than half-caste' and that 'Aborigines cannot be sufficiently identified from the rest of the State population'.¹⁶ If 'admixture of blood' was the sole criterion he was correct, but those identifying themselves as Aborigines could have been easily ascertained. Adherence to the old criterion created insuperable problems for the Department of Labour and National Service. As one officer

⁹ H. Goodall, 'An Intelligent Parasite: A.P. Elkin and white perceptions of the history of the Aboriginal people in NSW'. Paper presented to the History '82 Conference.

¹⁰ R.A. Smee, NSW Regional Director, to Cook, 16 December 1965, Elkin's statement in agenda item 17 p.31 of conference working paper attached to letter from Secretary, Dept. of L&NS, 23 July 1965, L&NS file no. SC67/96.

¹¹ Conference 22 July 1965, agenda item 17, p.30 *ibid.* CPD vol. H of R. 49, 10 December 1965, p.3951 and pp.3954-5.

¹² 6 December 1965, L&NS file no. SC67/96

¹³ A summary of the definitions in the various state legislations is to be found in L&NS file no. 73/4914 TA 1975 RP.

¹⁴ F.H. Moy, Department of Territories, to Bland, 10 May 1966. L&NS file no SC67/96.

¹⁵ C.D. Rowley, *Outcasts in white Australia: Aboriginal policy and practice*, vol. 2:349-50.

¹⁶ R.A. Smee to Cook, 16 December 1965, L&NS file no. S C 67/ 96.

observed gloomily, there were approximately 1,000 twenty year-old Aborigines throughout Australia, 'and if we have 1,000, we will have about 1,000 problem cases'.¹⁷

It was almost impossible to apply consistently the method of selection by birthday ballots to Aborigines, because varying administrative practices in the states often made it impossible to determine or verify date of birth. The registration of Aboriginal births had not been required in the Northern Territory until 1949; in South Australia it was required but the requirement was not enforced; and in Western Australia records of Aboriginal births were neither complete nor accurate 'being obtained mostly from hearsay information from various sources such as pastoralists, owners of stations, etc'.¹⁸

The Department also noted that normal administrative practices would be difficult to apply to Aborigines who were registered. Exemptions to men married within a specified period would be complicated, as many Aboriginal marriages were regarded by authorities as *de facto*.¹⁹ Although there were only an estimated 200 nomadic Aborigines, many more were itinerant or seasonal workers. To prosecute them for failure to register, to notify changes of address or to attend medical examinations would be unreasonable, Bland believed, but not to do so would mean discrimination in their favour. English was not the first language of large numbers of Aborigines, and many educated in mission schools did not speak it at all, but literacy in English was a pre-requisite to registration.²⁰ Bland continued to oppose the suggestion of the Department of Territories that these problems could be overcome by administrative discretion. Once registration was required, he argued, normal arrangements must operate. He therefore recommended that the matter be considered by Cabinet and that nothing further be done for the rest of 1966.²¹

On 10 January 1967 the problem was considered by a meeting of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal welfare authorities. Apparently influenced by Professor Elkin and others,²² the meeting favoured compulsory registration and selection by administrative action. Once again the Department of Labour and National Service was excluded from these discussions and even found it impossible to discover what was said at the meeting. The Department of Territories decided not to include the matter on the agenda of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for Aboriginal welfare in Perth, although the Department of Labour and National Service had wished it to be raised, and had prepared a paper for it.²³

Political pressure for the conscription of Aborigines was resumed when the Western Australian Branch of the Liberal party at its conference in July 1967 passed a resolution urging the Government to include more Aborigines in the call-up. The Department of Labour and National Service believed this to be nullified by the Natives (Citizenship

¹⁷ A. Sutcliffe to Cook, 2 March 1966, *ibid.*

¹⁸ W.K. Allen, Victorian Regional Director, to Cook, 23 December 1965 and F.H. Moy, Department of Territories, to Bland, 10 May 1966, *ibid.*; W.F. Sharpe, Adelaide Regional Director to Cook, 22 December 1965, *ibid.*; G.E. McGregor, Assistant Registrar, Perth to the Registrar, Perth, 14 February 1966, *ibid.*

¹⁹ S.K. Allen, Victorian Regional Director, to Cook, 22 December 1965, *ibid.*

²⁰ Bland to Secretary Department of Territories, 11 March 1966 and Bland to Regional Directors, 16 August 1967, *ibid.*

²¹ Secretary, Department of Territories, to Bland, 10 May 1966 and Bland's reply, 27 September 1966, *ibid.*

²² R.A. Smee, NSW Regional Director, to K.C. McKenzie, Assistant Secretary, L&NS, 26 September 1967, *ibid.*

²³ R.S. Swift, Deputy Secretary, Department of Territories, to Bland, 11 August 1967. (Paper was dated 12 July 1967). Bland to Swift, 18 August 1967, *ibid.*

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Rights) Act of Western Australia, which prevented Aborigines from applying for citizenship until they were twenty-one - beyond the age of registration.²⁴ On 16 August 1967 Bland again asked the regional directors to discuss the principal problems with state authorities on Aboriginal affairs.²⁵

At this time there was some hope that the newly created Council for Aboriginal Affairs might gain enough power to influence government policy and administration throughout the various Commonwealth departments dealing with Aborigines. The Prime Minister, Harold Holt, saw the 91% 'yes' vote in the May 1967 referendum to amend the Constitution in respect to Aborigines as a direction to the Government to act immediately to improve the status of Aborigines. On 2 November 1967 he announced the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, a small advisory body attached to an Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Prime Minister's Department, comprising Dr H.C. Coombs, former Governor of the Commonwealth and Reserve Banks, Professor W.E.H. Stanner, Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the Australian National University, and Barrie Dexter, then Australian Ambassador to Laos. Unfortunately, before the Council began to function Holt had died, and no subsequent Prime Minister during the existence of the Council was sufficiently interested in it to define its role or provide it with a charter.²⁶ W.C. Wentworth was made Minister in Charge of Aboriginal Affairs from 28 February 1968.

On 15 May 1968, Wentworth incorporated in a submission to Cabinet a more rational definition of 'Aboriginal' than that based on classification by 'blood'. An Aboriginal, for the purpose of the specific benefits proposed in the submission, was defined as 'a person of whole or partial Aboriginal descent who claims to be an Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the community with which he is associated'.²⁷ Although this definition was clear, its status was not. Cabinet made no comment on it in its decision of 22 May, but ordered a second, more detailed submission, based on the findings of an Interdepartmental Committee.²⁸ The Committee's comment on this definition reflected the attitude of the Department of the Interior rather than that of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, as it remarked that 'in identifying Aborigines to receive special benefits, regard might also be had to a criterion of need determined by the facts of individual cases. The Committee was conscious of the possibility of enticing Aborigines already settled in the general community unnecessarily to seek the special benefits'.²⁹ When Cabinet considered the Committee's

24 Note to McKenzie 29 June 1967, *ibid* ; Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Western Australia, no. 23 of 1944, sections 4-6 this was amended by no. 82 of 1964, section 2, to extend citizenship to the children of Aborigines granted citizenship, once those children had reached the age of twenty-one. *Australian*, 4 and 5 July 1967, *West Australian*, 5 July 1967.

25 Bland to Regional Directors, 16 August 1967 and memorandum 'Aborigines and National Service', 10 May 1966, L&NS file no. SC67/96.

26 A detailed account of the administrative history of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs is found in Coombs, *op. cit.*, pp.1-25.

27 Cabinet submission 92, paragraph 16, 15 May 1968, Cabinet Office file no. CO 80, part 1.

28 Cabinet decision no 252 on submission 92, 22 May 1968, *ibid*.

29 Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Submission 92, 31 May 1968, *ibid*. Evidence that this represented Interior's perspective is to be found in a similar statement in Cabinet submission 269 of the Department of the Interior, paragraph 7 of 19 July 1971 which complained that some of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs' projects 'have the effect of encouraging part-Aborigines otherwise being peacefully assimilated into the general community to identify themselves with Aborigines as a group in order to get benefits they otherwise would not get.' *ibid*, part 2.

report on 2 June 1968, along with Wentworth's original submission, it affirmed its commitment to the principle of assimilation, and emphasised its desire to 'avoid proposals which, by identifying Aborigines as such and setting them permanently apart from other Australians, are likely to have the effect of acknowledging and establishing a policy of continuing separate development leading to an eventual racial problem.' 'Full-bloods' faced different problems from 'other Aboriginal people', it declared, and its approach to solving them should therefore be pragmatic. Nevertheless Cabinet recognised the overall responsibility of the Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs for policy in relation to Aborigines on an Australia-wide basis.³⁰

Despite these inconsistencies the Office and Council for Aboriginal Affairs were successful in having the new definition accepted by most of the government departments dealing with Aborigines. By 1972 it had been accepted by all the departments represented at the Commonwealth-State meeting in Darwin, except for Interior, which would only regard 'full-blood' Aborigines as Aborigines. Alison Stephen, the Department of Labour and National Service's representative observed that it was, as a result, 'under constant criticism from other Commonwealth and State Departments'. The Employment Branch of Department of Labour and National Service accepted the new definition, but the National Service officers adhered strictly to section 18 of the National Service Act which referred to the old definition by 'blood'. The refusal of the Government to amend the National Service Act, and the determination of the Department of Labour and National Service not to deviate from the legislative provisions of the Act, meant that for the entire existence of the scheme the National Service area of the Department was hamstrung by the old, outdated and unworkable definition.³¹

Nevertheless, pressure on the Department of Labour and National Service to solve its Aboriginal problem continued. In the early 1970s it was still being urged to remove its 'discriminatory exemption' of Aborigines both by Aboriginal groups and by sections of the Country Party and the Returned Services League.³² The Attorney-General's Department, which was preparing a paper on 'existing provisions in State and Commonwealth legislation which appear to be discriminatory,' also raised the issue in the light of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.³³

The Government never reached a formula whereby it could determine by regulation categories of Aborigines which it could conscript. The campaign to purge legislation of references to Aborigines prevented it from specifying the exclusion of tribal or nomadic Aborigines and those with unregistered or designated birthdates. In his policy speech of October 1969 the Prime Minister declared that: 'In recent years, most discriminatory legislation against Aborigines has been abolished. We intend to see that this process is completed in the life of the next Parliament upon both State and Federal levels'. Nevertheless the Government was extremely reluctant to tackle the conscription of Aborigines as it wished to avoid opening up any general discussion of the Act by

³⁰ Cabinet decision no. 314 on submission 92, 104, 2 July 1968, *ibid*, part 1.

³¹ Alison Stephen to M. Kangan, minute, 'Departmental Definition of "Aboriginal" ', 31 August 1972, L&NS file no SC 67/96.

³² B.G. Dexter, Director of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, to Secretary L&NS, 19 December 1969; Letter, F.J. Martin, Secretary, Moore Divisional Council, Country Party of Western Australia, to Secretary of the Parliamentary Country Party, 3 November 1971, *ibid.*; *Age*, 17 March 1972.

³³ B.G. Dexter to Cook, 3 January 1970 and 4 November 1970, L&NS file no. SC 67/96.

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introducing new amendments.³⁴ The Minister for Labour and National Service, B.M. Snedden, considered the issue in early 1970 but decided to do nothing because of the growing popular hostility to the Vietnam War. As the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, P.H. Cook, explained to the Director of Aboriginal Affairs, 'with the . . . identification of National Service with Vietnam it would doubtless be said that the Government had now reached the stage where it was calling up Aborigines to fight in Vietnam . . . (T)here was, indeed, the real risk that while Australian troops remained in Vietnam successful attempts would be made to join and exploit what have been separate protest causes, namely Vietnam and Aboriginal rights.'³⁵ Opposition was anticipated 'from the Civil Rights people to the spelling out of any definition'.³⁶ The Department of Labour and National Service, however, continued to insist on clear legislative guidelines, resisting all proposals that classes of Aborigines be excluded by administrative action.³⁷ It refused to follow the practice, adopted by the electoral authorities, of requiring Aborigines to register as voters, but in practice making 'no strenuous efforts' to see that they did.³⁸ Officers of the Department believed that 'If all Aborigines were required to register, we would then be obliged to take the same steps to see that they do so as in the case of any other person required to register.'³⁹

The problem became even more complicated as the Act's definition of Aborigines by proportion of 'blood' came under the test of individual cases. In March 1967 the Department was confronted with the case of a 'full blood' Aborigine who had 'lived substantially as a European', who had registered but had failed to appear for his medical. The Commonwealth Police were sent to investigate whether he was obliged to register or had registered by mistake - that is to determine whether or not he was a 'full blood' Aborigine.⁴⁰ Other people 'not hitherto perceived as Aborigines' were listed as defaulters, and in these cases the State agencies for Aboriginal Affairs were consulted. Some officers, particularly in the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, were reluctant to cooperate, arguing that it was not 'the function of that Department to arbitrate on questions of eligibility'.⁴¹

The new definition which allowed Aborigines and the Aboriginal community to identify who was, and who was not, an Aborigine, was also not without its pitfalls, as the case of Stanley Ward in Western Australia revealed in 1971-2. Charged with failing to register he argued that he did not have to as he was an Aborigine, not on the grounds of blood (he was classed as a 'quarter-caste' and thus by Western Australian law was not an

34 Secretary L&NS to B.G.Dexter, Director of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 19 February 1970 and Dexter to Cook, 29 February 1972, *ibid.* Prime Minister's policy speech of 8 October 1969, paragraph 6, page 2, Cabinet file no. CO 80, part 2.

