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The Burrup Gets Burked

Stephen Bennetts

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While I lived in Italy in the late 1980s, the great boil of post war political corruption swelled to gigantic proportions before finally being lanced in the great explosion of pus known as the *Mani Pulite* (or 'Clean Hands') investigation. Lately, Western Australia has become increasingly reminiscent of that period with recent Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) hearings providing an eerie sense of *deja vu* (albeit with a touch of Les Patterson).

The hearings have graphically illustrated how perversion of public policy in WA has walked hand in hand with the destruction of the State's natural and cultural heritage assets. In the Pilbara's Abydos/Woodstock region, demoted former Indigenous Affairs Minister, Sheila McHale, last year lifted heritage protection over an area packed with rock art to allow the construction of a railway line by Julian Grill's client FMG Resources. It is clear from recent CCC evidence that McHale had already been directed by Premier Alan Carpenter to overrule the expected decision of her own Aboriginal advisory committee (the ACMC), a month *before* the committee

had even received heritage documentation for the site.¹

However, the most striking example of the Carpenter Government's abject failure to protect the State's unique cultural heritage is the Pluto gas project, under which oil and gas giant Woodside proposes to build a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant in the heart of the Pilbara's Burrup Peninsula. The oldest and largest outdoor rock art site in the world, the Burrup is the only Australian site on the World Monument Fund's list of 100 most threatened sites in the world. It contains perhaps half a million rock engravings spanning a period from perhaps 30,000 years ago until recently – making it far older than Stonehenge or the pyramids. The Burrup's extraordinary record of human cultural history in stone contains what may be the oldest known representations of the human face, and images of animals such as the thylacine which have been extinct in the area for 6000 years.



Burrup Peninsula 'archaic face': the site may contain the earliest representations of the human face in the world.

[Photo: Robin Chapple]

Former WA Liberal Opposition Leader and Minister for Resources and Industry, Colin Barnett, believes the Burrup is the biggest heritage issue Western Australia and Australia have ever faced; 'the fact it was not debated in State Parliament is shameful.' Whilst professing amazement at the ALP's lack of interest, Barnett also admits to sadness at the similar lack of interest in his own Party.

Apart from Carmen Lawrence, Colin Barnett, NSW Federal Independent Peter Andren and the Greens, almost no other Federal or State politicians have so far had the courage to speak out. International awareness of the

Burrup issue is, however, increasing rapidly, and a series of global 'Stand Up for the Burrup' actions have already happened in Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Germany, Spain and Italy, with more planned in London, New York, San Francisco and Mongolia.²

Woodside began its most recent assault on Burrup rock art in Pluto Area A in January 2007, following approval by former Minister McHale, and the rejection by former Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell of an emergency application by Carmen Lawrence, Peter Andren and Greens Senator Rachel Siewert, for the entire Burrup Peninsula to be heritage listed.

The important Pluto project could go ahead in low risk areas such as Onslow or the existing Burrup joint venturer site.³ Although WA Indigenous Affairs Minister Michelle Roberts approved Woodside's clearance of further rock art in Pluto Area B on 28 February, on the grounds that there were 'no commercially-viable alternative sites,' she has yet to substantiate this claim by producing estimated costs for the other sites.

But Woodside is determined to go for the cheapest option available and, as in the Abydos/Woodstock case, it is mining companies that are calling the shots inside the WA Government through their proxy – the WA Department of Industry and Resources (DOIR). As with Tasmania's Hydroelectric Commission at the height of the 1983 Franklin Dam dispute, the State's real political engine room is located within a monolithic bureaucracy whose fanatical dedication to development at any cost risks causing immeasurable damage to WA's cultural heritage and international reputation.



Thylacines have been extinct in the Pilbara for 6000 years
[Photo: Robin Chapple]

DOIR's former Minister, John Bowler, was sacked from State Cabinet and expelled from the ALP on 27 February following CCC revelations of Brian Burke and Julian Grill's apparent influence over his ministerial decisions, including the Abydos/Woodstock affair.

There is not the merest shred of evidence to suggest that Woodside, and its directors, are corrupt in the narrower legal sense. While tinpot WA mining outfits such as FMG Resources typically employ characters such as Burke and

Grill to ensure they can build railways through heritage-protected sites, higher up the corporate food chain, companies such as Woodside keep their lobbying in-house by simply hiring former politicians and bureaucrats.

Woodside recruited the Department of Indigenous Affairs' former Registrar of Aboriginal Sites Warren Fish to head its cultural heritage management section; while former ALP national secretary Gary Gray was Woodside's head of corporate services until resigning in January to contest Kim Beazley's seat of Brand at the next Federal election. By parachuting Gray into a safe Labor seat, the ALP National Executive has also ensured Woodside have good parliamentary access at the Federal level, without the blowback of the Burke effect.

On 22 February, Ian Campbell's successor in Canberra, Malcolm Turnbull, apparently washed his hands of the Burrup issue by postponing the question of heritage listing for a further six months. On receiving this prearranged signal, Indigenous Affairs Minister Roberts then overruled her ACMC committee's unanimous rejection of Woodside's proposal to clear rock art in Pluto Area B – effectively giving the green light for the company to recommence its assault.

But the actual LNG plant on the Burrup has still not even passed EPA approval, and Woodside's board will not make a final decision to commit funds to the project until June. In other words, the company is clearing world heritage rock art for a plant which may never actually be built. Woodside apparently hopes that it can cure its greatest political headache by removing the rock art itself, thus weakening opposition to the LNG plant and stiffening the courage of nervous investors.⁴

Woodside's share price has declined by 12.5 per cent since September 2006, despite an ASX200 rise of 14.5 per cent over the same period. One energy industry veteran speculates the company's flagging share price may reflect investor disquiet over risks inherent in Woodside's ambitious expansion program:

The company's good revenue and profit returns in 2005 and 2006 reflected the high oil prices over that period, which are now falling. Long term debt has grown by over 500 per cent since 2004; production has been revised downwards twice in the last nine months; unreliability plagues existing operations; and cost blow outs on joint venture projects point to an uncertain control over the Pluto project. Scarcity of human and material resources will continue to increase costs and the risks of delivering projects on time. Although Pluto will cost somewhere between \$6 and \$10 billion, the Woodside Board has, so far, only approved \$1.4 billion for the total project. This, coupled with a yet to be concluded agreement on the sale of Pluto gas leaves investors with a somewhat precarious outlook.

Colin Barnett argues that Pluto may also be vulnerable to litigation because it is not covered by the standard WA State Agreement Act. All major WA industry projects (except Pluto) are subject to such agreements and it is

unheard of, says Barnett, for a project of Pluto's size, cost, contentious nature and major heritage implications not to be covered by an SAA: 'Woodside have failed to obtain the solid parliamentary support which they need, and if challenged in court, there could be problems.'

The company's greatest fear is a Supreme Court injunction against Pluto and, in fact, it is believed that at least two Burrup Aboriginal groups are currently preparing such a challenge.

Despite the fact that, so far, he has done nothing to save the Burrup's rock art, Premier Carpenter is widely respected in Burrup campaign circles. As one veteran campaigner commented: 'Alan Carpenter's been doing a pretty good job cleaning up the WA ALP, and once he's finished doing that, he can move on to the Burrup.' However, patience with him and his Government is fast waning, particularly after CCC revelations of his part in the Abydos/Woodstock affair.

International art critic Robert Hughes – whose niece is married to Malcolm Turnbull – once summed up WA in the following terms: 'civilization is to Western Australia as justice is to its legal system.' Woodside, the WA Government and its bureaucracy bear living testimony to the truth of this cantankerous observation.

Turnbull's recent visit to the Burrup Peninsula may suggest Australia's most celebrated art critic has already been advising him of the Burrup's significance to human cultural history. If so, then he is now in an excellent position to steal a march on his sluggardly opponents, in both the National and WA ALP, and to highlight the obvious fact that the WA Government and its bureaucracy have not only failed on the Burrup issue, but on Aboriginal cultural heritage protection generally.⁵

1. Bowler CCC deposition, 26 Feb 2006 pm at www.ccc.wa.gov.au/files/transcripts26M02SU.pdf
2. See www.standupfortheburrup.com
3. <http://dampierrockart.net/Media/> 2007-02-19 FARA open letter to Turnbull.pdf.
4. For images of the January 2007 'removals', see: <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/vandal.html>
5. For further critical analysis of WA's deficient Aboriginal heritage protection processes, see David Ritter, 'Trashing Heritage: Dilemmas of Rights and Power in the Operation of Western Australia's Heritage Legislation' in C. Choo and S. Hollbach (eds), *Studies in Western Australian History*, 23, 2003, 195-209 & Phillip Moore 'Anthropological practice and Aboriginal heritage (a case study from WA)' in S. Toussaint. & J. Taylor (eds) *Applied Anthropology in Australasia*, UWA Nedlands, 1999: 229-54.

Stephen Bennetts has worked as an Aboriginal heritage consultant since 1994, including from 2003-6 on Woodside's Transterritory Pipeline project. He is completing a PhD in Anthropology in the School of Social and Cultural Studies.

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AAS Annual Conference 2007

October 30 – November 2, 2007

Australian National University

Transforming Economies, Changing States

Conference web site: <http://www.aas.asn.au/conf07/>

Conference Theme

Radical changes in the economic and political aspects of human life-worlds characterize the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Although the economy has always been at the heart of social life, both national and local economies have taken on an increasingly monetary character, transforming the social fabric and leading to a widespread economization of cultural practice. Neoliberal claims about the receding state notwithstanding, it is increasingly apparent that these transformations have depended on a growth and consolidation of state power, particularly as exerted around the object of 'economy' and the practices of 'economic development'. Growth of state influence has occurred through the emerging framework of international institutions, through the 'outsourcing' of state functions, and through the increasing incursion of state policies and programs into daily life and subjective experience.

