



# The Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter

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## AAS Newsletter Contributions

Please submit contributions for the next Newsletter by Monday 15 September.

The Newsletter is a vehicle for informing members of AAS matters and to provide brief commentaries on issues relevant to members. It may include such items as book reviews, notices of conferences, reports on research-in-progress, as well as short articles. If you wish to contribute an item for publication in the Newsletter, please contact either of the co-editors:

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Back issues of the Newsletter are available on the AAS website: <http://www.aas.asn.au>

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## TAJA – Flagship Journal of AAS

At a recent meeting of the AAS Executive, and after due consideration, it was decided to provide a subscription to *TAJA* (the flagship journal of the AAS) as part of the annual membership fee paid by members and fellows. This new arrangement will take effect from 1 January 2003. The implementation of the scheme will necessitate the following modest increase in AAS annual fees for the year 2003, which is subject to member's approval at the 2003 AGM:

Fellows:	from	\$78	to	\$98
Members:	from	\$52	to	\$72
Unsalariated:	from	\$13	to	\$28

It should be pointed out that non-AAS members pay \$60 for a *TAJA* subscription alone, while members - until now- were paying \$50. Current subscribers will therefore incur a saving, while other members will gain access to *TAJA* at an extremely low additional cost. Note that most other professional associations in Australia and beyond also provide a flag-ship journal as part of their annual

membership subscription fee.

The executive has approved the scheme in the belief that it will substantially increase the benefits of AAS membership. For *TAJA* the benefit will be an extra 200 or more subscribers to the journal. Overall, the scheme will benefit the profession by providing a broad-based forum for the presentation of contemporary research by Australian anthropologists.

Michael Allen, TAJA Editor

Thomas Reuter, AAS President

Information on TAJA is available on the Australian Anthropology website [www.aas.asn.au/TAJA.htm](http://www.aas.asn.au/TAJA.htm)

The TAJA subsite contains a homepage, subscription information and form, lists of contents and abstracts beginning from Vol.13(1), April 2002.

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## AAS Conference Updates

**1 –3 October, University of Sydney**

**Conference Theme: Anthropology and Pragmatism**

### Conference Costs

Members	Full Fee	\$175
	Earlybird	\$150
Student concession	Full Fee	\$ 90
	Earlybird	\$ 75
Non –Members		\$250
One day rate		\$ 80

Dinner	\$45
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**Key Dates for AAS Conference planning – make sure you diary them now!**

1 June	Submission deadline for panel proposals Well, it's been and gone! And we still have some new ones – but will be closing this VERY SOON as we are nearly 'full'. The program is looking healthily diverse!
15 July (approx)	Updating website with details and forms for registration
8 Aug	Deadline for paper abstracts. Closing date for earlybird registration <b>** Don't miss this one!**</b>
30 Sep	AAS Clearing House Pre-conference Session HODs Meeting
<b>1- 3 Oct</b>	<b>AAS Conference</b>
1 Oct	Plenary 1 Welcome Reception
2 Oct	Plenary 2 Conference Dinner
3 Oct	AAS AGM Plenary 3

Further details on the Conference will be published via AASNET as well as in the next Newsletter, and updated in due course on the AAS web page: <http://www.aas.asn.au>

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**Eulogy for Ken Maddock 1937-2003**

Les Hiatt  
June 10, 2003

Last Tuesday members of the AAS received a brief email message from David Martin, informing them of Ken's death. It ended with the sentence: "His forthrightness, intellectual honesty, and rigour will be missed by the profession". I think that summarises very well how Ken was regarded by his colleagues, and the high esteem in which they held him.

Over the weekend I refreshed my memory of Ken as a young man by looking at a photograph taken in 1967 at a cricket match. Tall and athletic, with a shock of blond hair, he stood in a group of youthful emigres from England and Wales, including Richard Wright, Nicolas Peterson, Rhys Jones and Harry Oxley. If you didn't know that he was born in Hastings, New Zealand (as distinct from Hastings, England), you would be excused

for thinking he was one of them. Indeed, given his careful articulation and a certain formality of manner, I initially assumed he was English in origin and for a long time continued to think of him as such.

In his struggle with cancer, Ken drew upon cricket to describe the humiliating effect of medication on a once-robust frame: "Chemotherapy has hit me for six", he said. His last words to Sheila were: "I have scored ten runs short of a century - write down the score". Although he may not have been in a clear state of mind, she thought his meaning was that he had not quite accomplished what he had hoped for. A good innings, but not one for the record books.

I am sorry if he left us on that note of disappointment because it is not warranted. Ken's contribution to social anthropology in Australia over the last forty years is second to none. If we take, as criteria, range of interests, depth of scholarship, analytical acumen, and lucidity of exposition, the score on the board comes to a comfortable ton. He played the game at international level; and while he may not have been the Don Bradman of Aboriginal studies, neither was anyone else.

Let us spend no more time on the quantification and hierarchy of achievement. Ken, after all, was by conviction an anarchist, even if as a normal product of natural selection he was susceptible to the pleasures of competition and the temptations of self-esteem. His initial training was in law, which helped him to develop formidable debating skills. Almost immediately after obtaining his bachelor of laws degree, he enrolled for an MA in anthropology at the University of Auckland. The subject of his thesis was preferred and prescribed marriage systems in New Guinea and Western Melanesia, which in due course aroused his interest in Aboriginal systems and led to a preliminary trip across the Tasman Sea. Recalling the occasion much later, he wrote: "Les was in the field during the summer of 1962-63 when I made my first visit to Sydney, but I shared a house with [his friend Monty West] and his wife Betty, who lent me his PhD thesis". A year later he returned to begin his own PhD candidature at the University of Sydney, with me as his supervisor. The subject of his research was a recent, highly secret cult in southern Arnhem Land called 'Yabadurrawa'. Empirically and analytically the outcome was a *tour de force*. Because of the sensitive nature of the material, Ken's PhD thesis could not be published and I daresay nowadays cannot be read without special permission.