35 Cook to Dexter, 3 February 1972, L&NS file no. SC 67/96.

36 W.K. Allen to McKenzie, 4 September 1967, McKenzie to Sharpe, 12 October 1967, draft letter Cook to Minister, 21 November 1967, B.K. Phelan to McKenzie, 27 March 1968, *ibid.*

37 Bland to Director General, Department of Social Services, 11 September 1967 and B.K. Phelan to McKenzie 27 March 1968, *ibid.*

38 J. Tennant to Phelan, ND (folio 101) February 1968, *ibid.*

39 B.H. Phelan to McKenzie, 27 March 1968, *ibid.*

40 30 March 1967, L&NS file no. 67/1322,

41 24 March 1969, W.F. Sharpe, Regional Director, South Australia, to K.C. McKenzie, 16 October 1967, and Sharpe to Secretary, 9 April 1969, L&NS file no.SC67/96.

Aborigine),⁴² but on the grounds that in the terms of the Act he was 'a person who has an admixture of aboriginal blood and lives as an aboriginal native or amongst aborigines.'

He was convicted because the magistrate interpreted this to mean that such categories of Aborigines must be following a traditional lifestyle in an Aboriginal camp or reserve. He refused to recognize that urban Aborigines had their own distinctive lifestyles and could be also regarded as living as Aborigines in an Aboriginal community. When Ward was of the age to register he was living in Derby and none of the Aboriginal youths with whom he associated registered. He regarded himself as an Aborigine on the grounds that he lived with Aborigines most of the time and engaged in distinctively Aboriginal social activities, such as taking part in demonstrations on behalf of Aboriginal rights outside Parliament House and attending Aboriginal balls and football carnivals. His sister had been granted a Commonwealth Aboriginal Study Grant and was an executive of the Aboriginal Advancement Council. Therefore she, with the same parents, was regarded both by the Commonwealth Government and by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal. The Prosecutor, a senior legal officer in the Deputy Crown Solicitor's Office, asserted during the trial that: 'The only way you can get out of it is to prove you were living as an aboriginal. Were you wild in the desert?' In his submission he concluded that 'The defendant has told us he lived with his aunt, who is half caste, and must give evidence to show he has lived with lesser species.' The magistrate, F.E.A. Bateman S.M., in finding Ward guilty, concluded:

I agree the defendant must show he is an aboriginal native or living amongst aborigines. I imagine this means in a camp or something similar. The defendant lives in what is apparently a normal address, he is well dressed.

There has been no suggestion he lives in a camp, and he apparently lived in a house in Derby.⁴³

The newspapers reported that Ward felt insulted by the magistrate's remarks. 'He reckons Aborigines are not supposed to be well dressed and expects them to run around with spears. I am certainly classed as an Aboriginal when I try to find a house. I am having a lot of trouble and am discriminated against because I am Aboriginal', he complained.⁴⁴ The magistrate explained that although the section of the relevant Act was not clear he took it to apply 'mainly to the uneducated bush Aboriginal'. He could not understand Ward's indignation.

I was giving him a certain amount of praise . . . I think he has taken my remarks the wrong way. He seems to be conforming to the generally accepted standards of the white community. I know there are a lot of dregs in the white race too. And there are plenty of other Aborigines like Ward who have uplifted themselves from the conditions in which they are forced to live. My remarks were a compliment to him. They were not meant to insult him or Aborigines generally.⁴⁵

⁴² Under section 2 (ii) of the Native Welfare Act 1905-1954 'a quadroon over 21 years of age' was not regarded as a 'Native' unless 'that person is by order of a magistrate ordered to be classed as a native under this Act, or requests to be classed as a native under this Act.'

⁴³ Letter, Deputy Crown Solicitor, Western Australia, to Registrar, DL&NS, Perth, 21 June 1972, and Minute, Regional Director, Perth, to Secretary, DL&NS, with appended notes of hearing, 21 June 1972, DL&NS file no.73/4914, TA 1975 RD.

⁴⁴ *Australian*, 22 June 1972.

⁴⁵ *Daily News*, 22 June 1972.

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The *Australian* saw 'the administrative, legal and social swamp that has developed around Aborigines and national service' as a threat to the system as a whole. Ward would have done better 'to have smeared ochre over his neat, vogueish moustache and to have left his clean, city suit at home,' it remarked sourly.⁴⁶ The *Truth* was even more scathing. 'Presumably if Stan had painted his face and done a rain dance in the court he would have been all right. But he didn't. He behaved like a man proud of his race. For his pains he was stripped of his dignity - and \$40.'⁴⁷

The judgement caused the the Office of Aboriginal Affairs to complain to the Department of Labour and National Service that 'It is not a little embarrassing to have the courts ruling that persons are not Aborigines for the purposes of the Act who are for all other Commonwealth purposes regarded as Aborigines.'⁴⁸

Ward appealed against this decision. His case was scheduled to appear before the High Court in December 1972 but following the election of a Labor government on 2 December, conscription was abolished. On the advice of the Department of Labour and National Service Ward dropped his appeal.⁴⁹

The Vietnam decade saw significant changes in the legal status of Aborigines in Australia, and in many white Australians' perception of their place in society. The issue of the conscription of Aborigines became a focus of these changed expectations, but the Department of Labour and National Service was hamstrung by the social results of earlier laws and administrative practices, and by an unrealistic definition of Aborigines to which it was committed by legislation. All attempts to pressure the Government to review the legislation were unsuccessful. As late 16 August 1972 Senator J.L. Cavanagh (ALP SA), urged the Minister for Labour and National Service to review the definition of an Aborigine in the National Service Act to ensure its conformity with such definitions in various State Acts.⁵⁰ This was rejected. The Department bore the brunt of public criticism because it insisted on strictly adhering to existing legislation. The Department of Territories (later Interior) attempted to exclude the Department of Labour and National Service from the decision-making process on Aboriginal conscription, and its belief that an administrative solution was possible influenced Government thinking. The refusal by the Department of Labour and National Service to consider administrative solutions, however, was not only correct, it was also prudent. Throughout the decade the Department's decisions were constantly surveyed by a vigilant anti-conscription movement and tested in court by numerous litigants. No other government department had its decisions subjected to such rigorous scrutiny. The Government refused to amend the legislation, probably at first because it thought the problem was a minor one (or because it was influenced by those believing an administrative solution was possible), and later because for political reasons it wanted to avoid opening up the whole issue of conscription. The attempt to conscript Aborigines was an administrative nightmare which was only ended for the Department of Labour and

46 *Australian*, 24 June 1972.

47 *Truth*, 1-8 July 1972.

48 B.G. Dexter to P. Cook, 7 September 1972, L&NS file no.73/4914 TA 1975 RP.

49 File note by K.C. McKenzie, 14 December 1972 and minute, M.D. Robertson, Regional Director, Perth to the Secretary, DL&NS, 20 December 1972, DL&NS file no. 73/4914 TA 1975 RD.

50 This request was made with reference to the case of Mervyn Eades who was fined in the Perth court of Petty sessions on 13 December 1971 because the magistrate found him to be a non-Aboriginal in terms of the National Service Act, whereas in terms of Western Australian law he was considered to be an Aborigine. He was subsequently found not to meet the standards required by the Army and was not called up, CPD S vol. 53:125-6.

National Service by the election of a Labor government, which immediately abolished conscription.

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REMEMBRANCE

Deborah Bird Rose

'How deprived we would have been if we had been willing to let things stay as they were. We would have survived, but not as a whole people. We would never have known our place.' (Morgan 1987)

Sally Morgan's account of her search for her family's story focuses on her attempts to locate her self with respect to relevant others in the past, the present, and the future. Rejecting the 'soft lie of nostalgia'¹, she provides an exploration of place - historical, geographical, social, cultural, spiritual. Within her own narrative she embeds other stories in a way that allows past and present mutually to influence each other and the future.

Her book is both a link to, and a significant departure from, related issues in a number of different fields. The rising interest in historical fiction, the increasing use of anthropological models in historical analysis, new histories aimed at including those categories of people who have formerly been denied visibility, anthropologists' increasing attention to history, and the growing body of autobiographical (life history) accounts are convergent. At the place where these issues meet the concern is to undermine the authority of histories constructed around class, category, and national interests, and to link lived experience with the social and cultural processes which temper those experiences. While not all such attempts are equally successful, they indicate a process of reclaiming social and cultural identity through an appropriation of the moment in which lived experience is symbiotically linked with time and others.

This is potentially a social revolution of immense consequence. It arises from a particular paradox of the late twentieth century. Our lives are suspended between the twin poles of individual identity, often reduced to psychology, and national identity, often fuelled by the interests of a select minority and almost invariably focussed on the collective. Such reductions and immensities elide the fact that each individual's lived experience is both personal and shared; each person's past is both unique and collective. Stranded in an isolation we are increasingly unwilling to tolerate, we assert our position in the processes of which we are products, and reclaim our right to produce.

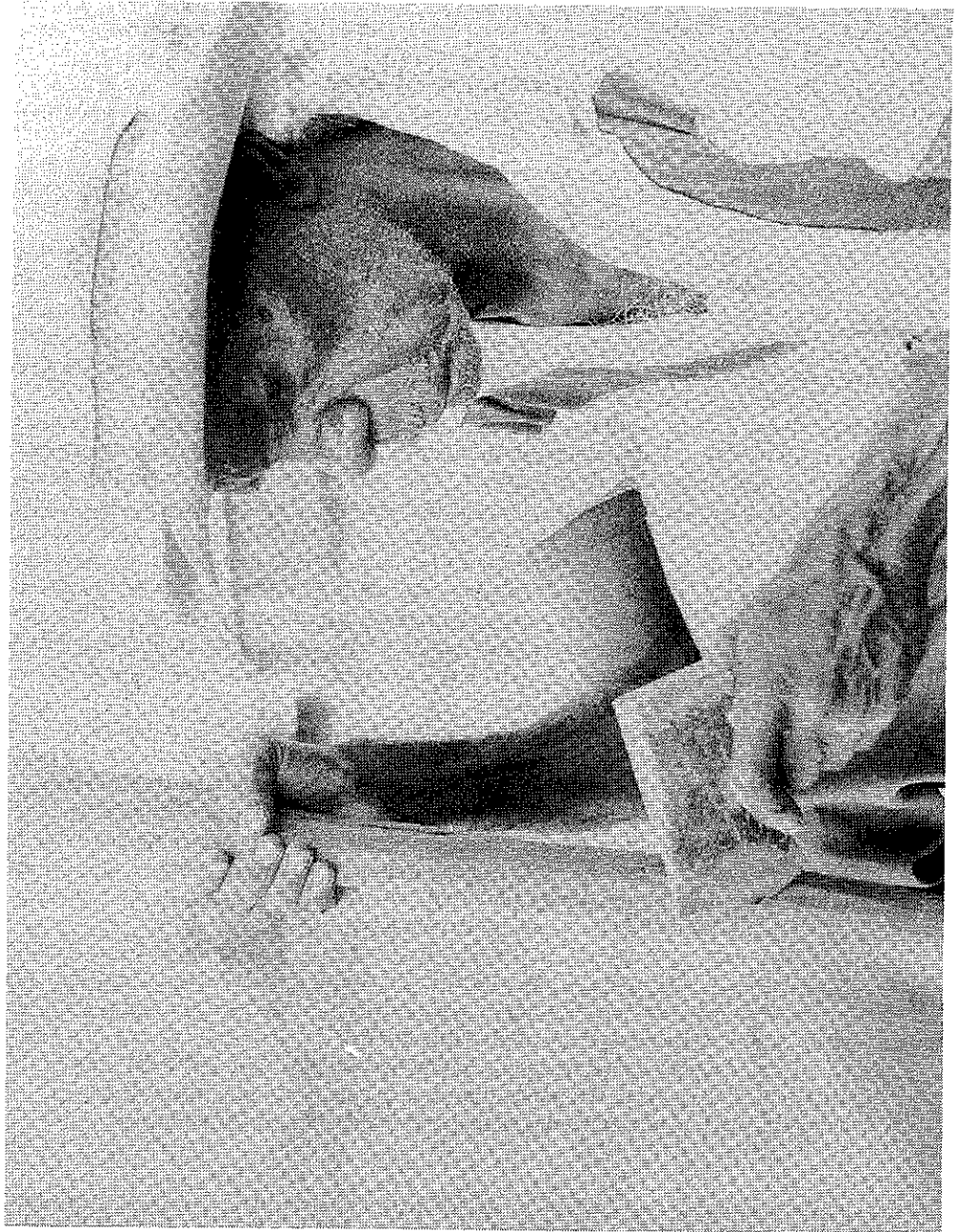
My argument here is parallel to that made by Ricoeur (1985) in his analysis of time consciousness. Defining the now as that which is 'constituted by the very transition and transaction between expectation, memory, and attention',² Ricoeur notes the peculiar paradox which our modern conceptions of time pose for us:

the inexorable expansion of the time-scale far beyond the traditional 6,000-year barrier makes the span of the human life-time appear ever more insignificant - whereas this same human life-time remains the very source of significance.