At the same time, it is clear that many places remain either at the periphery or beyond the ambit of the state, whilst new spaces of 'exception' have also emerged as part of contemporary changes in state organization and economic practice. Similarly, various forms of 'customary' economic practice and political organization persist, even in the face of current transformations. At least some of these practices offer forms of local resistance to or transformation of what are often presumed to be monolithic or homogeneous forms of global capitalism or governance.

This conference aims to provide a forum for contemporary anthropological engagements with 'the economic' and 'the state', 'government' and 'the political' more generally. The conference seeks to foreground the role of the economy in relation to the late-modern social transformations.

Keynote Address

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, will present a keynote address on the evening of 30 October.



Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing

[Photo: University of California, Santa Cruz]

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, has research interests in the politics and culture of Indonesia, rainforest ecology and gender in the US. She is the author of "*Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*" (Princeton University Press, 2005).

Further details of the 2007 AAS Conference

Contact the organizing committee c/o

Monique.Skidmore@anu.edu.au

Conference web site: <http://www.aas.asn.au/conf07/>

Practice and Practicality: Anthropology in Indigenous Australia

Indigenous Workshop, Australian National University

9am – 5pm, Monday October 29

In association with AAS Conference 2007

Workshop organisers: David Martin, Ben Smith, Kevin Murphy & Kati Ferro

This workshop aims to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas around anthropological practice about, with, and for Australian Indigenous people. It aims to transcend the 'applied' – 'academic' divide, but is specifically focused on those forms of anthropological practice which seek to have 'practical' effects.

The workshop will consist of four interrelated sessions. Each will be of 90 minutes duration, and involve no more than three presentations.

- The limits of and on anthropological practice
- "Making a difference" - intentions and effects
- Communicating anthropology
- Can anthropology speak to the Indigenous condition? In what contexts? And to whom?

The limits of and on anthropological practice

Anthropologists often assert that the practical value of their knowledge and expertise is much broader than is normally recognised. This session sets out to provide a forum for discussion of the practical limitations that are imposed on anthropologists by virtue of the social, political and legal circumstances in which they most commonly work; reasons for and possibilities of stretching those limits; and ethical considerations that may lead anthropologists to place their own limits on the type of practice that they would be willing to engage in.

"Making a difference" – intentions and effects

One of the main motivations for practical engagements by anthropologists is 'to make a difference' in the lives of our respondents. It is this possibility, for example, rather than financial gain, that motivates many anthropologists to undertake work on native title and land claims in Australia and beyond. Doubtless this desire to make a practical difference is at least partly a response to ongoing criticisms, both within and beyond anthropology, about the discipline and its practitioners. But such interventions – and the desires on which they are based – can be the

subject of anthropological critique. Both Kapferer (2000) and Morris (2003), for example, have questioned the effects of anthropological involvement in Australian native title claims. And Kulick (2006) has recently presented an insightful and challenging critique of the fantasies that underpin anthropological practice based on ideas of empowerment, social justice or addressing disadvantage. The intention of this session is to generate discussion on the intentions that drive anthropological practice – in particular, the practice of 'applied anthropology' – and the effects (foreseen and otherwise) of anthropological interventions intended to 'make a difference'.

Communicating anthropology

Most anthropologists working in Indigenous Australia do so outside universities, in contexts where the specialist technical languages, theoretical paradigms, and communication styles appropriate to academe may be potentially opaque and even alienating. This session aims to explore questions concerning who are, or might be, anthropology's audiences and the challenges faced in communicating with them.

Can anthropology speak to the Indigenous condition? In what contexts? And to whom?

In a keynote speech to the AAS 2002 conference, Annette Hamilton contrasted anthropology's dwindling presence in Australian universities, and its declining respect and reputation more generally, with those of psychology and history. Psychology's popularity and success arise in part from its claim to being an empirical 'science', and (we might speculate) its deep resonance with western individualism, and it is deeply influential through its pervasive teachings in academia and in society more generally. Where psychology rejected the social, history on the other hand, also booming, embraced it in dialogue with other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and psychology, and with postmodernism. In Fernandez-Armesto's words "As never before, historical writing ... illuminates the human condition". Hamilton writes: ... where psychology entrenched itself by embedding its graduates into vocational outcomes, history laid claim to the broad vision of human societies on a world scale, as providing a humanistic knowledge appropriate to all educated people. Anthropology has resisted both possibilities. In terms of vocational outcomes anthropology in Australia and Britain has tended to deny or downplay the legitimacy of an anthropology in the service of "the real". To advocate anthropology as a "useful" activity is viewed in some circles as tainted, something lower down the scale of human worth than the scholar sitting in his study. In part this is because "the real world" has not turned out to be as anthropologists thought it should be. Hamilton observes that illuminating the human condition may not readily translate into a job or a vocation. And, perhaps paradoxically, it is precisely where anthropologists working with Indigenous people have engaged with 'the real' that they have attracted the most trenchant criticisms, such as those of Roger Sandal and Noel Pearson, and

disquiet within the profession itself. This session follows on from the preceding ones, focusing on the linked questions of whether anthropology has anything of value to say about the situations of Indigenous people in contemporary Australia, the contexts in which it might be said, and who its audiences might be.

Further details of the Indigenous Workshop

Contact Indigenous Workshop organizing committee c/o David.Martin@anthropos.com.au

Changing Places

From Deakin University

In June 2007 **Tanya King** and **Richard Sutcliffe**, from The School of Social and Environmental Enquiry, The University of Melbourne, will both take up lectureships in anthropology with the School of History, Heritage and Society, Deakin University.

From La Trobe University

Raelene Wilding has recently left anthropology at the University of Western Australia to take up a lectureship in the School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University.

From The University of Melbourne

Emma Kowal has joined The School of Social and Environmental Enquiry as an NHMRC post-doctoral fellow. Three recent doctoral candidates from the School of Social and Environmental Enquiry have, or will soon, take up appointments elsewhere. **Simone Blair** has commenced a postdoctoral fellowship with Australian Studies, The University of Melbourne; **Nick Bainton** has been appointed as Research Fellow to the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland; and **Julian Lee** has been appointed as Lecturer in International Studies at Monash University's campus in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The AAS Thesis Prizes: 2007

In 2004 AAS instituted the award of prizes for the best thesis in anthropology, granted during the preceding 12 months, in each of two categories: Honours and PhD/MA (by research). Winners are announced during the course of the annual AAS Conference. Each winner receives \$500 and a commemorative certificate.

Procedure of Award

1. The AAS will award prizes of \$500 in two categories: a) Honours and b) PhD / M.A. (by research). A written certificate will be issued to the recipient.
2. Each department or school or centre is able to nominate only one student for each category, and normally this will be the student with the thesis that achieved the highest score. The decision is made by the HOD or equivalent.
3. Submissions must include a letter of recommendation from the supervisor (stating the thesis score awarded), all examiner reports, the title and abstract of the thesis

(max. one A4 page), the student's contact details.

4. The deadline for submissions is 31 August. This means that in Year 2007, we will be looking at Honours theses submitted around November the year before, and at PhD / MA (research) theses that have been completed (= degree awarded) at any time in the 12 months before 31 August of Year 2007.
5. The submissions will be examined and ranked independently by the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the AAS (i.e. Assigned ranks declining from No 1 to No x).
6. The thesis with the best (lowest) composite rank number will be awarded the prize. If there is a draw, the matter will be resolved through discussion. Failing that, another AAS executive member will be asked to decide the matter by choosing one out of the two or more equally ranked theses.
7. The decision will be announced at the following AGM. Recipients will be advised in advance, because their physical presence at the AGM is highly desirable. If the recipient cannot attend, he or she should nominate a representative, preferably the supervisor or another staff member of the home department, to receive the certificate on their behalf.
8. Submissions to be sent to: **Shane Silva, AAS, LPO Box 8099, ANU, Canberra ACT 2601**

ANSA – The Australian Network of Student Anthropologists

If you are interested in becoming a member of ANSA, membership is free to current AAS members and the benefits are great! For information on how to join please visit www.ansa.asn.au.

AAS Conference

AAS Conference Travel Grants

ANSA will be organising grants again this year. We have a commitment of three grants of \$300 which will be awarded to those of greatest need to attend the conference. So far AAS has contributed two and our anonymous benefactor another. ANSA will be canvassing for more grants so if you know of anyone who might be interested let us know.

Postgrad Showcase

ANSA has put a session proposal to the AAS conference committee for this year. The proposal is to have a postgrad session run during the main conference. It is based on a session run by Kirrilly Thompson in Adelaide in 2005. The session will provide a supportive environment in which postgrads can present papers. Papers will not need to fit the conference theme. Postgrads are still encouraged to present in other sessions at the conference.

Postgrad Colloquium

The postgrad colloquium is being run by the postgrads at ANU via the conference committee. It is being held the day before the main conference and will consist of a

number of information sessions run by academics on topics relevant to postgrads.

Social Event

ANSA and the postgrads at ANU will be organising a postgrad social event during the conference. We will keep you posted.

ANSA Meeting

ANSA will be organising a meeting at some stage during the conference. This will give postgrads a chance to discuss the future of ANSA and hopefully vote in new subcommittee members. In particular, Klara Hansen will be stepping down as Chairperson in order to give someone else a chance to reap the benefits of the position. She will remain as a member of the subcommittee (if needed). Other subcommittee members will remain.

Kay Milton ANSA Seminar

In April Kay Milton gave a thesis writing seminar at SSEE (School of Social and Environmental Enquiry), Melbourne University, to a group of postgrads working/living in Melbourne. There were students from a number of universities including: Monash, La Trobe, Curtin, Melbourne and ANU. The seminar wasn't nearly long enough but Kay managed to impart invaluable wisdom and encouragement. Many thanks to SSEE, particularly Mary Patterson and Monica Minnegal, for financial and logistic support and general encouragement.

Current Members of the ANSA Subcommittee

Klara Hansen – Australian National University

Jovan Maud – Macquarie University

Jenny Gabriel – James Cook University

Nelia Hyndman-Rizik – Australian National University

Nikola Kalamir – Sydney University

Fleur Smith - Melbourne

Join the ANSA Subcommittee

The ANSA Subcommittee now includes students from institutions around Australia. However, some institutions are still sadly un- or under represented while others are well represented. If you would like to become a member of the ANSA subcommittee and ensure that your institution is represented, please contact ansa@ansa.asn.au.

