

Book Reviews

Cultures of Australia

Diprotodon to Detribalization. Studies of Change among Australian Aborigines. ARNOLD R. PILLING and RICHARD A. WATERMAN, Eds. Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1970. xiv, 418 pp., illus. \$10.

Apparently man was in Australia early enough to have been a contemporary with the *Diprotodon*, one of a variety of now long extinct giant marsupials, and aboriginal man seems to have been changing his genetic, his linguistic, and his social and cultural patterns ever since. This is the dominant theme uniting this collection of conference papers: first, to lay to rest forever the notion of the "unchanging aborigine," and second, to indicate the proper placement of aborigines in the frameworks recognized today for the analysis of culture change.

Around this broad theme Pilling and Waterman have assembled papers by physical anthropologists, archeologists, social anthropologists, and linguists, as well as from a serologist, a medical doctor, a botanist, a geographer, a paleontologist, a priest, and a welfare department staff member, to create a veritable file cabinet of information about aboriginal history and prehistory. The works of such specialists are presented under seven headings: General, Physical Anthropology, Prehistory, Linguistics, Economics, Social Organization, and Religion and Ritual. But these sterile rubrics give a rather misleading impression that each paper is a description of a different aspect of a single larger human whole. This is true only in the most general sense. Yes, the authors do discuss man in Australia, but the theme of the book is culture change, and the papers deal with different periods of history, with different areas of Australia, and in perspectives which vary from broad, continent-wide interpretations to what might be termed "core borings" of specific groups clearly defined in time and space. Thus, in the bias of this reviewer, the organization of the book obscures two conventional strategies employed by anthropologists to under-

stand processes of culture change: (i) that of historical reconstruction and the tracing of cultural evolution, and (ii) that of analysis of culture contact situations. No doubt processes of evolutionary change and contact change may be observed to occur in the same situation, but in order to understand which processes lead to a given result we must initially separate so-called synchronic descriptions from diachronic descriptions.

Thus to discuss these papers more specifically and to focus on possible causal explanations of change I find it helpful to recognize three groups: papers dealing with cultural evolution and prehistory, papers describing the "before and after" conditions of initial European contact, and papers describing the contemporary conditions of culture contact.

There are four papers focused on changes in Australian prehistory, but I would add to this group Pilling's paper on "Changes in Tiwi language" and Micha's on "Trade and change in Aboriginal Australian cultures . . .," for they are primarily reconstructions of precontact situations. Collectively, these papers represent at least four different strategies of interpretation: Kulturkreise diffusionism, specific historical reconstruction from early records and museum materials, culture area analysis, and archeological research. Examples of the last approach are Bauer's paper dealing with the prehistory of Kangaroo Island and Gill's impressive paper "Antiquity and changing environment of the Australian Aborigines." Gill offers the general reader a summary of archeological research in Australia up to about 1967, a rather detailed discussion of the problems involved in dating the Keilor cranium, and an ecological interpretation for the great differences found in tool assemblages, fossil remains, and the distribution of sites dating 18,000 to 30,000 years ago. Such differences he contends are explicable by the radical changes in the paleoclimate and the responding flora and fauna. The theme of change is vaguely continued in McCarthy's paper, "Prehistoric and recent change in Austra-

lian Aboriginal culture," and in the paper by Lommel, "Changes in Australian art." McCarthy's paper is a summary of the work of D. S. Davidson, who is said to have been the first researcher to develop culture and age area analyses of Australia. Davidson made detailed maps of the distribution of material culture traits such as stone tools, throwing sticks, bark canoes, skull caps, containers, art forms, gum cements, shell pendants, footwear, and mortuary practices. As a nonspecialist in the prehistory of Australia I found myself lost in the involved interpretation of sites, sequences, phases, and traditions, which are presented without benefit of charts, maps, or diagrams. Finally, in conclusion, McCarthy discusses his own study of the changes in the techniques and styles of cave paintings and rock engravings.

The analysis of art styles continues in the work by Lommel, of the Kulturkreise school, who identifies six pan-Australian aboriginal art styles, notes their relationship to similar styles outside the continent, and speculates about the influence of such styles on prehistoric Australian culture. He concludes: "As far as change is visible in Australian art, its main feature is a progressive degeneration." And as for the influence of such imported styles on Australian mentality and social habits he states: "The typical Australian characteristic seems to be the incapability to change and to assimilate." This analysis is based primarily on the assumption of the priority of naturalistic forms, on the relative uninventiveness of man, and on the tenacious association of dissimilar traits. I find such conclusions not only nondescriptive, but with such evidence clearly unsupportable. Quite a contrary view of aboriginal capabilities for change is presented by Micha's description of the modifications of tjuringa boards, cults, dances, myths, and corroborees which were traded all over ancient Australia. Also, Pilling's reconstruction of Tiwi linguistic forms reveals that "at least one Aboriginal language was dynamic, not static, in the pre-European era."

Studies of the initial impact of the European invasion include Cook's paper on the incidence of disease, Simmons's paper on the introduction of new blood genes, Irvine's paper on the evidence of change in the vegetable diet, and Goodale's paper on ritual change among the Tiwi of Melville

Island. All these contributions portray some aspect of aboriginal life before or at the point of earliest contact and then proceed to discuss what happened as a result.