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1 Settle 1988.

2 Ricoeur 1985:16.



Hobbles Daniyarri, 1982. [Photograph by Darrell Lewis]

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Put differently, the most insignificant segment of time, in terms of the modern time-scale, is the very place where the question of significance can be raised.³

I suggest that this same paradox is central to the relationship between individuals and history. Class and national histories pose a tyranny of the immense, threatening to engulf individuals in a flood of overdetermined processes. The genius of Morgan's book is that through her exploration of her own life and the lives of her mother, grandmother, and other relatives, she makes the links between broad social processes and their effects on individuals and families. One of the major keys to her work is remembrance. Family is foregrounded as the basis in which the individual's lived experience is both personal and collective, and the family is shown to be the product both of social processes it does not control, and of its own agency. Morgan thus moves toward empowerment: not drowning, but signalling that here is a site we can occupy with the strength of knowing that the place is truly one's own.

In this essay I draw on Aboriginal Australian oral narratives as a case study in remembrance. I will examine a short narrative which links past, present, and future, and will draw some conclusions about the value of remembrance. These issues have a particular poignance in the year of Australia's bicentennial celebrations. For many European Australians, remembrance has been raised to the status of a national obsession, and it is becoming increasingly clear that identity founded in pride derived from the past carries with it an unwanted but inescapable under-side: remembrance with guilt. Deprived of the honest and compassionate understandings which empower, many people founder between hubris and despair.⁴

Histories

For the past few years I have been working with Aboriginal oral traditions. Between 1980 and 1982 I lived in the Aboriginal community of Yarralin (Victoria River District, Northern Territory) carrying out research into cultural identity. Most of the older people with whom I worked frequently told me stories about their own lives and those of their immediate forebears; events, actions, and consequences.

European invasion of the Victoria River District began in earnest in 1883 when the major cattle stations in the area were taken up. Warfare continued for the next few decades as Aboriginal people, from the preserves of sandstone fortresses, resisted. By about 1930 the majority of the survivors lived on cattle stations more or less permanently; there was an interaction between the bush and the station which continued for at least the next twenty years. As an unpaid labour force in the cattle industry, living in appalling conditions, Aboriginal people tried to survive.⁵ In 1970 the people who now live at Yarralin and Lingara (an outstation) went on strike and joined the Gurindji strikers at Daguragu. Yarralin was offered to them as an inducement to return and work for Victoria River Downs station. Most of the stories I was told referred to these periods: resistance, working years, and the strike. Some stories, more like sagas in their narrative power, brought these periods together in a single frame of reference.

One particularly strong and articulate story teller was Hobbles Danayari. Hobbles used the vehicle of the Captain Cook saga to tell the whole history of European invasion and

3 Ibid:17.

4 This essay gained shape and energy through discussions with Kevin Keffe and benefitted greatly from his critical reading. Several other people read drafts and offered helpful comments. I am grateful for the sharing that went into its production.

5 See Berndt and Berndt 1987.

settlement, focussing on Yarralin peoples' experience of the process. His narratives are a bridge between external social processes and lived experience. Hobbles was not the only person in Yarralin who spoke of Captain Cook, and similar narratives are told throughout the Victoria River District and the Kimberley.⁶ In Arnhem Land stories about Captain Cook have a somewhat different significance,⁷ although they too deal with invasion and its consequences.

Stories, as Yarralin people told them, are predominantly local. They refer primarily to events in which the teller had been a participant, or events which persons known to the teller had witnessed. Frequently, accounts of the particular were told with the clear intent of illustrating processes which were more general, and of commenting on events of the present. Stories generate meaning through their very openness. They are told by people who have particular interests and expertise with respect to the issues involved; they draw on shared memories; they construct continuities between past, present, and future; they link specific events to broader processes; they show the options available for determining the meaning of events, and they do so with respect to local understandings. There is no collective Yarralin view of the event articulated by a single spokesperson. There are stories: many voices joining together. Often the voices are in agreement, but consensus is not a necessary condition to telling strong stories.

I have chosen to analyse one of Hobbles' Captain Cook stories because it is short (and thus feasible), because it demonstrates the issues quite clearly, and because it is intended for a non-Aboriginal audience. This brief story was taped in October 1980. A friend who was writing a book asked me to contribute something about my field work, and I thought that this would be an opportunity to make some of Hobbles' words available to a broader audience. I discussed the proposition with him, and he taped this message for an anthropology textbook. The transcription presented here is in partial conformity to criteria suggested by Muecke, Rumsey, and Wirrunmarra (1985). The intention is to render an oral text in a way that will allow it to be performed in something approximating its original form. Each line break indicates a pause in speech; a slash indicates an intentionally longer pause. Where Hobbles hesitated over words, and clearly did not intend the pause to mark a significance, that hesitation is indicated by a hyphen.

Right /
 Well, I'm speaking today /
 I'm named - Hobbles Danayari
 and I got a bit of troubling./
 Long way back beginning, I think
 right back beginning.
 I don't know but
 this the biggest troubling./
 Ah
 when that Captain Cook been come from big England
 and come through
 down to Sydney Harbour.
 And lot of - Aboriginal people, I don't know, but
 people been down to Sydney Harbour

⁶ See Kolig 1980, Rose 1984.

⁷ Mackinolty and Wainburranga 1988.

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Aboriginal people./
And when that Captain Cook been come
through
down to Sydney Harbour /
well he's the one been hit the - Sydney Harbour.
Should have askem him
one of these boss for Sydney
Aboriginal people.
People been up there
Aboriginal people
he should have come up and - "hello", you know, "hello".
Now asking him
for his place
to come through
because Aboriginal land./
Because Captain Cook didn't give him fair go
to - tell him to "good day"
or "hello"
you know
givem a people fair go.
We all men.
Because Captain Cook got his land
big England
and Aboriginal people got the Northern Territory./
Now Captain Cook didn't - givem fair go people
all over Australia today./
That before
he should have give him a fair go
askem people, Aboriginal people.
They own the Northern Territory.
Because Captain Cook should give them fair go whether he say "good day"
whether he say "hello"
that's be all right.
But my people
my people Aboriginal people they been fright for Captain Cook, he's a whitefellow /
He's a whitefellow and they been frighten, you know.
They been frighten and really
he should have been give him time
makem him - you know
quiet and askem him quiet time when him
want to try and askem him
whether he can
ask him for the - country
or - cross to see another people
Aboriginal people.
You know, he should have give it him a fair go.
Right /
Captain Cook been start to - "Ah
this the wild one people"

he reckon.
He's not the wild one but
he's the boss for the land /
He's the boss for the land, the Aboriginal people.
Well, Captain Cook should ask him, make sure
you know
and make that - my people - settle down
make it quiet.
And he got - more troubling.
Aboriginal people got more troubling
you know he should have tell him Captain Cook
other way round.
Because that's not his place to come to the Northern Territory
because that's just for the Aboriginal people.
Now when he been start to
knock [kill] my people up in the Sydney
that means he been start to clean [eradicate] my people.
Because Captain Cook
him been come very cheeky
you know.
He don't - he don't askem, make sure
or quieten him
You know
make it right.
And when that
Captain Cook been start and shootem from Sydney
right up,
right up to Darwin Harbour,
all over Australia,
see?
That's wrong.
That's Captain Cook been do wrong.
He should tell them
to ask them fair go
whether - whether that Captain Cook listen to my peple.
You know?
Well
when him been start
to go down to that - Darwin
got that his boat
got that fly [sail; tarpaulin] on
and start to look around that Darwin Harbour
and when he been come out - through that Mindil beach,
they only got a little bit of a pocket - down to Darwin.
And come into that Mindil beach pocket
and him - been makem bit of a jetty up there.
And there the Captain Cook been get off from boat
and have a look around Darwin Harbour.
Because nother - nother people been down to Darwin

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they're Aboriginal people, same thing
down in Sydney, same thing in Darwin.
Because people been all over - the Northern Territory.
No whitefellow, no
it's just for the Aboriginal people.
When him been start up come in
put him boat
into the Mindil beach pocket
and been get off.
And have a look around
see a couple of men there, Aboriginal people, old people.
And it start.
Two my people been look, "Oh, that's whitefellow".
They been frighten really
you know.
But if him been come, Captain Cook /
"hello" him
"good day" him
you know
and calm him down
till him - till him been want to get quiet
you know
my people, and he should have askem them.
Because
you can't hunt him like a dog.
No.
Because
that's the land for the Aboriginal people.
Because people on the Northern Territory
Aboriginal people.
Because I know
Captain Cook didn't give them a fair go for them my people.
You know
if your Captain Cook been trying - to - ask and make sure
you know
whether he can - whether he can take it
from Aboriginal - people.
This is the one we're looking at
this is the one
you know.
Because
he's the bloke who started
kill my people
up in the Northern Territory.
This is the biggest country
not a little country but biggest country.
You know
we own the one -
and now Captain - Cook - didn't

you know, say something to my people.
If him been say, "all right"
we been - you know
we been start to make it.
Make it
my people should have make it
old people.
But he got lot of more important one
up in the Darwin /
more important for the people
for the Aboriginal people
more important for the - Sydney Harbour/
you know.
Oh, lot of ceremony, lot of secrets, and all that thing.
Because he lost - he lost a lot of it.
Lot of white men
because Captain Cook started,
not my people, you know.
Now I'm talking again, over.
Right
now - till we can have a friend
friend together now.
I'm speaking on now.
We're friends together -
because we own Australia
every one of them
no matter who
white and black.
We come together join in
whether we can
you know - take it mijelb [ourselves]
love mijelb [each other] one another
and cross-ways marriage
no matter what kind of marriage we can have them
because we own Australia
today
every one of them.
That be all right.
Make it more better
out of the,
out of that big trouble.
You know before
Captain Cook been making lot of cruel
you know.
Now
these days
these days we'll be friendly
we'll be love mijelb
we'll be mates

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that be better
better for make that trouble.
Now we'll be come - join in
no matter who white and black or yellow
as far as there.

Hobbles identifies Captain Cook as the persona of invasion. Although his account is at odds with western knowledge of Captain Cook's journeys, the more interesting point is that this difference is irrelevant in a fundamental sense. Invasion did happen, people did get shot, they did have their lands stolen. Hobbles' purpose is primarily to tell us about relationships between Aborigines and Europeans. Different constructions of Captain Cook only matter if we make them matter.

In the first part of the story Hobbles establishes the fact that early Europeans did not ask Aborigines for permission to come into their country, and did not acknowledge Aboriginal peoples' ownership of the country. They killed the people and stole the land. Hobbles establishes that this set of actions constituted a wrong from an Aboriginal point of view. The 'lot of ceremony, lot of secrets, and all that thing' is an index to the systemic organisation of knowledge and place through which Aboriginal people demonstrate their rights to land to each other, to non-Aboriginal people, and to the cosmos at large.

In addition to stating the wrong in Aboriginal terms, Hobbles also specifies it quite clearly in European terms. Drawing on the European Australian concept of a 'fair go', Hobbles illuminates Captain Cook's actions against a background of Australian ideals.

Hobbles' statement that 'we are all men' [human beings] serves a most important function in bridging Aboriginal and European culture. That is, Captain Cook witnessed people behaving in ways that should have told him that they were responsible land owners,⁸ but even if he failed to grasp the significance of Aboriginal messages, he ought to have understood that within the terms of his own culture he was dealing with people who deserved a fair go.