Student Placements in Native Title Representative Bodies: A Personal Reflection

Michelle Goodwin

The University of Western Australia

In January of this year, it was with great eagerness and anticipation that I started my seven-week internship at Yamatji Land and Sea Council in Perth, Western Australia, as part of my BA Anthropology studies at UWA. The placement was also partly organized through the Aurora Project's Native Title Internship Program.

I began my placement with few expectations, knowing that the intense workloads and lack of substantial funding

for resources in Native Title Representative Bodies meant that I was there to help the organisation rather than vice versa. However, by the end of my internship I felt that I had embarked on one of the most enjoyable, challenging, and engaging experiences of my life. The internship program was invaluable for providing me with the experience of what it is like to work in a Native Title Representative Body; and for enabling me to develop a better grasp of the particular anthropological terms and theories which are used in a native title context.

One of the most valuable and interesting aspects of my internship was being able to totally immerse myself in the process involved in the production of a connection report. On first arriving at Yamatji Council, I embarked on an extensive reading and consideration of documents relating to the production of a connection report, such as the W.A. Government's Office of Native Title "Guidelines", various connection reports, State Position Papers, and anthropological assessments of these connection reports. With this basic background understanding of the process involved in the production of a connection report, I was then given a task which was an immeasurable aid in further developing my comprehension and appreciation of this process.

My supervisor at the land council gave me the responsibility of sifting through the anthropological field notes relating to a particular claim group, and collating the information (particularly claimant testimony) relating to aspects of group identity, normative system, and continuity & vitality of the society's laws and customs, for the purpose of inclusion in a supplementary report. It was quite challenging to be given the responsibility of evaluating the information in the field notes, and making informed research decisions based on what I found. Inevitably, this task greatly increased my confidence in my ability to ascertain what information is required for inclusion in a connection report.

As well as the outstanding learning experience, I also enjoyed the opportunity I had to view some connection report videos, and to meet a claimant. After engaging in the complexities of the process of the production of a connection report, it was good to be able to remind myself of what the process is all about. It was very insightful to hear Aboriginal people talking about their families and their country. It is not surprising that these videos are given a lot of weight in the State's Position Papers prepared in response to claim documents, and that the videos can positively assist the process of mediation. In a mediation meeting I attended, in which a connection report video was screened, it was abundantly clear how valuable such videos are. They enable the various parties to tangibly see the Aboriginal claimants as real people, which takes the mediation process above and beyond a mere dispute about land, and reminds all present about the people who have special cultural and spiritual relationships with the land.

My university anthropology essay for the BA Practicum unit was on the subject of the role of previously prepared ethnographic and related archival documents in the

preparation of connection reports.

Overall, my internship at Yamatji Council was an invaluable experience. Prior to my internship, I was wary about the prospect of working in native title – with a family member who has worked in the field, I was well aware of the demands of the high-pressure working environment and the frustrations of dealing with the many conflicts of interests between groups and between individuals. Now I am not quite so daunted by these issues, for during my internship I found the demands and challenges of working in the field of native title incredibly engaging and engrossing. I am particularly glad that I had the opportunity to meet many of the Council's anthropologists, from both the Geraldton and Port Hedland regions, and discuss with them my future aspirations in the field of anthropology. Their passionate involvement in their work encouraged me to seriously consider a future career in native title anthropology.

As part of her Anthropology major at The University of Western Australia, Michelle Goodwin completed a supervised semester unit known as Bachelor of Arts Practicum, involving a 6 week placement in a relevant work setting outside the university. In this case, the placement was with a Native Title Representative Body (Yamatji Land & Sea Council). The placement was also facilitated by The Aurora Project, an organization assisting capacity building among professionals working in native title in Australia (see: <http://www.auroraproject.com.au/About.htm>).

[David Trigger, UWA]

Bullocks, Mates and Cowboys

The stage of professional rodeo as a space for exploring indigenous and settler relations in northeastern Australia: preliminary thoughts

Tanya J. King

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The University of Melbourne

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The scene is a dusty showground in southern New South Wales, during the 2003/4 summer round of the Australian Professional Rodeo Association competition. The cowboy, Kelly Daly from Julia Creek in Queensland, sits quietly on the railings behind the shoots as, one by one, his mates climb onto 700 kilos of muscle, bone, hoof and horn, specially bred and trained to buck. Though each man secures his own glove into the rope that is tied around the Brahman bull he will be riding that night, each will be helped by other cowboys who are awaiting their turn or licking their wounds. Their role is also to prepare the cowboy by offering advice and quiet, but adrenaline charged, words of encouragement. Allusion to the competition between the cowboys themselves, however, is not made: to do so would be in poor taste. Regardless of who wins or loses these cowboys, and others in the rodeo community, present themselves as equals: as mates.

The commentator's voice barely pauses throughout the entire night's entertainment – which can last several hours

– as he describes the different events, promotes the local businesses that have sponsored the rodeo, praises the condition of the stock and announces the cowboy who is about to ride, his home-town and his current standing on the professional rodeo circuit. The cowboy carefully settles onto the bullock and, on his word, the shoot is opened into the flood-lit arena. All watch eagerly and shout encouragement, urging the cowboy to stay atop the bullock as it bucks and twists with ferocious energy. If the cowboy manages to ride for eight seconds, he is judged according to his riding style, including his spurring action, as well as the bucking style of the beast. If, as is more often the case, he is thrown to the ground before eight seconds, he receives no points for the ride. In some cases the demounted cowboy faces another challenge as the bullock he has recently alighted turns on him. It is then the job of the rodeo clowns to draw the attention of the beast onto themselves, skilfully ducking around it in order that the cowboy can climb over the arena fence.



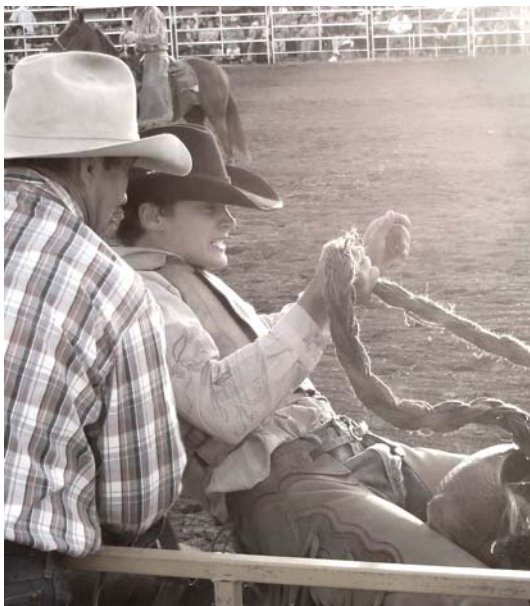
Sitting behind the shoots, waiting and watching.
[Photo: Tanya King]

Regardless of the success or otherwise of the ride – whether the cowboy jumps off the bullock of his own accord or is tossed back into the shoot a few seconds after the gate is swung open – the response of the cowboys is usually the same. While the crowd and the commentator applaud a good ride or a spectacular throw, cheering loudly or gasping and wincing as the cowboy takes a beating, the cowboy himself will almost always make his way back to the shoots without acknowledging the crowd, the competition, or the judges. Typically, he concentrates on the ground in front of him, his hat pulled low over his eyes. Even a cowboy who, it is later revealed, has injuries such as a dislocated arm, internal haemorrhaging, broken bones or a concussion, rarely displays his pain. His 'welcome' back behind the shoots is markedly subdued: there may be quiet discussion of the particulars of the ride or of the bullock, though by this time attention has been directed to the next cowboy in the shoots.

When it comes time for Kelly to climb aboard a bullock, securing his glove and his hat, the demeanour of the other cowboys is anticipatory, but stoic. Kelly is the last

cowboy to mount up, and has drawn a particularly large but relatively unknown bullock. He does not seem to hear the commentator advising “Keep a leg either side, your mind in the middle and you ride him all day”. With a low-pitched and decisive “Righteo!” from Kelly, the gate is swung open and the bullock springs from the shoot, puts his head down and spins to the right. Kelly rides for about three seconds. After all of the cowboys have competed, they climb off the shoots with few words and move back to an empty, though restricted, area just outside the arena where they pick up the game of hackey sac that was interrupted when their event was called.

In rodeo, young men compete against each other in a context where egalitarianism and fraternalism are explicitly valorised. Indeed, as they travel from event to event accruing prize money and circuit points, they often travel together, camp together, sometimes share equipment, occasionally split entry fees and any prize money, and while each of them can point out the current bullock-riding champion – a small, quiet, 19 year old horse-trainer from country New South Wales – all stress that everyone is equal in the corral. Sometimes, they explain, you will draw a difficult bullock, or will have a bad ride, will misjudge the animal or someone else will simply ride better. In other cases you might be more lucky and win enough prize money to pay the entry fee at the next rodeo. Cockiness and boasting is not tolerated, and anyone who is seen to be “getting too big for his boots” is censured with exclusion by the other cowboys. An example of the strong ethic of egalitarianism in the rodeo community was presented during a playful tug-o-war between bull-riders (intended for the entertainment of the audience), in which the commentator smoothed over the win/loss result by noting, “The great thing about these tough little bull-riders is that they are all mates out here”.



