



Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations, Coolgardie, 1897. Aborigines had little cause to celebrate this year. Coolgardie nuggets, 1898.

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CHAPTER 14

ABORIGINAL STUDIES AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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THE LEADING COLLECTION of print and non-print material on Aboriginal society is housed in the library of the AIAS in Canberra. The library holds over 5000 books, 4000 pamphlets, 5000 unpublished manuscripts, 150 000 photographs, 880 000 feet of archival film, 250 films and 14 000 language and music tapes and is being constantly expanded. It has an exhaustive catalogue by tribe, topic and author, a small staff to answer queries and a reading room, and is an essential resource centre for those seeking to pursue in depth a topic related to the Aborigines.

Published bibliographies are relatively few and are soon outdated because of the rapid growth in research and publication on Aboriginal matters since the mid-1960s. The only comprehensive bibliography is by J. Greenway (1963). Between 1966 and 1970 the AIAS published five annotated regional bibliographies on those areas of the continent then regarded as offering the best research possibilities—those where people lived most traditionally. These useful volumes, all compiled by Beryl Craig, are: *Arnhem Land peninsular region, including Bathurst and Melville Islands* (1966); *Cape York* (1967); *Kimberley region: an annotated bibliography* (1968); *Central Australian and western desert regions: an annotated bibliography* (1969); *North-west-central Queensland: an annotated bibliography* (1970).

N.J.B. Plomley (1969) and A. Massola (1971) produced regional bibliographies on the Tasmanian and Victorian Aborigines which are still useful. Original data that are often hard to find are contained in theses and dissertations. W.G. Coppel has listed these up to 1977 and his work has been updated by D.H. Bennett in the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies newsletter* (14, September 1980, 52–65), and since then in the Institute's *Annual bibliography* referred to below. The *Union list of higher degree theses* discussed in chapter 8 is, of course, another source of information on work done in Australian universities.

None of these bibliographies deals in depth with publications about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal society or the contemporary situation. Since 1966 the AIAS has been issuing current bibliographies which now appear in the form of an *Annual bibliography*, containing over 1200 items in 1983, indexed by subject, tribe, region and author. The bibliography covers a range of topics from learned articles on the finer points of kinship to government reports on employment and pamphlets about land rights. More recently a new bibliographic service has been added: the newspaper cuttings, which have been bound in volumes for each year since 1962 and are now made available twice yearly in microfiche, with an annual cumulative index beginning in 1981. Although not comprehensive, this publication covers 6000 items each year.

A few specialist bibliographies have also appeared. In particular, P.M. Moodie and E.B. Pedersen (1971) present basic reference in the important area of health which has been updated by recent unpublished work available at the AIAS. J. McCorquodale's work, *A bibliography of Aborigines and the law*, now in press, will list all Aborigine-related legislation, with notes on significant cases and a bibliography. It will supersede Brockwell (1979).

For teachers there are two particularly useful reference works. M. Hill and A. Barlow (1978) provide an evaluative assessment of those resources most likely to be in school libraries or which ought to be in them. A companion volume by W.G. Coppell entitled, *Audio-visual resource materials relating to the Aboriginal Australians* (Canberra, Curriculum Development Centre, 1978) lists a wide range of non-print material and teaching kits available to teachers.

Given this wealth of material on Aboriginal society, it is surprising that there are relatively few good textbooks. For prehistorians D.J. Mulvaney's classic (1975) has been superseded by the much less readable but information-packed text by J.P. White and J.F. O'Connell (1982). In the area of socio-cultural life, Elkin's well-known and much reprinted book, *The Australian Aborigines: how to understand them* (A & R, 1938 and subsequent reprints) is dull and out of date. R.M. and C.H. Berndt's account (1981) is encyclopaedic but not a book to sit down and read from cover to cover. One of the best integrated and most lucid overall accounts is by Kenneth Maddock (1982), but it is a cool and clinical analysis from which conflict, competition and people are absent. For physical anthropology, Robert Kirk (1981) is an accessible and up-to-date account.

While textbook overviews of Aboriginal society are important places to begin reading, the rich texture of daily life can be found only in detailed descriptions and analysis of particular Aboriginal societies, that is, in the classic ethnographies. Although Europeans began writing about Aborigines from initial contact, it was not until the 1870s that the first major work devoted to Aboriginal culture was published. This, like much subsequent work, relied heavily on the use of questionnaires sent to protectors of Aborigines, missionaries and the like. Lorimer Fison and Alfred Howitt's *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (Melbourne, Robertson, 1880) was the first detailed study addressing a specifically anthropological problem, but the people whose way of life is described had already been drastically affected by colonisation.

Twenty years later detailed studies began to appear of people whose way of life was substantially intact. In 1879, Walter Roth started publishing on Aboriginal culture in northwest and northern Queensland. Although his work was highly detailed and important, it did not have the impact of Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen's more sustained accounts of Aboriginal religion and social organisation in central Australia. Professional anthropology began with the establishment of the first chair in anthropology at Sydney University. This led to a dramatic change in the nature and amount of work being undertaken. The outstanding books arising from this initiative in the prewar period are undoubtedly the studies by Lloyd Warner (1937) and Phyllis Kaberry (1939), but many important papers are also published principally in the journal *Oceania*.

The professionalisation of archaeology took place after World War II; Aboriginal studies received a boost from the establishment of the AIAS in 1962. Initially the institute promoted linguistic research, but it quickly broadened its scope to cover all aspects of Aboriginal society.

There are few adequate accounts of the contemporary situation. Only Basil Sansom (1980) and Robert Bropho (1980) provide insights into the cultural world of fringe dwellers. Other analyses are sociological in tone, such as Fay Gale's *Urban Aborigines* (ANUP, 1972) and her more detailed examination of the same subject with J. Wundersitz, *Adelaide Aborigines: a case study of urban life, 1966-1981* (Australian National University, 1982), which provides statistics on people in Adelaide but little insight into how such people differ from poor white Australians. For this one has to turn to Aboriginal writing, mainly biographies and novels. A. Shoemaker has drawn up 'A checklist of black Australian literature', *Australian literary studies*, 11, 2, 1983, 255-63.

Nevertheless, the series of 14 volumes *Aborigines in Australian society* (ANUP, 1970-80)—of which Gale's book was one—that resulted from the Social Science Research Council of Australia's Aborigines project directed by Charles Rowley between 1964 and 1967, remains a fundamental and comprehensive source from which to investigate the contemporary scene.