The term 'fair go' carries the essential denotation of 'the elementary fair treatment to which anyone must be entitled'.⁹ 'Fair go' is a basic element in mateship, and thus is essential to a whole set of Australian characteristics based on ideals of social equality. While mateship and fair go have been used in a variety of ways,¹⁰ Hobbles intends the term to evoke the ideal of resistance to domination expressed by Henry Lawson in 1894: 'when the ideal of "mateship" is realised, the monopolists will not be able to hold the land from us'.¹¹

The point is, of course, that Aborigines have not had a fair go. White Australians, Hobbles suggests, would do well to pay attention to their own values. It is important to add here that Hobbles was well aware of the dark side of mateship: its use as a means of exclusion.¹² Many stories develop the distinction between moral and immoral uses of 'mateship', telling of the 'Union Mob' and the 'American boss'. Such stories identify 'moral Europeans' - those who seek to engage with Aborigines through equitable social

8 See Rose 1984.

9 Wilkes 1978:138.

10 Ward 1970; Altman 1987.

11 Wilkes, *ibid*:215.

12 Altman, *ibid*:171.

relationships.¹³ Hobbles encountered both kinds of Europeans - moral and immoral - in his life; his words emerge from lived experience and assert his understanding that there are people who will want to listen to him and will respond favourably to what he has to say.

He divides his Captain Cook story into an account of the past and an account of a possible future; the transition is effected by his phrase 'Now.... I'm speaking on now.' The concept of a fair go links these two segments. Hobbles tells people, in the last segment, how a fair go could be implemented. The basis for a better future lies most succinctly in Hobbles' statement of friendship/mateship.¹⁴

In Aboriginal usage, and perhaps in European ideal usage as well, the term 'mate' links past, present and future in denoting relationships which endure through time. The broader connotation of the term suggests that mateship can be extended across social boundaries in order to construct a better future. This idea is signalled in the words: 'Right now... we can have a friend, friend together now'. Here again, Hobbles brings together Aboriginal and European concepts of equality. The means of implementation he offers are, however, quintessentially Aboriginal: land and marriage.

Aboriginal land ownership has been the subject of vast debate, but it is clearly understood that localised social/cultural identity authorises a person to engage with others. Locality is both an identifier of the person and that which enables the person to enter into social relationships which are initiated and sustained by equitable exchanges with other persons/places. To be located, for Yarralin people is to have a ground from which to know, to speak, to act, to invite and deny, to share and to ask. Myers makes the excellent point that the right to be asked is given greater priority than the right to exclude.¹⁵ To paraphrase Turner, through reciprocal exchange part of one place is located in another place, and vice versa, without loss of integrity of either.¹⁶ Turner defines this exchange process as 'accommodation':

Opposition, then, is thus successfully subordinated to complementarity and the cause of revolutionary upheaval in society vanishes. Instead of confrontation over territory and resources there is accommodation in economic interdependence out of mutual respect for exclusive, abstract, jurisdiction, an exclusiveness that in this context actually promotes peace.¹⁷

¹³ Burridge 1960:247-83.

¹⁴ In Yarralin people's usage, connotations associated with the term 'mate' are removed from considerations of gender exclusivity and of national identity. In most contexts it is equivalent to the term 'friend'. As two or more people are defined as 'mates', the term indicates shared experiences which form the basis of a mutuality of shared interests, loyalty, and consideration among people who are social equals or equivalents. It can be used to refer to alternate generations of males, but most frequently it is detached from kinship or social category domains. It can be used to refer to age sets - people who grew up together; men who went through initiations together; women who worked together; men and women who have had and continue to have common purposes in life. In my experience, it is never used to designate persons who stand in cross-sex avoidance relationships. The term 'friend' is often a gloss for a partner in an extra-marital affair. Context determines the meaning, and in this narrative it may be possible that both meanings are intended.

¹⁵ Myers 1986:184.

¹⁶ Turner 1987:62.

¹⁷ Ibid:62.

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One of the most important means of achieving accommodation - a portion of each placed in the other - is through marriage. Physical being, itself conceived as part of place, is mutually exchanged, as are objects, responsibilities, and knowledge. Integrity of place/person is sustained through systematic and regular exchanges. Unlike most western systems with which many of us are all too familiar, in which the effort to resolve contradiction generates ever more serious contradictions, the genius of Aboriginal systems is to use paradox as a principle of organisation.

This brief diversion allows us to hear more clearly what Hobbles is saying in the final portion of the narrative. First, he says that we all own Australia now. What he doesn't say, because for him it is so obvious, is that Europeans have already taken most of the country and ought therefore to be more equitable. They ought, in fact, to allow more opportunities for Aborigines to control land. What I find notable here is Hobbles' acceptance of the past. Rather than indulge in the belligerent denial, false pride, or soul-destroying guilt that have been so characteristic of European discourse in the bicentenary year, he takes the past as a condition of the present and shows how it can be transformed. His implied suggestion that Aborigines should have more land (under European land tenure systems) offers Europeans a form of accommodation. It is also based on the point made in the previous section: that although Aboriginal people were not initially given an opportunity to meet threat with accommodation, the situation is rectifiable. In more extensive narratives Hobbles says that the years during which people worked on cattle stations, offering their labour to pastoralists,¹⁸ ought to be understood as an attempt at accommodation to which Europeans have yet to respond.

Finally, he suggests that there could be more marriages. Hobbles' concern, which comes out more clearly in longer narratives, is that marriage, like land relationships, has been misused by Europeans. He notes two points in particular. The first is the fact that white men married or consorted with black women and that black men had few opportunities to reciprocate. The second is that mixed descent children were taken away from their families. In Hobbles' view, the most oppressive wrong in taking children away was that they were kept from their culture. The whole point of marriage as a system of accommodation is that a new generation shares in the place/identity of both parents; European practices of sexual exploitation and policies of assimilation effectively disabled this system. Hobbles asserts that marriage, descent, and land ownership can be tied together in ways that give everyone a fair go.

Hobbles' genius was to 'intervene in a situation and tell a story which can change the conventions for understanding things'.¹⁹ In this brief narrative he offers a set of profound gifts to a non-Aboriginal audience: an acceptance of the conditions of the past as the basis from which we will build our future; some means of transforming the wrongs of the past into more equitable relationships. Flesh and blood, earth and water are offered as media through which Aboriginal and European Australians can be truly at home together in this continent. Hobbles may not have realised that beyond his overt statements he was also offering other gifts; his narratives point to a theory and practice of managing difference, and of generating structures which empower, rather than diminish, people. Like Morgan's written words, his stories stand as journeys to a place in which confusion, alienation, and powerlessness can be put aside.

¹⁸ Danayari in Rose 1984.

¹⁹ Benterrak, Muecke and Roe 1984:173.

Strong Stories

Hobbles Danayari died in April, 1988. My sense of loss has stimulated many memories of the time we shared, and forced me to examine the value of remembrance. As Hobbles and I worked through the tapes he made, discussed ideas, and explored a great range of issues, we became close friends and mutual informants. It is sometimes difficult for me now to be certain of whether the voice I use is my own or Hobbles'; the same may occasionally have been true for him. Hobbles would not have seen this mingling of voices as a problem; rather, if it was apparent to him, it would have been the self-evident expression of friendship and sympathy. The following discussion is undoubtedly my own, but had I never known Hobbles I would never have addressed these issues in this way.

I want to return to my basic contention that stories, as they are managed by Yarralin people, construct temporal and social relationships which European Australians and others whose culture is essentially western have difficulty perceiving. One of the lessons to be gained from this analysis is that by listening very attentively we could learn something about engaging with our own past and future, our own personal and collective histories. And where one set of peoples' past and present intersect with that of another people, the abilities to listen, to link, and to construct equitably are crucial. This is not an argument for appropriation; it is quite an opposing argument for listening.

Oral narratives show how to reclaim the past in order to liberate the future. They contrast forcibly with national histories which place us under the tyranny of the immense, depriving us of lived temporal connections. In part, the question is one of power and privilege. Many western histories construct the past according to certain class views, or according to national priorities. Some historians resist, and aim to provide the histories of those who have been ignored. Yet, rather paradoxically, it seems that insofar as the intention to reclaim a voice focusses on class, gender, or other immensities, such histories render us powerless. This apparent paradox is best understood in light of Berger's analysis of war photographs. He contends that such photos stimulate a sense of personal moral inadequacy which effectively vitiates a constructive response. Confronted with such photos one:

Either...shrugs off this sense of inadequacy as being only too familiar, or else...thinks of performing a kind of penance.... In both cases, the issue of the war which has caused that moment is effectively depoliticised. The picture becomes evidence of the general human condition. It accuses nobody and everybody.²⁰

Special purpose histories, I believe, have a similar effect - producing our anonymity and inadequacy in the very fact of denying it.

There is also the tyranny of written 'facts'. As they are construed in many literate cultures, facts tend to reduce us to insignificance. They are given a privilege, which is greater than our own lived experience. Facts tell us what the past was really all about, regardless of our memories, our knowledge derived from older people, our experience of how things work. Wielded by the powerful, facts tell us what matters, rather than allowing us to decide what matters.

I do not want to reify facts. They are, after all, only transformed into information through human agency. If history depends upon reliance upon facts, and if facts are construed primarily as written documentation, then we must always suffer a certain obscure inadequacy. How are we to construct the real histories which are those which we sense, we partially remember, and we need? O'Neill puts the case superbly: 'Remembrance is the

²⁰ Berger 1980:40.

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bodily infrastructure of political knowledge and action. It holds injustice to account and sustains the utopian hope that underlies the will to freedom and equality.²¹ One of the beauties of Yarralin peoples' stories which Hobbles demonstrated most eloquently is that they require 'facts' to be subservient to a more powerful truth .

Yarralin people do not recount the history of Aborigines in Australia. They tell their own histories. There is no Yarralin history, as such; there are stories. There are stories that belong to people because they were witness to the events recounted, because their parents or other forebears were witnesses and passed the knowledge on to them. Stories are true because the ways in which they account for the particular are proved through experience. If stories fail to provide the required understandings, they do not survive. All these stories intersect. The past is kept accountable to the needs of the present because there is no single instance of present authority, and because there is no illusion of a-contextual privilege.

We are located in the ever-changing present which is the link between the past and the future. As Ricoeur says, the now is constituted through the play of memory, attention, and expectation. Without memory, we are incomplete, our attention adrift, and our expectations constrained. Insofar as our collective memories are incomplete, so too must all our collective action in the shared present be incomplete. Indeed, how are we even to know what possibilities are open to us, in the absence of remembrance?

I have used written words to argue the case for listening. Hobbles used European Australian ideals as a cultural bridge, constructing his message in terms that resonate with his audience's own experience. In contrast to western scientific discourse, for which 'human time is turned outwards towards what it can demand of the future without any care for what it has made of the past'²² Hobbles speaks the words which situate time and persons dialogically. Passion, sculpted from intellect, experience, remembrance, and the desire to engage with others, is offered in gifts of stories.

How deprived we would be if we failed to hear.

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21 Cf. Morphy and Morphy 1984:461-2.

22 O'Neill, *ibid*: 2.

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RESPONSE TO COLIN JOHNSON'S ARTICLE 'CAPTURED DISCOURSE; CAPTURED LIVES'

Bruce Shaw

If we take the closing statements in Johnson's article to their logical extreme it is that *only* Aboriginal people should write Aboriginal life stories and that Johnson does not like a non-Aboriginal person writing an Aboriginal's story whether that be in his/her own idiom, e.g. Kriol, or a translation into colloquial English. I understand these sentiments but I cannot agree with them. If *My country of the pelican dreaming*, *Banggaiyerri*, and *Countrymen* had not been written the stories of the six men contained in them would never have been told. Their stories deserved to be told and for the same reasons given in Johnson's polemic: the Aborigines of the east Kimberley as in all other parts of Australia have been given a lousy deal. Their stories help to record this and in some measure seek to redress the wrongs by jogging the awareness of readers. The life stories are moreover an accurate record of Aboriginal opinion in that region in spite of what Johnson says about authenticity. They can no longer be reduplicated. There are also cases where an Aboriginal person requests a white friend to record on tape and in writing his/her story. An obvious rejoinder is, Why not get another Aboriginal researcher to do this? Bill Rosser for instance is doing it (Rosser, 1984-5). But that is not always possible. Oral history workers are few in number. Funding is not always readily available. Friendship and trust is another important ingredient which does not always conform to ethnic boundaries. In time there will be I hope more autobiographies and biographies written by Aboriginal people so that my contributions and those of a scant handful of other researchers will become increasingly unnecessary.