The cowboy grits his teeth and nods for the shoot to open
[Photo: Tanya King]

This paper presents preliminary thoughts on some very new research which builds upon earlier work on identity

and masculinity with the commercial shark fishing industry of Bass Strait (King 2005, 2007, in press). During my research into the fishing industry I became interested in the paradox evident in Australian masculine expressions of competition and cooperation. I found that fishermen used discursive tropes such as ‘individuality’, ‘egalitarianism’, ‘mateship’ and ‘luck’ to gloss over potential contradictions that emerged at the nexus of competition and cooperation. While the relationship between competition and cooperation is hardly unexplored territory in Australian studies, as I will touch upon in a moment, research into Australian professional rodeo culture shows great potential for exploring the processes of ‘mateship’ with particular relevance to current political concerns about nationalism, the environment and race. The question I hope to address in this new research project is how the stage of rodeo, and bullock riding in particular, acts as a space in which indigenous and white settler relationships can be reinvented, or reinvigorated with meaning, through the explicit and repeated exaggeration of competition between cowboys in which, though each is ranked against the others, hierarchies are actively challenged through overt demonstrations of egalitarianism, expressed as ‘mateship’. The multiplicity of meanings embedded in the notion of Australian ‘mateship’ has been considered most notably in relation to such cultural icons as the ANZAC and the ‘bushman’. Carroll (1982:468), for example, has suggested that it is precisely in the act of submitting himself to the misconceived will of an authority figure, such as a British army officer, and relinquishing his individuality for the sake of his peers, his fellow ANZACS, his ‘mates’, that the Australian man claims a legitimate Australian identity. Indeed, ‘mateship’ in Australian identity is often a combination of individuality and group loyalty. Illustrative is Ward’s (1978:216) ‘bushman’ who “exhibited ... that ‘manly independence’ whose obverse side was a levelling, egalitarian collectivism, and whose sum was comprised in the concept of mateship”.

In more public forums the notion of ‘mateship’ has been tied to significant debates regarding Australian nationalism, race, masculinity and identity. The response to Prime Minister Howard’s push to incorporate the concept of ‘mateship’ into the Australian constitutional pre-amble, ignited significant debate over the meaning and implications of the term (Curran 2006). Some groups raised concerns regarding the racist and misogynist connotations sometimes attributed to the term, and the proposal was scrapped (Bird and Kelly 2000). There is a sense in which the term ‘mateship’ is a trope that is used to gloss over the contradictions and disruptions, the tension between individuality and group membership, which characterises Australian national identity. The act of bullock riding is a performance of extremes, which disrupts entrenched social relationships, by pitting one ‘mate’ against another in explicit competition. Demonstrations of equality, of mateship, such as a group of men book-ending high-risk individual competition with public displays of cooperation – standing in a circle

playing hackey sac – are employed to reestablish an appropriately level social field.

Any comments or suggestions in relation to this preliminary research, or notices of current research in this area, would be most welcome.

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News Makers, Trouble Makers or Spirit Mediums?

A reflection on doing anthropology ‘at home’

Monica Minnegal & Peter D. Dwyer

School of Social & Environmental Enquiry
The University of Melbourne

Since 2000 we have been working with commercial fishermen in Victoria. In mid-July last year we published an often ironic, and certainly harsh, critique of the management of Commonwealth fisheries in an industry periodical, *Ausmarine* (28 [9]:16-17). Our critique was directed at the detail and process, and to a lesser extent the social consequences, entailed in a then current buy-back package that aimed to eliminate half the existing Commonwealth fishing licences by the end of 2006. To be eligible for buy-back, fishermen were required to participate in a ‘blind’ tender process in which they nominated a price at which they were willing to relinquish their licence and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry accepted or rejected tenders on the basis of (unquantified) ‘value for money’. The fishermen were not allowed to collude.

The article elicited a flurry of responses by telephone, e-mail, ministerial press release and newspaper reports.

One correspondent, an unconventional marine biologist, commented that “it is a rare academic who is so bold as to dare question the prevailing notions of eco-correctness”. Another man, a naturalist with a long-term commitment to

fishermen and the commercial fishing industry, praised us and asked: “Do you think we could make an argument that fishermen were an identifiable culture of people ... and then, quite easily, show they were being discriminated against before the Equal Rights and Human Opportunities Commission?”

The article, almost in its entirety, featured as the front page story in the Lakes Entrance local paper – the *Lakes Post* – on July 26, 2006. By phone, one fisherman judged our article to be “appropriate”. Another wrote from Lakes Entrance: “loved your article in the paper down this end of the universe, it has been getting rave responses from all and sundry”. Other correspondents from Lakes Entrance – they were not fishermen – wrote that “your story said everything people here have been wanting to say, but couldn’t because they were afraid it would prejudice their tender application”, or they jokingly alluded to our likely “popularity in Canberra”.

We were not popular in Canberra. On August 1, 2006 the Minister for Fisheries, Senator Eric Abetz, sent out a detail-free press release reporting that “commercial fishers have responded overwhelmingly to an opportunity to surrender their Commonwealth fishing licences”. And, on August 2nd, again as the front page story in the *Lakes Post*, Senator Abetz responded at length to our article. He said that we had provided an incorrect and incomplete view about the Securing Our Fishing Future package and wrote “I am disappointed that the authors of the original article have misconstrued or overlooked important facts about the package”. He wrote of ‘the positives’: of extensive consultation, of an available help-line and of the fact that “the tender process has been very carefully managed and conducted under strict probity requirements”.

On August 7th, an editorial – “An industry in trauma” – appeared in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*. It summarized both our position and that of Senator Abetz. And it strove for a global perspective by concluding as follows: “One certainty is that industry disruption is a permanent reality. Governments have long experience in dealing with it, though they do not always deal with it well. In this case the problems are caused by global, not local or national factors. Fish stocks are under threat in every ocean. Family livelihoods are threatened all over the world, as global problems multiply. This is no comfort to Australia’s beleaguered fishermen, who can only hope that government sympathy is expressed in something more tangible than the easy currency of words. Nevertheless, our industrial problems bear no comparison with those in other lands brought about by war, terrorism, famine and disease.”

To this time the fishermen themselves had, in public arenas, been silent. There was some anxiety that if they were outspoken – or, indeed, if others, such as us, were outspoken – then this might, as one of our correspondents had noted, “prejudice their tender application”. But now a fisherman responded to the editorial in the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*. He preferred to remain anonymous. With reference to the buy-back package he wrote that “as with all good packs of lies there is just enough truth to deflect

outright condemnation". He assured his readers that we had not overlooked important facts about the package but, rather, in "some ways had been lenient". He generously wrote: "in this day and age of chequebook science it takes a lot to earn the respect of the fishing industry and Peter and Monica are part of a very small group of such people". He continued by saying that "they gained our respect by telling us the truth".

There is, however, an irony here. Many anthropologists try to imagine how other people imagine the world. Our role has often been depicted as that of translator, expressing the ways the people we study understand their world in a 'language' that is accessible to others who are unfamiliar with that world. When we work "at home", however, in our own culture or in a part of it, those who we have studied are more likely to be part of the audience to whom we speak. And sometimes, it seems, we may accurately express that which cannot be said, or which no one within the focal community wishes to say because to speak is to attract public attention.

The 'truths' which anthropologists sometimes seem to report may be merely the ineffable convictions of those whom they are writing about. We may simply reflect back to those we study something of the ways in which those people do, in fact, imagine the world. In many societies this is precisely the role of spirit mediums. Skilled mediums read the mood, the desires and the anxieties of those among whom they live and, in séances, where they may enter trance and communicate with spirits, are often able to give to those people exactly what they want to hear but are unable to articulate. In a similar way, the anthropologist working in his or her own society may present for public consumption an interpretation of concerns that is developed through dialogue with the audience but for which no one in that audience can take credit or be blamed – speaking a 'truth' that is legitimised not by the authority of spirits but by the equally esoteric authority of the 'academy'.

We wonder, therefore, whether through that flurry of excitement last year we were acting as news makers, trouble makers or spirit mediums?

A slightly different version of this piece was first 'published' in the in-house Newsletter of the then named School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies, The University of Melbourne (SMAG 16, 30 August 2006).

Forthcoming Conferences

Northern Europe's Indigenous Minorities – Pointers for Australia?

19 – 22 July 2007

Centre for European Studies, University of New South Wales

The struggle for Indigenous rights is a worldwide one: from Australia to Canada, from Indonesia to South Africa, from Central America to – Europe. Yes, Europe: the Sami people of Northern Europe, divided between (and colonised by) the four states of Norway, Sweden, Finland,

and Russia, have played a major part in the international Indigenous rights movement of recent decades, particularly at United Nations level. At home, they have resisted cultural and linguistic assimilation, the loss of their traditional lands and resources, the denial of equal rights, and the destruction of their traditional economy and way of life. Much of their story will be familiar to Indigenous Australians. Yet theirs is also a success story, at least in some respects. Today, they have their own elected parliaments in three of the four states, and there has been an impressive Sami cultural revival.

The Sami experience will be the subject of a conference taking place at the Centre for European Studies at UNSW, Sydney, 19-22 July 2007. Among the speakers will be many leading activists of the Sami movement, Sami academics, and researchers on Sami history and culture, covering topics as diverse as Sami music, literature, history, local and regional case studies, political activism and representation, involvement in the global Indigenous movement, legal status, and much more. There will also be Australian speakers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to compare and contrast the Sami experience with that of Aboriginal Australia.

Further details:

<http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/ces/overview.html>

Thinking Society, Thinking Culture

First Annual Symposium on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Western Australia

13 – 14 September, 2007

Institute of Advanced Studies, The University of Western Australia

The symposium has three main goals. (1) To promote scholarly interaction between institutions and across disciplines within Western Australia, with an eye to fostering research collaborations. (2) To provide a space for scholarly networks in Western Australia. (3) To increase knowledge of research in progress in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Western Australia.

Further details: Tanya Dalziell or Mark Edele at

thinkhum@admin.uwa.edu.au

The Archaeology of Aboriginal Missions

Session at 'New Ground: Australasian Archaeology Conference 2007'

21 – 26 September 2007

New approaches toward understanding the role of missions and reserves within colonialism have begun to emerge. From the earliest decades of invasion, colonists sought to confine the indigenous occupants within defined and secluded bounds; although this process of isolation varied across colonies and time period, it became a central element in official Aboriginal policy. Since the 1960s, accounts of such places have ranged from hagiography to condemnation, focusing on whether they were 'good' or 'bad' for Aboriginal people. Now, however, attention is shifting to issues such as the current status of these sites in

Aboriginal and local community memory, their representation by various colonial interests, the power of didactic landscapes and spatial relationships to shape human interaction, and Indigenous responses to missionisation. This session brings together recent archaeological perspectives on Aboriginal missions and reserves. Papers that stem from collaborative work with communities will be especially welcome.