In the introduction to Capell's excellent paper, we learn that "there seems to have been an indigenous population of about three hundred thousand, divided into some six hundred tribes, each speaking its own language." But today "many—perhaps more than half [of the] languages have disappeared entirely." No doubt some of the disappearance of native language has been due to the disappearance of the speakers as a result of introduced diseases. Cook concludes that few of the most devastating diseases were indigenous and that most of them were a result of introduced changes beginning since 1824 when aborigines were induced to settle in permanent camps, were exposed to new human contacts and thereby new infections, and were enticed by wage work to change their diet. The late botanist F. R. Irvine concludes that almost all dietary changes have been for the worse.

Clearly, the best focused and most comparable first-hand observations in this anthology are the seven portrayals of what is happening to aboriginal life today. "Today" refers to any baseline date from 1900 to 1967. Together these vignettes offer the basis for an emerging portrait of the acculturation front in the Australian suburbs and hinterlands. Here we read a familiar story recorded by Spicer in *Cycles of Conquest* for the Indians of the American Southwest. The Indians variously endured community reorientation, the gradual extinction of their native languages, political and economic isolation, and a confusion of administrations and policies. Under a variety of programs, all more or less dedicated to the replacement of indigenous customs and institutions, the descendants of these people managed to pull together a new way of life which may be described as a fusion, an incorporation, or even a compartmentalization of different cultural behavior.

Similarly, aborigines as discussed in the papers by the Berndts, the Watermans, J. Wilson, Long, Capell, K. Wilson, and Worms all made adjustments that were not simple replacements of indigenous behavior. Initially government and mission stations, mining and cattle camps, and settlements on the fringes of Australian cities

seem to have functioned as collection centers, draining the open country of aboriginal occupants. Bands of aborigines came to these places for rations, for part-time jobs, and for a variety of other reasons, often remaining there until they died. After a decline in population there was a rapid increase, and larger numbers of people were found at these places than were ever collected in one spot in the "bush." Children born at these stations grew up knowing no other area, no other way of making a living, and no other language but the one dominant in the settlements. There was a breakdown of the gerontocracy, a change in the subsection grouping, an alteration of the marriage rules and initiation rites, and greater numbers of people attending more ceremonies of greater variety than ever before. But such communities, the majority of which have no economic base, are transitional to something that is yet to emerge. Today, they appear to serve as learning depots, as places where people have increased opportunities to validate their behavior in terms of other cultural systems.

Thus, *Diprotodon to Detribalization* offers an array of material for many yet-to-be-written books on aboriginal culture change. It begins with a full summary of change theory, and by its title emphasizes a change in the influence of forces leading to the replacement and creation of new life forms. The environment is always changing and species that have the greatest built-in variety have the greatest chance for survival. We must pay increasing attention to what man is doing to himself in destroying this variety.

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Social Mobility Models

Chains of Opportunity. System Models of Mobility in Organizations. HARRISON C. WHITE. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1970. xvi, 418 pp., illus. \$15.

Despite the vast production of sociological literature very few sociological works manifest both conceptual originality and analytic power. *Chains of Opportunity* belongs to this select group. Like White's earlier research

this book emphasizes the complex and interrelated character of social structure, and the constraints this interrelatedness places upon the operation of social processes.

White develops these themes by proposing a new orientation to the old phenomenon of social mobility. The typical mobility study analyzes successive distributions of a demographically defined population over highly aggregated social categories often demarcated in terms of status. This, White suggests, is not a very fruitful procedure, especially if the ultimate objective is construction of sociological theory. A more propitious approach—and the one pursued throughout *Chains of Opportunity*—involves examination of "mobility by a well-defined population of eligible men among a system of fixed jobs independently demarcated." White illustrates the appropriate methodology with a detailed investigation of mobility patterns among clergy of the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches.

Central to the new perspective is the concept of opportunity. White identifies the structure of opportunity, not the ambitions of individuals, as the principal generator of mobility. Thus a satisfactory theory must first and foremost explicate the logic of opportunity as it operates in specific social contexts.

White briefly describes four general mobility systems, but analyzes only one—the "tight system"—in detail. The tight system is characterized by a slight surplus of jobs over men, which means that men in the system almost always have jobs but jobs may go temporarily unfilled. To analyze the logic of opportunity as it occurs in tight systems, White introduces the notion of a "vacancy chain." A vacancy chain may be interpreted as the path a vacancy describes as it moves through a system of fixed jobs. Suppose, for example, A a bishop of the Episcopal Church retires, thus creating a vacant bishopric. Then B rector of large church in New York fills the vacancy resulting from A's retirement. Next, C rector of small New Haven church occupies the vacancy created by B's promotion. Finally, D a newly ordained seminary graduate replaces C in the New Haven position. This sequence of events yields the following vacancy chain: a vacancy initially appears in a bishop's position; from there it moves into a large New York church; then it transfers to a small New Haven church; lastly it leaves the system altogether.