The review is full of sweeping judgements using emotive language. The word 'discourse', which means reasoned speech or narration, is used as a magical term along with other jargon. The reviewer indulges his antipathies towards whites, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, anthropologists and a special sub-category, American anthropologists. There is very little critical evidence. Within this welter of opinion I agree on some points and take issue with others.

Jack Sullivan did not give a 'so-called' life story. It *was* a life story. He thoroughly understood that. He was not tongue-tied, nor was Grant Ngabidj. After forty-six conversations with Grant and forty-two with Jack that was hardly the case. They did not water down their stories of shootings, etc. in self-censorship through fear of me. We had to communicate and we did so through English plus many indigenous words. It does not figure necessarily that Aborigines recording their recollections with a white person are wasting their creative imagination. Oral narration is an art (a lost one in most corners of modern white society). Many persons who told me their stories did so with enjoyment, zest, skill. We were friends. They taught me. All stories oral or written are manipulated. They are artefacts. They are subjective (so too are translations). That is what storytelling involves.

The narratives in their penultimate form were *taken back to the field and reread aloud to the storytellers* who to that extent did have control over their work. They approved of the straight forward English into which their tales were transformed. They were more interested in the subject matter, preferred the message to the medium. When oral narrative is transferred to writing it must of necessity undergo change. Even verbatim stories lose the nuances of facial expression, tone and gesture unless (as Muecke does) these are indicated in

glosses in the text - and that is a second best. This limitation is one of the reasons why video film is slowly coming into its own as another means of recording Aboriginal history.

Jack spoke more or less as in his narratives (see page 5 of *Banggaiyerri*). He spoke English much like white bushmen in the region because that was the language he grew up with. In Grant's case I took far more liberties. I agree that I might have used a different approach as in Rosengarten's life of Nate Shaw for example, a long colloquial narrative. Even so considerable editing took place there.¹ Translation does not necessarily mean complete assimilation into English. I kept in mind (a) what I thought would be acceptable to a publisher, and (b) understandable to the general reader. These were value judgements. (General reader denotes all people, not only those of European descent. For example, one or two of Grant Ngabidj's younger relatives just out of school read parts of Grant's story to his widow Daisy Djandu in some time back). It is true that a European Australian framework was superimposed on the Aboriginal narratives, the arrangements into chapters and sections for instance, as well as very close paraphrasing. I am surprised however that Johnson thinks the stories themselves are anthropological. The introductions and end notes are. Most writers have an editorial policy. What I did was to employ one of several possible ways in which life histories might be presented. In the eyes of some critical readers this comes off; in the eyes of others it doesn't.

Johnson wants the life histories to be political. Grant was interested in telling me about his experiences on the cattle stations, his brushes with the police (a political theme), conflicts between his own people (another political issue), and matters of the religious life that he felt free to tell. Jack Sullivan liked to tell of his experiences on the cattle stations too and he says just that on page 211 of *Banggaiyerri*. It's all in those books. The third book *Countrymen* to which Johnson makes passing reference is full of political questions. Bulla Billinggii had some very pertinent things to say. Look them up in pages 93-95, 170-173, 236-239 and elsewhere in that book. I say things about colonialism and imperialism in the introductions. To imply that if Grant and Jack were able to write their stories by putting pen to paper themselves they might have become aware of their position in modern Australia is to patronise them. They were fully aware of their situation as impotent onlookers in their own land and they told me so many times.²

Johnson does not like Kriol; nor is he enamoured with standard English (a label I used once and since regret because 'colloquial English' is a more accurate description). I am being taken to task for writing down Kriol (as I do sometimes) and so fossilising traditional discourse, and making free colloquial English translations of Kriol (as I readily admit) and so rendering the narratives inauthentic. Johnson is having it both ways. Linguists treat Kriol as a language in its own right within a particular cultural milieu and make written descriptive studies of it in order to show that it is just as legitimately a language as any other. The discussion and study of something does not necessarily mean that it is under threat or not accepted. To merit study can be sometimes the greatest compliment of all.

It is a good critical technique sometimes to judge a book by its cover but one must be careful. The pelican for *My country of the pelican dreaming* was chosen after much thought and discussion with the graphics people at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies because that bird was one of Grant Ngabidj's Dreamings. The title was also Grant's. The cover for Jack Sullivan's life history was made from a photograph of Jack and his pencil sketches of one of the cattle stations on which he lived. Johnson thinks Jack does not look

1 Rosengarten, 1974:xxiv.

2 Cf. *Countrymen*, :257.

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like an Aboriginal and damns the whole book on that account. Jack would be tickled to be thought of as a founding patriarch. He too suggested the title for the book.

I think that for me, Grant, Jack, Bulla and all the others the circumstances were right for the times, seventeen years ago when it all started. We are still at an early stage of this vocation. We can get inspiration from other writers (including Oscar Lewis) and should learn from their limitations and successes. Students of Aboriginal history have at their disposal a growing variety of self-told texts on Aboriginal life: autobiographies (entirely self-written), biographies (written by someone other than the person whose life is told), and life histories (written by collaboration between the person whose story is told and some other). This includes Aborigines and non-Aborigines. In every case there is some kind of editing. There is richness in this diversity. All of us, because we share a common humanity outside the blinkers of class, culture and belief, have something to offer.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The long road back . By S.M. Kelly. Artbooks, Perth, n.d., about 1988. Pp.115, illus., p.b. \$17.95.

Sheila Kelly (Sister Michael) writes of the family of Herbert Barker, whose books *Camels and the outback* and *Droving days* will be familiar to students of Australian folklore. Barker for some years lived with a Njangamarda (W.A.) woman named Bilbuor or Nelly. They had one son, Adam, who was born at his father's station, Barramine, in 1913. This book is partly about Barramine, and a trip to the homestead site which the author made with Adam Barker. The rest of the book deals with Adam's life, some of Herbert's career and with the history of the Barker family in New Zealand, where Herbert was born.

Kelly believes that, at a time when 'great pressure is being put upon the part-Aboriginal people to acknowledge their Aboriginality it seems more important than ever that they see themselves as inheritors of both cultures who can reconcile many of the different values, or at least understand them and become a bridge, not a divisive force rejecting the white culture'. For this reason she has followed both the black and the white sides of Adam's family. However, in the edited sections which Adam contributes, Adam does not seem at all concerned with the white Barkers. His interesting account of his life is about Barramine Station, the Aboriginal hostel and Progress Association at South Hedland, and his minor role in the McLeod-McKenna strike in 1946. Kelly's own interest, not Adam's, has taken her to the New Zealand side, which reinforces the rather obvious point that individuals should be left to their own decisions as to how and with whom they should identify.

The Long road back is an interesting book, though I am a little uneasy about Kelly's handling of the material. She baldly assesses Adam's display of deep emotion at returning to Barramine as 'essentially that of a white man'. A chapter which starts off as Adam's story of his boyhood drifts into a reported discussion between Kelly and a white man about why father Herbert did not contact his son after he left Australia. I wonder whether Adam was asked to comment on this section of the book or was even shown the draft. We are told that Herbert in later life often overstayed his welcome with relatives in New Zealand. This seems to me to be a gossipy detail of no concern to anyone outside the Barker family.

Since Herbert Barker evidently took no interest in Adam after he left Barramine when Adam was about 16, and since Adam was raised and has lived with his 'full-blood cousins' it is not difficult to see why he has regarded himself as Aboriginal all his life. The book's chief value, in fact, is to illustrate how somebody of equal Aboriginal and white ancestry, born in Western Australia in 1913, could so naturally assume an Aboriginal identity, and why to many Kooris the degree of 'Aboriginal blood' which a person has inherited is of less consequence than the cultural identification.

Peter Read
Australian National University

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Problems and solutions: occasional essays in musicology presented to Alice M. Moyle.
Edited by Jamie C. Kassler and Jill Stubbington. Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984.
Pp.413.

Alice Moyle's important work on Aboriginal music and on ethnomusicology in general is well known: she has been an esteemed and ever helpful colleague to so many that it is not surprising such a fine volume has been dedicated to her. The work contains 17 articles, grouped round certain main themes:

Transcription and Analysis of Music

Theory Construction

Disciplines related to Musicology

Data Collection and Organisation

The section on data collection contains a summary of the history of sound-archives in Australia (G. Koch and P. Burgis) and a most valuable index of early sound-recordings throughout the world (F.J. Gillis). The article by Jill Stubbington contains a summary of the work of Alice Moyle and discusses her treatment of musicological problems.

It seems invidious to point out particular articles in such an excellent collection, but there are naturally some that hold a very special appeal for the reviewer. One of those is the contribution by K. Hale. He discusses the Centralian doctrine of non-variance in the transmission of sacred songs across learning generations and shows that there is nevertheless room for creativity. He illustrates the difficulties in learning which are such that there is in fact a *re-creation*. The thoughtful contribution by D.P. McAllester is the only one in this collection that poses problems which defy a real solution. He describes the ethical dilemma involved in recording secret-sacred ceremonies for posterity. His experiences are centered on Navajo traditions, but they apply equally well in Australia since 'ethnomusicological or anthropological field work is a serious form of trespass into the minds of "the other".'

There are a number of articles in the collection which will have lasting influence: they will make scholars rethink their attitudes to particular problems. These problems range from the transcription of New Guinea drum-rhythms (G.D. Spearritt) and the relationship between speech-tones and music in Huli (J. Pugh-Kitingan) to time consciousness in Aboriginal performers (C.J. Ellis), Djirbal Song Types (R.M.W. Dixon), variations in the words of Ngiyampaa songs (Donaldson), and residency and ritual rights (Payne). An unusual feature of the volume is the inclusion in an appendix of three abstracts of papers which were not ultimately submitted. This is a rather sad situation, particularly as one of the intending contributors has died.

The present volume is a fine collection in honour of Alice Moyle, one in which any person interested in ethnomusicology will find both new thoughts and valuable material.

Luise Hercus
Australian National University

ROM: an Aboriginal ritual of diplomacy. Edited by Stephen A. Wild. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986. Pp.102. Colour and black and white plates. \$24.95p.b.

ROM is a ritual of diplomacy between Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, to establish and re-affirm friendly relations between people of different communities, languages and cultures. The ceremony culminates in a procession and presentation of ritual poles to the recipient group. There is an obligation of continued reciprocity between giver and receiver. This book documents the first such ritual ever held outside Arnhem Land, at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, on three days in November 1982, by 22 Anbarra men and women from Kopanga outstation and Maningrida.

The Anbarra people, from north-central Arnhem Land, had wished to present a *Rom* to the people in Canberra and to the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, both as an act of reciprocity for hospitality they had received from them and as an extension of friendship to those who had taken an interest in their life and culture. Through their spokesmen Frank Grrmanamana and Frank Malkorda, they sent a message to Canberra, via Betty Meehan and Rhys Jones, -

We want that Canberra mob to look at our ceremony . . . Peter Ucko [then Principal of the AIAS], Les Hiatt, Rhys Jones, Betty Meehan [anthropologists well known to the people]. . . all the Institute people too. A big mob of *balanda* [white people] can come to see the ceremony; . . .

We have been thinking of this for a long time . . .

If some of the people would like to receive a present of the proper *Rom* ceremony, we will bring it to Canberra. (pp.25-6).

After a succinct introduction by Stephen Wild, the editor and organiser of *Rom in Canberra*, the book divides into three parts, I. *Rom* the ritual, II. *Rom* the ritual objects and III. *Rom* the bark paintings. It concludes with a detailed bibliography including reference to film and musical recordings.

Part I includes sections written by L.R. Hiatt 'Rom the ritual', B. Meehan and R. Jones 'From Anadjerramiya to Canberra' and M. Clunies Ross 'Rom in Canberra'. Together these articles lead from the historical and anthropological explanations of *Rom* ceremonies for the Anbarra in Arnhem Land to the arrangement whereby the present ceremony came to be presented in Canberra, and conclude with a recording of the Canberra *Rom*, together with adaptations necessary to present such a ceremony over a comparatively short period of time, in unfamiliar surroundings.

Part II, *Rom* the ritual objects, with four colour plates, shows in detail poles and icons used, each representing a mythological complex of songs, dances and visual designs.

Part III, *Rom* the bark paintings, records Frank Malkorda's and Johnny Mundrugmundrug's 17 bark paintings, each with a full colour plate, diagram and detailed documentation. The collection was purchased by the National Museum of Australia.

This book, with its clear, concise background information on the Anbarra *Rom* ritual of diplomacy, together with black and white photographs of participants, and 27 magnificent colour plates is a most worthwhile addition to the literature on the life and culture of the Anbarra people. I am sure the Anbarra will be pleased with this record of a most significant exchange between them and the wider Australian community.