Further details: www.newground.org.au

Practice and Practicality: Anthropology in Indigenous Australia

9am – 5pm, Monday October 29, 2007

Australian National University

In association with AAS Conference 2007

Further details: see elsewhere in this Newsletter &

<http://www.aas.asn.au/conf07/>

Religious Innovation in East Asia – International Conference

November 28 – 30, 2007

The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

In the last few decades, the religious scene across East Asia has changed in fundamental ways. Changes in government administration, communications technologies, the degree of urbanisation, levels of education, and increasing wealth have run parallel to a burgeoning of religious life. These years have seen a growth in new religious movements, new varieties of existing religions and new forms of religiosity. They have also seen an increased public presence and awareness of religious groups through involvement in mainstream politics, in opposition to the state, and by violent interventions as well as simply becoming more visible on the streets, in the media and on the web. This conference seeks to explore these changes in China (including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau), Japan, South Korea and Vietnam and amongst their diasporic communities, and the background to them.

Further details: Benjamin Penny, RSPAS, ANU

benjamin.penny@anu.edu.au

The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific

Annual AFSAAP Conference

Jan 31 – February 2, 2008

Australian National University, Canberra

Proposals for papers and sessions on any aspect of African studies are welcomed. To date, two themes or strands have been identified: (1) Africans in Australia and (2) Outsiders in Africa. The first strand will include the African diaspora, studies of various African immigrants groups in Australia and New Zealand, results from the 2006 Censuses, and the provision of services for new arrivals. The second strand will include discussions of the role of AID agencies, mining companies and other organisations in Africa, and the involvement of nations

such as Australia and China. A Postgraduate Workshop will be held on Wednesday, January 30th, and the program for Saturday, February 2nd will include panels from African community organisations.

Further details: Dr David Lucas, Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, ANU

david.lucas@anu.edu.au

Is this the Asian Country?

17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia

1 – 3 July 2008

Monash Asia Institute, Melbourne, Australia

The theme for 2008 invites you to assess how the regions and issues on which you are interested are faring. The ASAA conference is multi-disciplinary and covers Central, South, South-East and North East Asia and the relationship of all of these with the rest of the world. The 17th biennial conference on 1-3 July 2008 will bring together specialists to assess trends in Asian law, medicine and health, science, ethics/human rights, politics, regional security, economics, culture, religion, environment, media, the performing arts and many other fields. Given the theme, we encourage cross-country and inter-regional analysis. To assess how Asia is doing, we need to think broadly about Asia and compare trends in India and China, the new giants of Asia, with the older industrial power Japan and newly emerging economies of Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. We also need to link up these trends with events outside Asia.

Further details: <http://www.conferenceworks.net.au/asaa>

Ownership and Appropriation

Joint International Conference of ASA, ASAA and AAS

December 8 – 12, 2008

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Centering on the core theme of *Ownership and Appropriation*, the conference aims to extend anthropological theory, by shifting the focus from 'property' and 'property relations' to notions and acts of 'owning and appropriating'. It will explore a variety of dimensions of ownership and appropriation, being concerned with process rather than states of being, with dynamism rather than stasis, and with agency and creativity rather than with property and objects. This emphasis is highly relevant in a globalising world in which resources are at once being depleted and increasingly privatised or enclosed, and ideas about the very kinds of things that can be property are expanding. Anthropology, with its emphasis on agency and understanding actors' perspectives, is well placed to advance colloquial understandings of such processes.

The deadline for proposals for workshops/panel sessions will be November 1st 2007. All members of the three associations are eligible to present papers at the conference. The deadline for paper abstracts will be May 1, 2008.

Further details: contact the Convenors, Veronica Strang
v.strang@auckland.ac.nz & Mark Busse
m.busse@auckland.ac.nz

Previous listings (see March 2007 AAS Newsletter)

Tasa Health Section: Health Social Science Conference
[Beechworth Campus, La Trobe University, 22 – 24 June 2007]

Beyond Text: Synaesthetic and Sensory Practices in Anthropology [University of Manchester, June 30 – July 2, 2007]

Indigenous Biography and Autobiography [Australian National University, 9 – 12 July 2007]

The 7th International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics (COOL7) [University of New Caledonia, Noumea: 2 – 6 July 2007]

In the Pipeline: New Directions in Cultural Research on Water [University of Western Sydney, 19 – 20 July 2007]

ICOMOS Conference: eXtreme heritage [James Cook University, Cairns Campus, 19 – 21 July 2007]

Climate Change and Heritage [James Cook University, Cairns Campus, 19 July 2007]

Language of Poetry and Song [Adelaide: 26 – 26 September 2007]

Recent Theses in Anthropology

Nicholas Alexander Bainton, School of Social & Environmental Enquiry, The University of Melbourne

Title: Virtuous Sociality and *Other* Fantasies: Pursuing Mining, Capital and Cultural Continuity in Lihir, Papua New Guinea (PhD, 2007)

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the cultural shifts that have occurred in Lihir, Papua New Guinea, as Lihirians were drawn into greater engagement with the capitalist system, initially through the colonial labour trade and more recently through large-scale resource extraction. This research draws upon 15 months of fieldwork in the Lihir Islands from 2003 to 2004.

This thesis is intended as a critical dialogue with world system theorists. World systems arguments are constructive for understanding how Lihirians have remained economically marginal. However, I reject the assertion commonly propounded in these approaches that the world capitalist system inevitably destroys ‘traditional’ cultures and remakes them to its own specifications. Working from Sahlins’ (1985, 1992) premise that there is always continuity in change, I have sought to illustrate those enduring structures and received cultural values that have shaped Lihirian engagement with the capitalist system. My concern is with articulation rather than penetration; to capture the dialectic of global structural inequalities and Lihirian selective appropriation. This approach allows me to emphasise the heterogeneity of Lihirian culture, not only prior to sustained European contact, or even mining activities, but specifically at the height of their engagement with the capitalist system.

Lihirians have long desired the kind of development that would enhance their lives and provide them with a sense of equality with their Western neighbours. Large-scale resource extraction has brought many material and cultural changes to Lihir. Aside from emphasising the economic differences between Lihirians and Westerners, it has also generated internal stratification. Lihirians have since become aware of the pernicious effects of incommensurable difference. For many Lihirians, the historical denial of a shared humanity with Westerners, and their unrealised desires for material wealth, coupled with the more recent experience of local inequality, have been the source of great distress; over time this has fuelled diverse and diffuse attempts to reverse this situation. I have concentrated on the various ways Lihirians have sought to transform their lives and enable their ambitions for virtuous sociality – their ideal of an egalitarian and wealthy society configured on local social values. However many of their attempts have been flawed by internal contradictions. I demonstrate that not only do the majority of their dreams remain unrealised, but that they are also unrealisable.

In concentrating on Lihirian engagement with the processes of modernity, particularly as it is experienced through large-scale resource development, I have argued that capitalism has essentially ‘vitalized’ Lihirian culture, most evident in the manifold ways that Lihirians have selectively utilised aspects of capitalism for their own ends. However, I stress the vulnerability of this process, particularly as Lihirians have become increasingly dependent upon the useful things provided through capitalism, which in the Lihir case is ultimately contingent upon the extraction of a finite resource.

Stefanie Everke Buchanan, German Studies, Monash University

Title: The Construction of Cultural Identity: Germans in Melbourne (PhD, 2006)

Abstract:

The present study examines the ways in which German identity is lived in present-day Melbourne. In it, key operative terms such as identity, culture, community and symbols and rituals are defined for my purposes before the background of societal processes such as globalization and transnationalism, which, in turn, define the conditions under which migration from Germany to Australia takes place. The study’s method of data collection is based on empirical, ethnographic fieldwork. As the focus group of the present study is one of the most prominent ethnic groups in the history of migration to Australia, a brief history of German migration to Australia is given to provide necessary background knowledge.

The results of the empirical research are presented in three chapters, the focus of which is inspired by Ulf Hannerz’ tripartite system of describing “People”, “Places” and “Culture” as applied in his *Transnational Connections* (1996). This division allows for the devotion of adequate attention to a number of aspects of the findings, as well as

for their placement in a wider context. Thus, in 'People', the highly varied and diverse forms of group building and engagement in networks among Germans in Melbourne are presented and analysed and placed in their synchronic and diachronic contexts. In 'Place and Space', the focus was the relationship of participants with a real as well as an imagined Australia, investigating the connotations that they had of Australia as a space before their departure as well as the linkages they have made with Australia as a place since their arrival. In 'Cultural Practices', the focus is shifted towards the use and application of cultural practices that were perceived as 'German', such as symbols and rituals that were maintained in daily life. This chapter includes a brief discussion of the role of the German language for German community life.

It is in the interplay of all three categories that the research participants constructed and lived their cultural identities, and it is only by placing their experiences and practices of being German in Australia in the contexts outlined above that an understanding of this highly mobile, diverse and adaptive group can be achieved.

Brendan Corrigan, Anthropology and Sociology, The University of Western Australia

Title: Different Stories about the Same Place: Interpreting Narrative, Practice and Tradition in the East Kimberley of Northern Australia and the Aru Islands of Eastern Indonesia (PhD 2007)

Abstract

This thesis interrogates the relationship of archaeological models and indigenous understandings of origins in the East Kimberley region of Northern Australia and the Aru Islands of Eastern Indonesia. Archaeological models of prehistoric migration construct these places as part of the same landmass in the recent human period and at times of lower sea levels. Yet, the indigenous groups who currently inhabit these places assert and rely upon their localised understandings of autochthony and mythological creationism. The existence of these competing models led me to examine the degree to which the practice of archaeology in these locations constructs human prehistory in a way that necessarily disempowers the indigenous cosmology there. I examine the construction and content of these different stories about the same place to show how it is that they are essentially competing, conflicting and contradictory claims to truth. I show how each of these asserted cosmological positions emerge from the various cultural systems that sponsor and perpetuate them, paying special attention to the role of institutionally authorised experts within each of the cosmological positions described. I also seek to demonstrate the ways in which the distribution of expert knowledge plays a core role in a naturalised social order and the ongoing construction of cultural identity in their respective communities. I then interrogate the relationships that these differing forms of knowledge have with each other - paying close attention to the specifics of context in which they are evoked. I conclude that the examination of how these competing claims to truth are

distributed in space reveals their influence in the ongoing construction of identity in their respective communities.