Kate Kahn
The Australian Museum

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Art and land: Aboriginal sculptures of the Lake Eyre region. By Philip Jones and Peter Sutton, South Australian Museum, Adelaide, 1986. Pp.144. \$29.95.

This is a beautiful book, excellently produced and well illustrated. It was brought out by the South Australian Museum in association with the Wakefield Press. The work deals with the South Australian Aboriginal artefacts known as toas, and it was published in conjunction with an exhibition of all the toas in the possession of the South Australian Museum. These toas were made in the vicinity of the Lutheran Mission at Killalpaninna on the lower Cooper about 1905 or before. They were collected by Pastor Reuther who provided detailed documentation for them and sold most of them to the South Australian Museum in 1907 along with numerous other artefacts including a collection of resin figurines of dogs; a small number went to museums in Sydney, New Zealand and Germany. The toas were described as follows by the Reverend Reuther (as quoted on p.14):

To the Aborigine, toas are way-markers [or direction posts] and location finders. Each toa indicates a particular locality according to its topographical character, and by its shape bears reference to the name of the place in question.

The present book gives photos of all the toas, many of them in colour and it also contains the information given by Reuther alongside the picture of the relevant toa. It is therefore a unique source-book on toas. The work however is much more than this: it gives succinct and first-rate background information on the Aboriginal people of the area, briefly tracing their tragic history from the time of the first impact of settlers to the destruction of Aboriginal traditions. There is a short history of the mission period, an account of J.G. Reuther as the main collector of toas and an assessment of his work as an ethnographer. There is also a section entitled 'The great toa hoax?' which discusses the allegations made by George Aiston as to the 'authenticity' of the toas. The authors imply that the toas represent a new form of artistic expression, using traditional materials, and that this novelty does not detract from the aesthetic and cultural value of these artefacts.

There is a more detailed account of one particular toa, the one for Lake Gregory. This includes not only information on its mythological significance, but also practical suggestions, aided by x-ray photography, on the way in which toas were made. All this background to the toas and to the Killalpaninna Mission is illustrated with unique historical photographs, mainly from the Museum Archives and from the Lutheran Archives.

Naturally there is still more work to be done on the toas: the detail given for the Lake Gregory toa gives some indication of how much could be learnt from a closer study of many others. The present book shows both historical and anthropological insight, but it was not intended to be an exhaustive treatise. It is superb as what it was clearly meant to be: it is a beautiful and most intelligently written guide to the toas and their background.

Luise Hercus
Australian National University

Uluru: An Aboriginal history of Ayers Rock. Robert Layton. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986. Pp.ix + 139, colour illustrations, bibliography, index. \$19.95 h.b.

Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians. To non-Aborigines it is the symbol of the outback, the biggest 'pebble' in the world, and a tourist attraction of which to be justly proud. To Aborigines from that region it is part of the country of their ancestors, a place of great religious significance and a location for which they eternally hold responsibility. These two viewpoints embody conflict - in land ownership and in land and resource use. Robert Layton's book, an Aboriginal history of Uluru, describes many elements of that conflict.

Layton's book, largely based on research conducted for the Uluru Land Claim which came before the Aboriginal Land commissioner in 1979, presents the story of Uluru in three parts. Part One, entitled 'Traditions', traces the religious beliefs associated with Uluru; the past and present subsistence activities of the Pitjantjatjara/Yankuntjatjara people of that area; and the structure of their land ownership systems. Part Two, 'Conflict and Change', describes the impact of explorers, missionaries, government officials and pastoralists on Aboriginal groups; and it highlights details of non-Aboriginal land use and the Aboriginal response to such practices. Part Three, 'Land Rights', first summarises the history behind recent recognition of Aboriginal rights and then the expression of such recognition in the case of Uluru; and concludes by describing the Uluru Land Claim, how the evidence was presented and how it was interpreted in the light of the provisions of the Land Rights Act (NT) 1976.

This book provides a valuable perspective on Aboriginal Land Rights and portrays with sympathy and understanding the close and enduring linkages of Aboriginal people with their land. As such it should counterbalance many of the popular beliefs still voiced about the area - that, because few Aborigines lived at Uluru during the earlier decades of the assimilation era, no-one held ritual responsibility for it; and that those families who now form the core of the Mutitjulu community, and who are represented on the Board of Management of Uluru National Park are in fact upstarts, out to grab whatever material benefits may accrue through the rapidly growing tourist industry. I feel that the book should be able to perform this educational role, and hence make an important contribution to the enlightenment of non-Aboriginal Australians about Aboriginal society past and present. However there are some problems which may detract from the effectiveness of that role.

The most important problem concerns the audience at which the book is aimed - anthropologists and prehistorians, or interested members of the general public. While some segments, such as the beautifully illustrated *tjukurrpa* stories in the first chapter would clearly interest both anthropological researchers and lay people anxious to extend their knowledge of Uluru, others such as the detailed descriptions of early non-Aboriginal exploration and pastoral settlement, would be difficult to comprehend by anyone unfamiliar with that region of Central Australia. The latter problem could have been overcome by the inclusion of detailed location maps.

Some anthropological statements also present problems, particularly in the light of subsequent land claim work in Central Australia. Statements such as 'The most important right which the Aboriginal owners of an estate possessed was the right to punish women . . . who trespassed on their sacred sites' (p.39) appear to imply that *owners* are *men*. As Layton later acknowledges women do 'own' sites and, as other Central Australian Land Claims have clearly indicated, such ownership complements rather than subordinates that of men. While Layton's understanding of women's land ownership would inevitably be limited because of his gender as a researcher, he nevertheless worked alongside women

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researchers and must have been well aware of the importance of the role of women in traditional ownership. Similarly the comment that 'the typical pattern in Aboriginal Australia is for everyone to inherit membership of their father's land-owning group, but in (Uluru) the group . . . is made up of some people who have inherited membership through their father and some who have inherited membership through their mother' (p.47) is misleading when one considers that land ownership through both paternal and maternal grandparents has been widely recognised elsewhere. Although generalisations are to be expected in a book aimed at informing a lay audience, they should be as accurate as possible.

Further problems concern the format of the book. The exclusion of some necessary maps has already been mentioned. Additional omissions concern a list of maps and figures, and of tables at the beginning; and inconsistency in some terminology, notably the apparently random switching between Uluru and Ayers Rock as the name of the most significant physical feature in the region. Unless there is a good reason for this, it would be much clearer to stick to one or other term, probably, since this is an Aboriginal history, Uluru. In some places (for example, p.48) the names Katatjuta (the Olgas) and Ayers rock are used in the same sentence, a needless confusion.

These problems make this book less satisfying than might be anticipated. Nevertheless it tells an important story, a story which takes on an even greater significance with the increasing involvement of Aborigines in the administration and control of the ever growing stream of tourists to Uluru.

Elsbeth Young
Australian Defence Force Academy

Australians: a historical atlas. Edited by J.C.R. Camm and John McQuilton with Trevor W. Plumb as cartographic editor. One of eleven-volume set, *Australians: a historical library.* Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987. Pp.xiii + 290, with coloured and black and white illustrations, maps and diagrams, index. \$270 the set, h.b.

An atlas is conventionally understood to be a book of maps, presenting the spatial distribution of the earth's physical features and of the activities and attributes of human beings. It generally refers to a common time period, as close as possible to the present. This atlas is in no sense a conventional presentation. It not only includes a wide range of maps, covering topics as varied as the incidence of droughts and floods, the distribution of sheep and the regions terrorised by well-known gangs of bushrangers, but it also includes graphs, cartograms, photographs and a detailed and informative text. Moreover, as a historical atlas, it illustrates the physical, social and economic characteristics of Australia over a time span sufficiently long to cause marked transformation. The result is a book of considerable complexity. But essentially the aim of the editors - to depict Australian history in a new way - has been achieved.

The atlas is divided into three main segments - Place, People and Landscapes. Place covers physical aspects of the Australian environment, including geology, climate and vegetation; and human use and response to that environment. Aboriginal landscapes, ranging from the distribution of major archaeological sites to specific examples of Aboriginal territoriality expressed through language, custom and art, form one component of that human response. Others include European discovery and exploration of the continent;

rural and urban landscapes resulting from European occupation; and the European development of Australia's natural resources such as minerals, water and power. People, the second section of the atlas, is concerned firstly with demographic characteristics such as population growth, immigration and the ethnic origins of Australians. An interesting series of maps on changing mortality causes and the spread of epidemics of contagious diseases such as the bubonic plague and polio is followed by segments on religion and education; Australians at war; the Depression and unemployment; and geopolitical considerations such as Australia's external territories, and internal politics at national and state level. Landscapes, the final segment, attempts to draw Place and People together through a series of photographs, paintings and vignettes of Australia, as it has appeared both in the past and at the present time.

The atlas as a whole combines both text and illustrations to good effect, with each complementing the other and the discussion flowing easily from one aspect of the topic to the next. This coherence and continuity cannot have been easily achieved. It stems partly from the skilful use of case-studies to illustrate general characteristics. For example the section on isolation and rural schooling (pp.190/91) effectively uses detailed examples from Queensland and New South Wales to highlight how education services could best be provided for a sparse population. Illustrations include distribution maps of schools and pupils, of itinerant teacher districts and of pupils being educated through correspondence. Photographs of people involved in these activities complement the maps and the text has many interesting comments on how these services were transformed through time and what problems both teachers and pupils had to overcome. The result is both illuminating and informative.

But while the use of case-studies does much to humanise potentially dry statistics it does inevitably mean that the coverage of the atlas is fragmented. This is a compromise which was probably inevitable in a volume of this type. Thus, in demographic terms, although there are detailed discussions on immigration and mortality changes, the transition in fertility receives only passing reference. When one considers that the average number of children born per Australian woman has dropped from over 6 to 1.9 between 1890 and 1981 these changes are surely sufficiently significant to receive greater attention.

As anticipated the atlas is generally concerned with the European history of Australia. However it does present some interesting information on Aboriginal history, primarily from archaeological perspectives. Thereafter I feel that the presentation of Aboriginal characteristics is less successful. In the discussion of the Aboriginal population (p.141) there is little comment about enumeration discrepancies which certainly have a marked effect on all the time-series graphs. Moreover the 1788 population estimate of 300,000, while frequently accepted, has been recently questioned by White and Mulvaney (1987:117), who consider that a total of 750,000 may be more realistic. In the remainder of the atlas reference to Aboriginal characteristics is restricted to specific issues such as resistance to the spread of European settlement (pp.218-9). This series of maps is interesting, although that for the 1880s to 1920 period should surely also show some remote regions not yet under European occupation. But the accompanying comments might have been usefully extended by brief reference to the reasons for resistance. Elsewhere, in considering components such as education, employment, and land tenure, Aboriginal characteristics surely require some comment, particularly in relation to the basic issue of land ownership. The final summary on rural landscapes might also have included examples of contemporary Aboriginal land use, particularly in regions now held under Aboriginal freehold title.

A notable omission from the final discussion on urban landscapes, the final section of the volume, is any reference to the city of Canberra. This, I feel, is unfortunate because

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Canberra is not only a unique city in Australian terms but one with a recent history which demonstrates many of the burning issues affecting urban development in the latter part of the 20th century.

From the cartographic point of view this atlas is highly innovative. The use of reproductions of early maps not only has historical value but also demonstrates the development of cartographic techniques through time. Many of the statistical diagrams show great imagination, and all are meticulously specified so that different distributions can be understood. As expected with historical data, some of the information included in these diagrams is complex and in a few cases this has made them somewhat hard to interpret. But in general the presentation is highly successful.

Altogether *Australians: a Historical Atlas* is a most interesting and informative book. A historical atlas should be a sketch of life through time, a series of pictures of how people lived, who they were and where they resided. It should raise issues of social, economic and political relevance and should stimulate its readers to investigate many of these in greater details. This is hard to achieve. However this first historical atlas of Australia fulfils these requirements. It should be an important reference book well into the future.

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Elspeth Young
Australian Defence Force Academy

End of an era: Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory. By Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1987. Pp. xx + 310, black and white illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$29.95 p.b.

At last the findings of the Berndts, 1946 report on Vestey's stations are available to a wider audience. The two anthropologists, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, were commissioned to look into the situation of the declining numbers of Aborigines on the company's pastoral properties in the 1940s. They innocently surmised this was intended to establish ways to improve Aboriginal living conditions, but not long into their survey, realised that Vestey's primarily hoped to use them to recruit Aboriginal bush-dwellers as additional labour.

The book is divided into five parts. The first section, ominously entitled 'A beginning with seemingly no end', provides the historical background. Large slabs from government reports sometimes make it stodgy, but the discussion which follows on the arrangements of the survey are more compelling. Parts 2 and 3 contain valuable observations on a variety of pastoral stations, buffalo camps and other types of settlements, including Aboriginal army camps. Sensitive and practical discussion is contained throughout, but it is often lost in tedious repetition, which a more comparative technique could have prevented. A chapter on 'Vital Statistics' provides useful data and level-headed analysis. Chapter 10, 'Traditional continuities' appears to offer the book's central arguments, but this is rather technical and its overall point unclear. Its potential impact is further watered down by the final part, 'An end with a beginning', with chapters for 'Overview', 'Aftermath' then finally 'Perspective'. Most

of this has or should have been said earlier. *End of an era* ends with a muddled plea for the relevance of the past.

After forty years of delays in seeing the work released, perhaps the authors were reluctant to take more editing advice, but a drastic reorganisation and tighter argument could have improved this book dramatically. After ploughing through it all, I desperately wanted to ask that tired old question, 'What is your thesis?'

Vestey's behaviour seems to baffle the Berndts. Throughout this book they are portrayed as ogres, driven - to the authors' apparent surprise - by profit and 'commercial interests'. This is in contrast to parties with humanitarian or welfare motives such as themselves. But the paradox of their situation was that the Berndts were in fact employees of the company - and the survey had been commissioned for its purposes.

Archival and richer historical research would enable the authors to locate Vestey's in wider context. Vestey's behaviour towards Aborigines was in line with their poor treatment of white employees, and of the land in general. Their Territory interests were of a speculative nature, so they spent a bare minimum on development throughout the 1920s and 30s, flagrantly ignoring the terms of their leases. Unlike other leaseholders, they took no notice of government requests for Aboriginal employment returns, and ignored demands to fulfill leasehold 'improvement' conditions. Various governments of this time were eager to carry favour with this corporate giant, so it is not enough to suggest that Administrator Abbott was the only 'fly in the ointment'.

How and why did Vestey's get away with being a 'law unto themselves'? Aboriginal regulations stipulated that where dependants were not properly provided for, cash wages were required. The Berndts were perhaps too trusting, assuming the state was basically a 'goody' which merely needed more expert advice. They were probably influenced by A.P. Elkin's approach, for he was their mentor and patron. In fact he overshadows the discussion throughout (with mentions on at least 24 pages). The Berndts obliquely suggest that at the time they relied upon his judgements too much. While he was keen to encourage earlier publication of the document, he blocked its wider distribution in report form. It is worth noting that the book is dedicated to Elkin, and to Chinnery, who was the current Director of Native Affairs for the Northern Territory. At various stages, the Berndts wanted to pull out of their contract, but these men urged them to persevere.

The resulting data on station diet during the 1940s and its relation to the declining birthrate is revealing, though disheartening. Information about shortages of nearby bushfoods on certain stations is interesting, though quantified analysis is rarely forthcoming. Medical evidence on the impact of venereal diseases would further complement this discussion, as would a consideration of the impact of decades of police seizures of lighter-skinned children; surely this contributed to women's lack of desire to bear children.

A key conceptual problem with the book is its inability to integrate an effective analysis of change. Early on, the authors acknowledge: 'The pastoral stations were firmly established - they wouldn't just go away' (p.31). Aborigines are victims, or objects of history, apparently unable to make their own decisions. In keeping with a somewhat static social model, Aborigines are portrayed as trapped on stations, even though much contrary evidence is provided (e.g. p.99). Continuing Aboriginal interest in ceremonies is thus seen as an 'escape', and interest in sexual rituals as a corruption. The army camps, though more regimented, are preferred by the authors because of their better sanitation, regular meals and cash wages. Whether the war decreased the availability, or altered the conditions, of Aboriginal pastoral labour during the survey period is not entirely clear. The Berndts' problem in tackling social change in the 'bad old days' is amplified in the conclusion, where

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they postulate that, in a sense, 'the identification of specific problem areas is socially and culturally outside of linear time (or, from a different perspective, timeless)' (p.284).

Two of the most stimulating issues to emerge from the book, while not fully resolved, leave scholars plenty of room for thought. One is the relationship and role of the professional when commissioned by a private firm, and the other is the relationship of loyalty and respect which can grow between the senior academic patron and the student who has been supervised, or employed, by that benefactor. Both situations present difficult ethical problems: where should the lines of professional integrity versus contractual or personal loyalty be drawn?

Except for its attractive presentation and the inclusion of the fascinating photographs, *End of an era* does not appear to aim at a popular audience. Aboriginal cultural vantage points are seldom included, and despite the Berndts' apparent expertise in a myriad of languages, individual Aborigines receive no chance to speak for themselves. The authors become the 'scientific/objective' mouthpiece we must trust. For patient students and academics, the book is an extremely useful resource, but for anyone wanting a 'good read' or satisfying conclusions, it can be frustrating.

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The "Civilizing mission": race and the construction of crime. By Greta Bird, Faculty of Law, Monash University, 1987. Pp. 66, notes, index. p.b. \$7.20.

This is the fourth monograph in a series on legal aspects of topical interest published by the Faculty of Law of Monash University where Greta Bird is a Research Fellow.

The work comprises seven chapters and a concluding eighth chapter, and derived from research concentrating in a number of South Australian towns originally the focus of Elizabeth Eggleston's seminal research. Indeed the Elizabeth Eggleston Trust Fund made a grant which supported the further field work of the author.

The author's study was concerned with the involvement of Aborigines in the criminal justice system in a number of South Australian and Western Australian towns, and is based on data drawn from her ethnographic research, from statistics and other published material. Using Weberian theory on interaction between individuals, and Marxist theories on the role of political, legal and economic structures in a capitalist society, Ms Bird explores the argument that our society has created Aboriginal criminality as part of the European drive to 'civilise' and modernise Aborigines, to compel them to conform to the white culture and to accept an inferior role in the white economy.

Her major theoretical construct is that the granting of land 'rights' is an important factor in reducing Aboriginal crime.

The monograph is slim indeed. The first chapter deals with the author's methodology in six short pages, the second traverses the settled-versus-conquered debate and concludes that the 'civilizing mission' of the white settlers 'performs an ideological function in society by legitimizing the expropriation of the Aborigines' land and their relegation to the margins of the white society and a capitalist economy'.

Her field-work was described in two chapters of 22 pages and was, for this reviewer at least, the most satisfying part of her book. The first of those chapters deals with adult crime and alcohol offences, the imposition of white values, and the construction of a drunk charge.

De-criminalisation, juveniles and civil liberties were also discussed, the major conclusion being that large numbers of police in small towns serve to cast the Aborigine in the role of an object of policing.

The second of her field-work chapters deals with offences other than of public drunkenness, more particularly adult crime and indecent language, the relationship of authority and discipline, and the 'police dilemma'.

Ms Bird concludes that the use of indecent language is seen as a challenge to the legitimacy of the laws made by the dominant white society and especially as a challenge to the authority of the police.

The fifth chapter discusses the legal service and theorises that the construction of Aboriginal crime cannot be understood or addressed except within the framework on colonialist expansion and the dispossession of Aborigines of their land. The mediator role of the Aboriginal Legal Services - except at the initial arrest stage where the police have enormous discretion - turns yet again to the use of alcohol as a meaningful response to a specific form of oppression. That oppression is cited as 'dispossession from the land, the imposition of political control, economic marginalization within a capitalist system, and close contact with the expropriators of the land in a relationship of subordination that allows no legitimate avenues for the expression of anger'.

Land rights and customary law are dealt with in the sixth chapter, particularly in the context of the recent report of the Australian Law Reform Commission in that reference. The theoretical overview is provided in five pages comprising Chapter 7, focusing on the 'establishment of a capitalist system of economy in a country whose mode of production was of a pre-capitalist hunter gatherer type based on land use and access to extensive trade routes'.

Overall I was disappointed with the work. It failed to bring the new perspective to the area of research pioneered by Elizabeth Eggleston, and it failed to offer the 'important new insights drawn from Weberian and Marxist theories' which the cover blurb promised.

Having staked a claim to a high intellectual and theoretical ground, and having led us through extremely well-presented chapters deriving from field research, the author simply fails to deliver. Such research as she has done is neither greater nor more profound than a plethora of recent studies, both academic and governmental, which she either ignores or devalues.

There are many tantalising glimpses which, perhaps in a larger work, would have been explored more fully. In particular, having seen the criminalisation of the Aborigines' drinking and other behaviours 'as being connected to their powerlessness and their poverty in a direct way' the author then moves immediately behind this condition to their position 'as part of a colonized race'. She focuses on the use of 'rights' as those that only exist to the extent that they are recognised, and are able to be enforced through, the legal system. Surely this cannot be so in any given democratic or indeed any other society. Whether or not the legal system recognises rights, are there not other rights of a more fundamental human or political nature upon which the society itself is based? The author tends to brush aside the theoretical constructs or possibilities which do not neatly fit her nascent view which developed with her field-work.

She would have been on higher and safer ground had she in fact developed more fully the concepts of power and powerlessness in society, much as Weber did, before applying to *her* concept of power a Marxist gloss. The interaction of the organs of authority and the state, the conflicts within and between authority and the subject, and between competing societies, are neither analysed nor even forcefully posited.

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Much of what she had to say about her field-work - and all of this undertaken in six short weeks - is unexceptional and did not deliver the 'new perspectives' promised. This failure I found to be the most disappointing feature of the entire work.

Yet she neatly encapsulates so much of the Aboriginal experience as other commentators have written about and the prose style is lively. The revelations that the author felt she was experiencing are less substantial than the somewhat pretentious chapter headings might suggest.

Nevertheless this is a welcome addition to the literature and represents a very reasonably priced work for those interested in the subject.

John McCorquodale
Canberra

Resources for Aboriginal family history. Edited by Rodney Lucas. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986. \$6.00 p.b.

This is the latest, and very welcome, bibliographical guide to come from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. It has a genealogical focus and is in fact a response to enquiries received over the years from Aboriginal people interested in tracing family members. Its compilers have restricted their coverage to research manuscripts, higher degree theses, and journal articles - excluding books so that Mathews *The two worlds of Jimmy Barker* or Rosser's *Dreamtime nightmares*, for instance, are not represented though they also contain genealogical data. Published books are more readily known and accessible. It is a bonus to have also a record available on other materials held in the Institute's library.

In a short introduction on 'History in an Aboriginal Community', Gordon Briscoe considers some of the difficulties attendant on the undertaking. On the one hand there is the often pressing importance of collecting oral history from the very old members of a community before the knowledge is forever lost with their deaths. On the other hand there are concerns about what to do with the information when once it is recorded on tape, manuscript, or film. That is, there are questions of access. (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has mechanisms to deal with this).

Briscoe makes a thought-provoking point, that when an oral tradition is transformed into a written one the value of the original oral form is altered. He broaches also the idea that an Aboriginal community might do its own research and record 'living history' which could well include contemporary matters. People engaged in this are thereby creating their own cultures.

The first half of the resource book, edited by Rodney Lucas, acknowledges gaps. Aboriginal genealogies and registers contains a lot of entries on the Northern Territory, the Kimberley division of Western Australia, and on Tasmania. However, other parts of Australia are not so well represented, for example New South Wales and South Australia (not including Ooldea and the Flinders Ranges). The entries in this section are first indexed alphabetically according to authorship and are then cross-referenced state by state both for language/tribe and for community/place.

The second half of the register, compiled jointly by Linda De Veer, Rodney Lucas, and John Mason, is a preliminary indexing of 'Oral history tapes'. Each entry is listed under the name of the person who collected the tapes and gives place, language(s) spoken, and person(s) speaking, followed by a brief gloss on the subject matter, e.g. 'discussion of

personal history', or 'dialogue about the pre-contact times'. These are then indexed under persons (Aboriginal speakers) and state by state for language(s) and for community/place, similar to the method of indexing in the genealogical register.

These compilers emphasised the intrinsic value of sound tapes as records of information not easily transferable to field notes, or to transcripts for that matter. (Tone of voice, inflexion, exclamations, interruptions no doubt belong to this category). Tapes are for this reason valuable though they might not always be of broadcasting quality.

One of the more obvious advantages of publishing *Resources* is that those using it might well be stimulated into plugging the gaps. It is not a static record but one which, it is hoped, will start to go out of date soon after its publication as new information comes to light.

Bruce Shaw
Adelaide

John Batman and the Aborigines. By Alastair H. Campbell. Kibble Books, Melbourne, 1987. Pp. vii + 270, maps, plates, bibliography, index. \$50 h.b., \$26 p.b.