Lorraine Gibson, Anthropology Department, Division of Society, Media, Culture and Philosophy, Macquarie University, Sydney

Title: Articulating Culture(s): Being Black in Wilcannia (PhD 2006)

The Aboriginal people of the town of Wilcannia in Far Western New South Wales have been widely depicted through dominant society discourses and images as having no culture. Through an ethnographic examination of what it means to be black in Wilcannia from both black and white perspectives, this thesis explores different ways of knowing and being. It describes the mechanisms through which 'culture' is tacitly and reflexively produced, performed and interpreted by Aboriginal people of the town, as well as the ways in which non-Aboriginal locals and dominant society consider these forms of 'culture' more broadly. The work offers counter-discourses to the dominant society claim that Aboriginal people of Wilcannia have no 'culture'.

In general terms, this thesis is about cultural identity, cultural recognition and difference. Recognition is by necessity a relational phenomenon. Therefore, the thesis is concerned with the ways in which non-Aboriginal people in Wilcannia perceive local Aboriginal people, and with the ways in which Aboriginal people perceive themselves in relation to one another as well as to whites. A special focus rests on how these perceptions are shaped and produced by underpinning ideologies inhering within certain dominant society categories and concepts. Some of the concepts and categories explored are those related to the themes of 'work', 'productivity', 'success' and 'opportunity'.

The thesis asks 'what is culture?' What does this concept mean to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Wilcannia and more broadly? What is it made to mean and why does this matter? In responding to these questions, 'culture' as category and concept is shown in its chameleon colours: colours which, for the most part, remain unproblematically hidden as they operate practically and discursively through 'taken for granted' and 'everyday' assumptions.

Given that Aboriginal people as a discursive category have become increasingly indexed by the products of art (Merlan 2001:681) this ethnography also engages with the category of 'art' and explores the ways in which 'art' and 'culture' are understood in more 'taken for granted' ways by whites and blacks in Wilcannia as well as more broadly. These are powerful and productive discursive categories that manifest in social actions and have social effects.

Wilcannia is a place where concepts about blackfellas and whitefellas are constantly being played out in practice and through discourse. What appear to be 'common' understandings and 'common' terms are revealed to be ambiguous and ambivalent as well as differently

understood. The easy binary categories of blackness or whiteness are often drawn on as a means to justify misunderstanding or to remove the work of clarifying inter-cultural confusion. This thesis engages with this confusion and its experience.

Lorraine now works as a Post Doctoral Researcher with the Australian Museum in Sydney
Lorraine.gibson@austmus.gov.au

Emma Kowal, Centre for Health and Society, University of Melbourne.

Title: The Proximate Advocate: Improving Indigenous Health on the Postcolonial Frontier (PhD 2006)

Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnography of white researchers who work at the Darwin Institute of Indigenous Health Research. This group of 'proximate advocates' is made up of predominantly middle-class, educated and antiracist white health professionals. Their decision to move from more populated areas to the north of Australia, where Indigenous disadvantage is most pronounced, is motivated by the hope of enacting postcolonial justice so long denied to the nation's first peoples.

This ethnography thus contributes to the anthropology of postcolonial forms, and specifically benevolent forms. The Darwin Institute of Indigenous Health Research is an example of a *postcolonial space* where there is an attempt to invert colonial power relations: that is, to acknowledge the effects of colonisation on Indigenous people and remedy them.

The thesis begins with an account of suburban life in contemporary Darwin focused on the figure of the 'longrasser' who threatens to create disorder at my local shops. This is an example of the *postcolonial frontier*, the place where antiracist white people encounter radically-different Indigenous people. Part 1 develops a conceptual model for understanding the process of mutual recognition that creates the subjectivities of Indigenous people and of white antiracists.

Drawing on critiques of liberalism and postcolonial theory, in Part 2 I describe the knowledge system dominant in Indigenous health discourse, *postcolonial logic*. It is postcolonial logic that prescribes how white antiracists should assist Indigenous people by furthering Indigenous self-determination. I argue that postcolonial logic can be understood as the junction of *remedialism* (a form of liberalism) and *orientalism*. The melding of these two concepts produces *remediable difference*: a difference that can be brought into the norm.

In Part 3 I describe how white researchers at the Institute experience radical difference, or at least its possibility. These experiences challenge the concept of remediable difference. If Indigenous people are not remediablely different, but radically different, the process of mutual recognition breaks down, and the viability of a white antiracist subjectivity is called into question. The ensuing breakdown of postcolonial logic threatens to expose white antiracists as no different from their assimilationist

predecessors.

Part 4 explores the underlying dilemmas of the postcolony that are revealed when postcolonial logic unravels. The *dilemma of historical continuity* emerges when the discursive techniques that enact historical discontinuity between postcolonisers and their predecessors break down. The *dilemma of social improvement* is the possibility that the practices of the self-determination era not only resemble assimilation, but are assimilation. It is the possibility that any attempts to extend the benefits of modernity enjoyed by non-Indigenous Australia to Indigenous people will erode their cultural distinctiveness. The *postcolonial condition* is the experience of living with these aporias.

In the conclusion, I consider the implications of my argument for the current Australian political context, for the project of liberal multiculturalism, and for the broader problem of power and difference. I look to friendship as a deceptively simple, perhaps implausible, and yet powerful trope that can relieve the postcolonial condition and offer hope for peaceful coexistence in the postcolony.

Poh Chin Lee, Anthropology and Sociology, School of Social and Cultural Studies, & School of Human Movement, The University of Western Australia

Title: Explorations of social capital and physical activity participation among adults on Christmas Island (PhD 2007)

Abstract

This research investigates social capital within the everyday space and actions of sociability on Christmas Island. The theory of social capital as proposed by Robert Putnam (1995) provides the framework for this investigation which was conducted in two phases. Quantitative and qualitative approaches and a mixed methods concurrent nested strategy were used in both phases of the investigation and the analyses. The analyses also incorporated multiple perspectives of both social capital and physical activity processes.

In the first phase, I sought to: (a) uncover the determinants of social capital within the Christmas Island community; (b) develop a social capital typology; and (c) establish the relationship between the determinants of social capital and adults' physical activity involvement. In all, 212 participants took part in the study. A social capital questionnaire and physical activity questionnaire were administered to the participants in a face-to-face interview. Factor analysis identified seven components of social capital. MANOVA analyses indicated significant main effects for gender and ethnicity on the social capital factors. Europeans compared to Asians possessed higher social capital scores for the dimensions of *Network Connections*, *Participation in Community* and *Social Proactivity*. Subsequently, four groups with distinct configurations of social capital were identified using cluster analysis. Descriptive analysis revealed that Cluster 1 had a majority of male respondents who spoke English, possessed tertiary education and were Europeans. This

group was the richest in fitness social capital composition and was the most physically active. Cluster 3 had a high percentage of Chinese and Malay women from a mixed range of educational levels. These individuals were non-English speakers, possessed moderate social capital levels and were the least active of all respondents. MANOVA analysis of physical activity participation further revealed significant differences for ethnicity and gender on physical activity status of the respondents. Males were more active than females, and European respondents were the most physically active of the three major ethnic groups. Participant observation and historical accounts revealed the influence of colonialism, ethnicity and culture on the community's social capital and physical activity profiles. In the second phase of my research I initiated two physical activity programmes (line dancing and walking), and used participant observation, along with in-depth interviews to further examine the relationships and intersections between ethnicity, gender, social capital and physical activity. Women from three major ethnic groups (Chinese, European and Malay) took part in 2 to 3 in-depth interviews regarding their perceptions of social capital and physical activity participation in the community. They also recounted their experiences in the two physical activity programmes. For reporting purposes, this phase is subdivided into three parts.

In part 1, inductive qualitative analysis revealed the existence of eight dimensions of social capital that resulted from contextual, everyday processes that operate in combination with macro processes such as culture, ethnicity, gender and history. Differences in associational involvement, network connections, civic and political participation were evident amongst Asian and European women. In part 2, five major themes related to women, ethnicity and physical activity were discovered. In part 3, another five themes pertaining to the nexus between women ethnicity, social capital and physical activity were found. Overall, several factors affected women's social capital and physical activity. These included: (a) women's societal roles and positions; (b) household and cultural norms relating to gender-based time and space negotiations; (c) ideologies surrounding ethic of care; and (d) role commitment. These factors also influenced women's recruitment into becoming active in their community. Network embeddedness and autonomy, assimilation and acculturation as well as language and knowledge competency further distinguished the community and physical activity status of European and Asian women.

Analysis related to the two physical activity programmes in part 3 showed how various forms of latent social capital within the community can be synergized to produce physical activity benefits and empower inactive and minority-group women. Findings in this study also support trust as an important element in the establishment of relatedness in a physical activity setting.

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Title: The formation and contestation of Molokan identities and communities: The Australian experience (MA, 2007)

Abstract

Molokans are a Russian sectarian community that has been a transnational diasporic community since their exile from southern Russia in 1839. During the 1839 exodus they were relocated to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. These countries make up a region referred to by Molokans as Transcaucasia located in and around the Caucasus Mountains. A further migration to Turkmenistan followed in 1889. Since that time, Molokans have settled in Iran, the United States of America, Mexico, Australia and Brazil. The colonies in Brazil and Mexico have disbanded with members re-joining Molokan communities in the United States of America and Australia. The communities remain in contact with one another and with various Molokan communities still existing in the Russian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic.

Molokans are characterised by a religious structure of lay ministers and elders in a traditional, patriarchal social community. They are a collectivity of churches (there is no hierarchy between the churches) and sub-groups who practise varying degrees of adherence to Molokan dogma. They are a millenarian, charismatic religious community similar to Pentecostals and Anabaptists with the exception that they have ceased to evangelise and have become 'closed' communities practising endogamy. Given their closed structure, relatively little is known about this group in mainstream society.

Jerry Moore (1997:212) notes that "a symbolic approach to culture inevitably leads to a concern with meanings" and that the meanings of cultural symbols may only be obtained from an insider's (emic) point of view. In this thesis, I explore various aspects of identity formation in Molokan communities in diaspora and present the meanings of some of their symbols and rituals in various chapters. I focus on two Molokan communities in Australia, namely in the southwest of Western Australia and Adelaide, South Australia. My exploration of the construction of the various Molokan identities is based on formal and informal interviews, participant observation and textual analyses (including of electronic media). I supplement ethnographic findings with an overview of Molokan beliefs, oral history and oral tradition to provide a context for the discussion of contemporary Molokan life in Australia.

In this thesis, I investigate oral history and oral traditions and demonstrate how they function to create a historical and religious foundation for the Molokans and how they develop a sense of community. I note the discourse of oppression, persecution, and migration which, despite ideological and social differences among the Molokan communities, unites its members and defines them as a closed community.

I also present the intercultural and intracultural interactions that contribute to the formation of disputed Molokan identities in diaspora. I investigate oral history and oral traditions and demonstrate how they function to create a historical and religious foundation for the Molokans and how they develop a sense of community. I highlight historical events that impacted heavily on the development of the Molokan community's social attitudes, in particular experiences of oppression, persecution, and migration.

I found that religious beliefs and practices are central to identity formation in that they create a lens through which migration and social experiences are interpreted. Religious performances provide an avenue for old rituals to be performed enabling aspects of the past to continue in the present. They provide a venue for perpetuating beliefs and cultural values through oral traditions and discourse. Religious performances also provide a venue to contest the identity promoted by elders of the Molokan church. Shared symbols in the form of cultural attire, religious texts, and Russian ornaments serve to preserve the predominantly Russian ethnicity of the Molokan communities.

Spirituality, in the form of prophecy, healing, and the shared expression of religious ecstasy (rejoicing in the Holy Spirit) provides a sense of *communitas* that helps to bind the communities. Persecution in Russia and in the United States of America promoted mistrust of outsiders and contributed to the closure of social boundaries. Interventionist and reform activities in both Russia and the United States of America reinforced the belief that social closure was the only way to maintain cultural continuity. Their shared history of migration and persecution contributes to the building of a core community identity.

Book Review

Animals the Ancestors Hunted: An Account of the Wild Mammals of the Kalam Area, Papua New Guinea

Ian Saem Majnep and **Ralph Bulmer** [Drawings by Christopher Healey. Edited by Robin Hide and Andrew Pawley]. Crawford House, Adelaide 2007

Peter D. Dwyer, School of Social and Environmental Enquiry, The University of Melbourne

The Lesser Prehensile-tailed Rat is a small, delicately coloured, soft-furred, burrowing and colony-dwelling animal of mid- and high altitude forests and grasslands of Papua New Guinea. It is named *Pogonomys silvestris* by scientific biologists and, variously, *gikep*, *moys* or *mes* by the much more knowledgeable Kalam people of the northern slopes of the Central Highlands of that biologically diverse country. In *Animals the Ancestors Hunted*, Ian Saem Majnep, as primary author, tells what he knows from his own experience of *gikep* and all the other mammals that live in and near Kalam territory. His gift to his readers is an extraordinarily rich natural history. Saem's lived experience of these animals – animals he

himself has seen, hunted, cooked, eaten, shared and been told tales about – interweaves so much more than the usual concerns of scientifically-trained biologists. In writing of *gikep*, and of the larger, related, *ymgenm*, Saem reports that the fruiting patterns of some plants, or the migratory patterns of some birds, provide cues to the whereabouts of the rats; that dietary practices vary between male and female Kalam; that people who have recently eaten these animals should not enter gardens and plant crops because, if they do, the crops might rot and die; that the animals may gather in great numbers to mourn the death of a member of their colony; that their tails were sometimes used for personal adornment; and that the arrival of Europeans, money and shops altered diets and hunting practices and has, sadly, led to erosion of local knowledge and understandings. The appearance of the animals, their favoured habitats, nesting and breeding habits and their diets are always framed by the ways in which these matters of biological fact connect to Kalam social etiquette, initiation practices, beliefs in forest goblins and sorcery, property rights, magic that attracts animals and magic that repels them, economic transactions and mythological origin tales. Throughout this book the biology of forest animals and the sociality of people blend seamlessly such that it is unsurprising to learn there was a time when game animals were so abundant that they were burned as fuel on open fires or that, in the distant past, a society of bachelor men acquired wives from wild dogs.

Saem's account of Kalam mammals reveals not merely much detail about the biology of these animals but provides insight into ways in which people who live with the animals incorporate them into all aspects of their lives. Ecology, as Saem appreciates it, is always relational and always grounded in experience. Little wonder, therefore, that there is often poetry in his words, a deep appreciation of the aesthetics of hunting and of being in the land: Thus, he writes: "In the dry season, when we go into the mountain forest and climb some tree and sit high up on a clump of epiphytes and scan the landscape, the distant woodlands shimmer with beauty, and this is so delightful to look upon that it may be hard to bring oneself to climb down and return home".

The book, however, is not Saem's alone. In the first instance it represents a 25-year collaboration between Saem and anthropologist Ralph Bulmer. Saem first tape-recorded his accounts of mammals. He then transcribed them in the Kalam language, repeated the transcription in neoMelanesian Pidgin and forwarded them to Bulmer who undertook the initial translation into English. For both men the task was time consuming and difficult. As the multilingual Saem commented, it was sometimes the case that he knew of no word in either Pidgin or in English that would suffice to translate a Kalam word so that, when Bulmer asked what he had meant, he would have to "stop and think" and sometimes "get really worried and begin to sweat with embarrassment" and ask himself "whatever possessed me that I took this work on!" Bulmer died in 1988 before the work had been completed. The anthropologists Andrew Pawley and Robin Hide,

hugely experienced Papua New Guinea scholars and former colleagues of Bulmer's, in association with Saem, somehow found time in the interstices of formal work responsibilities to complete the book. And Chris Healey, another experienced ethnographer of Papua New Guinea, drew on other talents to produce the fine pen drawings of wallabies, cuscuses, possums, bandicoots, rodents and dogs that appear throughout the work. The dedication of all five contributors to knowledge and to Papua New Guinea shines through the pages. But another dedication is worth noting. Saem was unusual among Kalam. His father died when he was very young. His mother, with her children, lived near the forest edge apart from most other people. And it was she who first taught Saem about the animals and plants which surrounded them, who showed him how to hunt and, ultimately, instilled the strong aesthetic appreciation he retains of the natural world. He thanks her beautifully: "For my mother Kalam, who with such fortitude carried me when we slept under the trees and in the rock-shelters and under the leaking roofs of desolate houses, so that I survived and grew. I have not forgotten her." Readers of this splendid book will have privileged insight into that remarkable woman and her remarkable son.

Recent theoretical explorations of human-environment relationships have argued that it is through their engagement with local environments that people give shape and coherence to the world, and that it is through forms of apprenticeship that they become equipped to negotiate the complex social and ecological relationships of which they, themselves, are a part. The world is not given in advance of people's interactions with it but, rather, it grows about each person as that person grows within it. The relationship between people and their environments is thus one of mutual and reciprocal creativity. *Animals the Ancestors Hunted* is not an explicitly theoretical work. Yet, as an ethnography grounded in Saem's personal experience and imbued with the imaginative understandings of Kalam society, it is embedded within and illustrative of these theoretical positions. This book may be read as poetry, as natural history, as a rich source of data for scholars of human-environment interactions and, importantly, as providing a superb opportunity for tertiary-level students to gain insight into ways in which people from another culture live and learn in their own holistic, interactive world. Saem Majnep was once apprentice hunter and natural historian to his mother. In *Animals the Ancestors Hunted* he assumes both his mother's role and her style. He directs attention to that which is significant. He invites his readers to follow his gaze and grow.

New Publications

Anthropological Forum

Vol. 17, Issue 1, March 2007

Lisa Palmer: "Negotiating the Ritual and Social Order through Spectacle: The (Re)Production of Macassan/Yolnu Histories"

Helle Rydstrøm: "Proximity and Distance: Vietnamese Memories of the War with the USA"

Robert Tonkinson: "Aboriginal 'Difference' and 'Autonomy' Then and Now: Four Decades of Change in a Western Desert Society"

Laurent Dousset: "'There Never Has Been Such a Thing as a Kin-Based Society': A Review Article"

Basil Sansom: "Yulara and Future Expert Reports in Native Title Cases"

The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology

Vol. 8, No.1, March 2007

Special Issue: Traditional Justice in Timor

Guest Editors: **James J. Fox & Andrew McWilliam**

Andrew McWilliam: "Introduction: Restorative Custom: Ethnographic Perspectives on Conflict and Justice in Timor"

Elizabeth G. Traube: "Unpaid Wages: Local Narratives and the Imagination of the Nation"

Laura S. Meitzner Yoder: "Hybridising Justice: State-customary Interactions over Forest Crime and Punishment in Oecusse, East Timor"

Andrew McWilliam: "Meto Disputes and Peace Making: Cultural Notes on Conflict and its Resolution in West Timor"

James J. Fox: "Traditional Justice and the 'Court System' of the Island of Roti"

Janet Gunter: "Communal Conflict in Viqueque and the 'Charged' History of '59"

The Australian Journal of Anthropology

Vol. 18, No.14, March 2007

Jane Anderson: "The Contest of Moralities: Negotiating Compulsory Celibacy and Sexual Intimacy in the Roman Catholic Priesthood"