The objective of this book is to relate the life-story of John Batman with the maximum of precision. Drawing on a range of documentary sources including the Port Phillip Association papers, John Pascoe Fawkner's diary and some unpublished letters of Batman, it attempts, through a biographical focus, to provide a basis for understanding the 'broader events and circumstances of Batman's times'. It is hoped that it will 'encourage European Australians to openly examine their roots in Australia, and that it will benefit Aborigines today in their struggle to reclaim their history'.

Campbell's achievement is to assemble a wealth of information on his subject. One issue of particular interest is the precise detailing of the Port Phillip Association's duplicity. Through treaties with Aboriginal 'chiefs' Batman claimed to have acquired 600,000 acres of land, in return for which he gave blankets, knives, looking glasses, tomahawks, beads, scissors, flour and other goods, of a total value of £52. He also promised a yearly tribute, which he was later to describe as a 'trifling cost'. On the basis of their generosity to the 'natives' - 'terms more equitable and just to the Aboriginal possessors of the soil than any which the history of the British plantations can produce' - the association laid claim to land which was assessed as a bargain at £100,000. In the attempt to win recognition from the British government the Association's lobbyist in the United Kingdom heralded the foundation of a new colony upon 'the principles of Conciliation and Civilization of Philanthropic Morality and Temperance without danger of its ever becoming onerous to the Mother Country, and calculated to ensure the well being and comfort of the Natives'. Commenting on this pretence, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur of Van Diemen's Land noted: 'This, of course, is all stuff and it is better for all parties to be sincere and plainly state that the occupation of a good run for sheep has been the primary consideration, if not the only one'. Shortly after concluding the 'treaty' with Aboriginal chiefs, one of the speculators confided: 'there is no such thing as chieftainship among them - but this is a secret that must I suppose be kept to ourselves or it may affect the deed of conveyance if there should be any validity in it'. It is revealing of the nature of the nineteenth century pastoral frontier that despite their duplicity Batman and many of his accomplices could claim to be, and were, generous in their dealings with Aborigines by the standards of their day.

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While Campbell's book will appeal to readers with an interest in biography and in the early history of European occupation of Victoria, it does little to advance understanding of Aboriginal-European relations. The broad outlines, and often the precise details, of the dealings of Batman and his contemporaries have been well documented. While greater precision is brought to certain issues, the book has the hallmarks of a style of historical writing that was in vogue thirty or more years ago but is now the province of the amateur: gather your documents, arrange them in chronological order and present your narrative. The result is a mass of detail, a narrow perspective, one which seems oblivious of the work of other historians (for example, Christie, Clark, Nelson and Reece are missing from the bibliography) and of wider issues. There is inadequate attention to the broad context, the development of the pastoral industry and British colonial policy; it is observed, for example, that 'influenced by policies advocated by Batman and Wedge, the British Government established in Port Phillip an Aboriginal Protectorate' (p.231). A final issue concerns Campbell's approach to his subject. Whereas the focus of historical research has shifted to analysis of the complexity of race relations, with emphasis on Aboriginal responses, the basic approach of *Batman and the Aborigines* remains Eurocentric, despite an attempt to deal with traditional Aboriginal values. There is considerable scope to explore Aboriginal perspectives in the 1830s, yet this aspect is not developed into a significant theme of the book.

Andrew Markus
Monash University

To my delight. By Bill Cohen. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1987. Pp.163. \$12.95 p.b.

Bill Cohen was born in 1914 and died in 1983. He was the son of Jack and Sarah Widders. His autobiography deals with his life as a young man, and finishes just after he was honourably discharged from the army during the Second World War. He was one of the last men to be initiated in Aboriginal Law and calls himself a grandson of the Gumbangarri. He traces his family tree from his grandfather King Bobby. The title was bestowed by white people, but as Judith Wright-McKinney points out in the foreword, it recognises 'in Bill and his father and their forefathers both character, authority and responsibility'. King Bobby's country was centred on Coventry's Oban station near Guyra and went south to Guyra and Armidale, east to Ebor and north to Glen Innis.

Cohen provides a picture of rural work in the twenties and thirties and gives us some understanding of the pastoral development that occurred. But his autobiography mainly dwells on the small details of his life - the events which gave him such joy. It is filled with anecdotes of the fights he won, the sports at which he excelled, horse-breaking, cattle mustering and dingo shoot. Cohen is conscious of the many roles he has played. He was Aborigine, child, son, friend, lover, husband, father, sportsman, roughrider, stockman, boxer (he was known as the Bare Knuckle King of the Tablelands) soldier, swaggie, dingo hunter and railway worker. He obviously enjoyed all of them. An extra-marital affair while he was in the army troubled his Christian conscience, but he used the Bible to justify another. After telling us how much he enjoyed the affection of a Chinese girl he writes:

Now back to the wonder book the Bible, Genesis Chapter 2 and Lord God said it is not good man shall be alone. I will make him a helpmate. Looking down from heaven God saw Adam was lonely, so God caused a deep sleep to fall on

Adam. God took one rib from Adam's body, close up the wound, form Eve of clay, breathe the breath of life into her nostrils. Eve become a beautiful woman. Here I will leave the question to the reader: What are girls for? Man's use. I guess this is part of God's set up.

We are fortunate that Cohen also wrote about Aboriginal customs, corroborees, medicine, hunting and fishing skills, canoe making and navigation techniques.

Cohen's book is important because it shows how government policy affected the consciousness of Aborigines a generation ago. Cohen does not mention the massacres that decimated his people, rather he depicts the shrewd adaptation which enabled them to retain some aspects of their culture in a potentially hostile environment, where any rebellion against the *status quo* would have been mercilessly dealt with. Although he identified with Aborigines Cohen moved easily between the world of his white bosses, the Coventrys and the Wrights, and the Aboriginal world, which was largely confined to the reserves at Bellbrook and Kempsey. He was 'born on the ground' in the traditional manner but the ground was in a hut. He ate native food as well as white, and was familiar with both Aboriginal and western medicine. As he lost his mother when he was very young Cohen's world is predominantly male. His sisters, grandmother, aunts and female cousins are mentioned, but the dominant influences are his white sports teacher, Mr Boyle, his father, uncles and male employers. 'Women could never control me,' he tells us proudly.

Cohen does not dwell on the seamy side of the assimilation policy. In those days Aboriginal children who could pass as white, were taken from their parents and brought up in homes so that they could be trained as servants for white families. Cohen mentions in passing that this happened to his relatives. He writes:

... as a small Aboriginal boy I saw something dreadful happen at Lower Creek. A member of the old Aboriginal Protection Board - I believe his name Donaldson - came up to Lower Creek in an old-time canvas-hooded Dodge. Bidy and Jack Scott were caring for two orphans, Tilly and Johnny Graham, the family of my father's sister Lucy. We saw this tall gentleman walk over to the camp of Jack and Bidy. He grabbed Johnny, also Elsie, Jack Scott's daughter, took them over to the car and took them away to Cootamundra Home.

Cohen also comments in passing on Aboriginal-police relations. He accepts police brutality as inevitable. It makes him angry. He wants to fight the officers whom he saw 'kicking these Aborigines in the backside, hunting them out of town'. But he accepts the situation, knowing that he is outnumbered. Then he adds sadly, 'it's the laws of our country, so we just have to co-operate'. Cohen's own relations with the police were good. On one occasion he beat up a detective not knowing he was a police officer. He was only jailed for an hour and was given money to buy food. Cohen writes: 'Over the years of my life I'd met many a good copper but I am sure this young detective would be tops.'

There are still Aborigines, particularly of an older generation, who accept the sort of adjustment which Bill Cohen pictures so well. But these days Aborigines are demanding land rights and a fair share of the Australian economic cake. It is clear they will not be satisfied with the sort of adjustment which Cohen made. This does not mean that he makes no contribution to Aboriginal consciousness. While most will feel that his way can no longer be theirs, they will nevertheless appreciate his courage, toughness and humanity. Judith Wright-McKinney, has described Cohen's book as a 'remarkable contribution to local history from other side'. Although it is a local history it has relevance nationally, for it helps us understand our wider history.

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Bill Cohen gave his original manuscript to my friend Geoffrey Blomfield to read. Blomfield put the hand written pages in order and showed them to me among others. We all agreed that it should be published. But first it needed to be typed and then edited. The typing was arranged by John Howard, a Kempsey solicitor, and this typed version was given to the Armidale and District Historical Society in 1983. It obtained a grant of \$500 from the Division of Cultural Activities of the New South Wales Premier's Department. The Society approached the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. It agreed to publish the manuscript and provided a skilled and sympathetic editor, Helen Williams. So that the book will have a wider appeal she has made some changes to Cohen's syntax and inflection, and has added words when they seemed left out. She has also added punctuation and standardised the spelling. But she has retained Bill Cohen's phrases and the rhythm of his speech. His family and friends are delighted with the result. The book is complemented by maps, a family tree and photographs. As so many people will want to check up so many different things, it would have been helpful if it had also an index.

Margaret Ann Franklin
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Man from Arltunga, Walter Smith Australian Bushman. By R.G. Kimber. Hesperian Press, Carlisle, Western Australia, 1986. Pp. 176. Coloured and black and white plates, maps and index.

In this outstanding work R.G. Kimber relates the reminiscences of Walter Smith, a part-Arabana man who was born at Arltunga goldfield in Central Australia in July 1893 and who in his own life-time has become a legendary outback figure. Walter Smith worked in many fields, prospecting, droving, driving camels, bird-trapping and mining. With his great bushcraft he was in demand for all kinds of expeditions, including the 1931 Eclipse Gold Expedition which was associated with Lasseter's supposed gold reef.

Walter Smith's reminiscences are by nature episodic and Dick Kimber has not changed this format: the work is divided into nineteen self-contained short chapters. This means that the narrative never drags on, it remains varied and fresh just like Walter's many adventures. The work is a brilliant piece of cooperation between Walter Smith and Dick Kimber. There are on practically every page some graphic direct quotations that come from Walter himself: this first-hand narrative gives the highlights of the episodes. These direct quotations are embedded in a narrative that is based on Walter's reminiscences and presented by Dick Kimber with the help of his own outstanding knowledge of the geographical and historical background of Central Australia. The narrative flows easily and there is no jarring discrepancy between the style of Dick Kimber and the style of Walter Smith. Each chapter contains notes that give literary and historical references. Dick Kimber shows himself to be an outstanding editor and oral historian.

The quality of Walter Smith's narrative, though episodic, is of a high order. Superficially there is no continuity in the work, no main issue nor any dominating theory, yet there is the all-pervading theme of the rough life and the feeling of community between people of all races in the outback. Most of Walter's life was spent with hard and rough men, who bent the rules wherever possible, but who nevertheless had some humanity. In his early years however he witnessed some hideous crimes. His dispassionate style heightens the enormity of the injustice such as the senseless shooting of an old Aranda man who was only trying to return some lost property. There are also humorous episodes, such as Walter

giving a little flour and tea to the great Cattle King Kidman himself disguised as a swagman, and then commenting wryly: "Rough times," old Kidman said. Couldn't have been too rough for him.'

Walter Smith identified with Aboriginal people and had his own place in Aboriginal society, but he was equally at home with miners, surveyors and prospectors. Because of this, his recollections give excellent insight into many aspects of the history of Central Australia. Moreover Walter Smith is not a shadowy figure that moves through this history, he played a lively and positive part in it. The work contains first hand oral historical information that would have been lost had it not been for Kimber's careful work with Walter Smith. From the point of view of traditional Aboriginal studies the work contains many pieces of information that only people of Walter Smith's generation could recall, such as the original distribution of Aranda, Wangkangurru and Wangkamadla people in the Simpson Desert. It contains comments about the Perenti Dreaming at Mungapiti, the 'Kwilpma' corroboree and the Nail-tailed Wallby myth. The index of people and the index of locations are most useful and make it possible to use the work for reference. There is even a probably less useful separate index for the names of particular camels.

The book has a few minor irritating features. Sometimes only the Aboriginal name of a location is given (e.g. Mungapiti p.42, which is in fact Tyon): the general reader would therefore find it impossible to locate such a place on any map. The general index looks as if it were in two parts until one realises that the first part is simply a subdivision of the one entry 'Aborigines'. The name Poeppel is consistently misspelt. These are only small matters. By taking a deep and continuous interest in what Walter Smith had to say and by putting it in historical perspective Dick Kimber has made a fine contribution to Central Australian Studies. The work has been published in time, so that hopefully the near centenarian Walter Smith will feel that his part in Central Australian life is not just a thing of the past, but that it is important and will be remembered.

Luise Hercus
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