Kay Anderson & Colin Perrin: "'The Miserablest People in the World': Race, Humanism and the Australian Aborigine"

John Burton: "The Anthropology of Personal Identity: Intellectual Property Rights Issues in Papua New Guinea, West Papua and Australia"

Jamon Alex Halvaksz: "Cannabis and Fantasies of Development: Revaluing Relations through Land in Rural Papua New Guinea"

Bruce Kapferer: "Anthropology and the Dialectic of Enlightenment: A Discourse on the Definition and Ideals of a Threatened Discipline"

Journal of the Polynesian Society

Vol. 15, No. 4, December 2006

Jennifer G. Kahn & James Coil: "What House Posts Tell Us about Status Difference in Prehistoric Tahitian Society: An Interpretation of Charcoal Analysis, Sacred Woods and Inter-site Variability"

Catherine Orliac: "Two Offering Stands from Mangareva in the Collections of the Peter-the-Great Museum of St Petersburg and the Musée du Quai Branly"

in Paris”

Jennifer Johnstone & Richard Feinberg: “From Oriori to the Everly Brothers: Observations on the Music of Nukumanu”

Oceania

Vol. 77, No. 1, March 2007

Alison Dundon & Charles Wilde: “Introduction: HIV and AIDS in Rural Papua New Guinea”

Katherine Lepani: “Sovasova and the Problem of Sameness: Converging Interpretive Frameworks for Making Sense of HIV and AIDS in the Trobriand Islands”

Alison Dundon: “Warrior Women, the Holy Spirit and HIV/AIDS in Rural Papua New Guinea”

Verena Keck: “Knowledge, Morality and ‘Kastom’: SikAIDS among Young Yupno People, Finisterre Range, Papua New Guinea”

Charles Wilde: “‘Turning Sex into a Game’: Gogodala Men’s Response to the AIDS Epidemic and Condom Promotion in Rural Papua New Guinea”

Lawrence Hammar: “Epilogue: Homegrown in PNG – Rural Responses to HIV and AIDS”

Eirik J. Saethre: “Conflicting Traditions, Concurrent Treatment: Medical Pluralism in Remote Aboriginal Australia”

Michael Kwa’ioloa & Ben Burt: “‘The Chiefs’ Country’: A Malaitan View of the Conflict in Solomon Islands”

Land of Beautiful Vision: Making a Buddhist Sacred Place in New Zealand

Sally McAra, University of Hawai’i Press, 2007

[From the publisher’s announcement.] *Land of Beautiful Vision* is the first book-length ethnography to address the role of material culture in contemporary adaptations of Buddhism and the first to focus on convert Buddhists in New Zealand. Sally McAra takes as her subject a fascinating instance of an ongoing creative process whereby a global religion is made locally meaningful through the construction of a Buddhist sacred place. She uses an in-depth case study of a small religious structure, a stupa, in rural New Zealand to explore larger issues related to the contemporary surge in interest in Buddhism and religious globalization. Her research extends beyond the level of public discourse on Buddhism to investigate narratives of members of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) about their relationship with the land, analyzing these and the FWBO’s transformative project through a thematic focus on key symbolic landmarks at their site, Sudarshanaloka.

In considering cross-cultural interactions resulting in syncretism or indigenization of alien religions, many anthropological studies concentrate on the unequal power relations between colonizing and colonized peoples. McAra extrapolates from this literature to look at a situation where the underlying power relations are quite different. She focuses on individuals in an organization whose members seek to appropriate knowledge from an “Eastern” tradition to remake their own society—one

shaped by its unresolved colonizing past.

In its exploration of the role of three key symbolic markers of relationship between the community, its motivating ideals, and the land it occupies, *Land of Beautiful Vision* brings together the diverse themes of land, colonization, environment, and the relationship between Buddhism and indigenous spiritual entities. It contributes to material culture studies, landscape studies, religious studies, and anthropology of religion. In exploring the domestication of Buddhism in a new cultural setting, it will be of interest to anyone wanting to understand the rise of Buddhism in new sociocultural settings. It will also be of interest to scholars and students of cross-cultural religious translation and settler societies.

Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery

Philip Taylor, National University of Singapore Press, 2007

[From the publisher’s announcement.] This book provides an account of the vigorous survival of an Islamic community in the strife-torn borderlands of the lower Mekong delta and its creative accommodation to the modernising reforms of the Vietnamese government. Officially regarded as one of Vietnam’s national minority groups, the multilingual Cham are part of a cosmopolitan, transnational community, and as traders, pilgrims and labour migrants are found throughout mainland Southeast Asia and beyond. Drawing on local and extra-local networks developed during a long history that includes many migrations, the Cham counter their political and economic marginalisation in modern Vietnam by a strategic use of place and mobility, with Islam serving as a unifying focus. This highly readable ethnographic study describes the settlement history and origin narratives of the Cham Muslims of the Mekong delta, and explains their religious practices, material life and relationship with the state in Vietnam and Cambodia. It offers original insights into religious and ethnic differentiation in the Mekong delta that will enrich the comparative study of culturally pluralist societies, and contributes significantly to the study of Islam, cosmopolitanism, trade, rural development and resistance and the Malay diaspora.

Yumbulyumulmantha ki-Awarawu. All Kinds of Things from Country. Yanyuwa Ethnobiological Classification

John Bradley, Miles Holmes, Dinah Norman Marrngawi, Annie Isaac Karrakayn, Jemima Miller Wuwarlu and Ida Ninganga; Research Report Series, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, The University of Queensland. Vol. 6, 2006.

[From the back cover.] This book explores Yanyuwa ways of understanding and classifying their environment. The authors argue that classification is a contextual act based on factors as diverse as authority, utility, kinship, ecology, aesthetics, ownership and religion. For the Yanyuwa, potentially endless classifications and reclassifications can be made because the goal is not to arrive at a particular system but rather to explore and understand the various relationships that may exist in

accordance with Yanyuwa law. The book “will appeal to specialists in a wide variety of academic fields and to interested laypersons”, it “is readily accessible to younger generations of Yarryuwa and serves as an important cultural resource for the future. Well-developed arguments in favour of a contextual and socio-cultural understanding of ethnobiological knowledge will be of particular interest to specialists in ethnobiology, and are highly relevant to ongoing debates in the field” (Christopher Healey).

Animals the Ancestors Hunted: An Account of the Wild Mammals of the Kalam Area, Papua New Guinea

Ian Saem Majnep and **Ralph Bulmer** [Drawings by Christopher Healey. Edited by Robin Hide and Andrew Pawley]. Crawford House, Adelaide, 2007

[See review elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter.]

Aboriginal Bird Knowledge

Robert Gosford, of the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University and the international web-based group the Ethnoornithology Research & Study Group, has spent the last two years collecting bird knowledge from across Australia and later this year will travel the country meeting with Aboriginal people to hear and record their stories about birds. He is currently writing a book with the working title “Aboriginal Bird Knowledge” to be published by CSIRO Publishing and planned for release in the third quarter of 2008. He will consider the following questions: What do indigenous Australians know about our birds and how is it different from contemporary ‘scientific’ knowledge? What contributions can that knowledge make to bird conservation and landscape management – on and off Aboriginal owned and managed lands? How can that knowledge be presented in a way that maintains its cultural integrity and is accessible to others interested in birds? How can local people contribute to this project and will their knowledge be protected? Robert said: “In Australia, traditional indigenous knowledge of birds has been poorly recognised by scientists and conservation managers and I hope that this book will bring this important knowledge to the attention of those scientists, bird watchers and the general public – not just because it is good and interesting information about our birds or to fill in some of the many gaps about our current knowledge about Australian birds, but also to see how this knowledge can make important contributions to the management of birds on and off Aboriginal land.” He invites anyone with an interest in the project to contact him directly at BirdKnowledge@gmail.com.

Do ‘Silly Titles’ Deserve Grants? The American Experience

In early May 2007 the American Anthropological Association alerted members to two congressmen attempting to block the funding of some NSF projects in Congress. The incident may remind AAS members of similar non-academic intervention in the funding of some ARC grants recently. Fortunately, the US instance seems to have ended relatively happily. Perhaps Australian academics should be a little less timid.

The NSF Authorization bill for FY2008 was scheduled to come up for debate on the US House of Representatives floor. Two proposed amendments – introduced by Reps. John Campbell (R-CA) and Scott Garrett (R-NJ) – would have prohibited funding of nine already funded National Science Foundation grants in the Social, Behavioral and Economics Science Division based on their “silly” titles. Those titles were (1) The Reproductive Aging and Symptom Experience at Midlife among Bangladeshi Immigrants, Sedentees, and White London Neighbors, (2) The Diet and Social Stratification in Ancient Puerto Rico, (3) Archives of Andean Knotted-String Records, (4) The Accuracy in the Cross-Cultural Understanding of Others’ Emotions, (5) Bison Hunting on the Late Prehistoric Great Plains, (6) Team versus Individual Play, (7) Sexual Politics of Waste in Dakar, Senegal, (8) Social Relationships and Reproductive Strategies of Phayre’s Leaf Monkeys, and (9) Cognitive Model of Superstitious Belief.

Urgent lobbying by AAA members, psychologists, sociologists and others saw the amendments rejected and the bill passed.

AAS Newsletter Contributions

The Newsletter provides a vehicle for informing members about AAS matters and other issues of relevance. We welcome items such as Conference announcements; notable appointments, retirements or honours received; titles and abstracts of MA and PhD theses in anthropology that were awarded in the past 12 months; short book reviews or brief notices regarding important new publications; short articles on issues of importance to the discipline; reports on research-in-progress; postgraduate events of significance. The current editors are Peter Dwyer (pddwyer@unimelb.edu.au) and Mary Patterson (marycp@unimelb.edu.au), both at the School of Social & Environmental Enquiry, The University of Melbourne.

The next issue of the Newsletter will be published in September 2007. Some back issues are available on the AAS web site: <http://www.aas.asn.au>