One day a few years after Ken finished his fieldwork I was sitting at a table in a beer garden at Mataranka writing up my diary in a field note book. An Aboriginal man I'd never seen before came up and started a conversation, in the course of which he asked me if I was a "business man" (meaning a person involved in secret ceremonial matters). I reacted somewhat cautiously to this, and he then asked: "You know Ken Maddock"? "Yes", I said, "he's a good friend of mine". "Well," replied the Aboriginal man, pointing to my notebook, "this paper, that's how I know you're a business man. Ken

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Maddock got the same paper.” The totemic significance of departmental stationery.

The dominant theoretical influence pervading Ken’s two theses was undoubtedly Levi-Strauss. In fact by the 1970s Ken had become the most influential exponent of French and Dutch structuralism in Australian anthropology. This status was achieved partly through his widely-acclaimed general description of Aboriginal society, published by the Penguin Press in 1972, but more importantly by a series of ingenious shorter essays, placing interpretations on such matters as Aboriginal myths of the acquisition of fire, the emu anomaly, indigenous systems of classification, dual social organization, the brother/sister taboo in Arnhem Land, and so on.

There’s something about the formalism of the structuralist approach, I think, that suited Ken’s temperament. What he found particularly attractive in Levi-Strauss was the notion of culture autonomously transforming itself according to the inherent possibilities and constraints of a rational logic. A good example is his analysis of the Australian fire myths which he argues can be ordered as segments of a supermyth generated by a mathematical formula of which the Aborigines themselves were presumably unconscious. Such structures, supposing they exist, provide explanations of a very different order from Freud’s concept of the unconscious and the associated idea of culture as a way of dealing with unruly emotions.

While Ken was in Sydney on his first visit he bought a copy of John Anderson’s *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*. He was already familiar with the Libertarian *Broadsheet* and continued to contribute to its successor *Heraclitus* until a few years ago. While Ken was always keen to point out common ground between Anderson and Levi-Strauss, such as the notion of social or cultural movements taking up and working through the minds of individual thinkers, it seemed to me they stood for two rather different though perhaps complementary strands in his intellectual composition: Levi-Strauss on the one hand focussing upon ideas as instruments for ordering the chaos of experience, Anderson on the other hand preoccupied with the distortions of ideology through which interests are concealed and authority imposed. It was Levi-Strauss who reinforced Ken’s interest in the crystalline properties of thought, Anderson who intensified his impatience with the impurities of sentimentality, mystification and self-serving humbug.

The passage through parliament of the 1976 Northern Territory land rights act was a watershed not only in Aboriginal affairs but in Australian anthropology as well. Anthropologists with a background in Aboriginal studies came into increasing demand as consultants and expert witnesses in a legal process that affected a return of almost half of the Northern Territory from colonial to Aboriginal ownership. Ken was in the forefront of this revolution, assisting the Land Commissioner in one case and the Land Councils in several others, but more importantly publishing a series of analyses and running commentaries for which his combined skills in

anthropology and law provided an unmatched authority. At a more general level, while in Holland on sabbatical leave in 1979-80, he produced a monograph entitled *Anthropology, Law and the Definition of Australian Aboriginal Rights to Land*, which became a precursor to his book *Your Land is Our Land* (Penguin, 1983). This provided not only an anthropological and legal background to the land rights struggle in the Northern Territory but also considered earlier trends in European thought manifest in the writings of such scholars as the philosopher John Locke and the Swiss jurist Emer de Vattel. It came as a surprise to me that Henry Reynolds, in the text of his celebrated and influential book *The Law of the Land* published some five years later, made no reference to Ken’s book whatever, although it was listed in the bibliography.

The first twenty-five years of Ken’s professional career in Australia were by any standards a period of outstanding achievement. By the mid-1980s he was a major figure in Australian anthropology, the father of three fine children, and the husband of a woman who was as much his intellectual partner as the joint custodian of his genetic future. Yet it was about this time that he entered what is vulgarly but perhaps aptly referred to as a ‘mid-life crisis’. I have no doubt that it was during this period that he began the depressing process of self-assessment that made him wonder whether he was ever going to score the coveted century. To pass over it like that, however, would be to trivialise something much more significant. The fact of the matter is that the profession itself was in a state of crisis, though whether as a prelude to death or some unrecognizable metamorphosis no one could confidently say. Topics and issues that had been at the heart of the discipline since its inception, including many of those Ken had devoted his best years to, no longer seemed to be of interest. More to the point, they were likely to be stigmatised as inappropriate. In the view of a new generation the primary responsibility of anthropologists was not to advance their discipline but to advance its subjects.

Both, one would hope, are moral enterprises which can be pursued simultaneously. It should be possible, as Ken put it, to mix science with sympathy. Unfortunately, however, as the century drew to a close, situations arose in which it seemed a choice had to be made between one or the other. At any rate, a bias in one direction or the other created a schism within the profession, particularly in that part of it involved in Aboriginal studies. There was never any doubt what values Ken would give priority to if a choice was forced on him. In one of his last essays, published in *Anthropology Today*, he spoke of ‘the dubious pleasures of commitment’. “The use to which anthropologists put information”, he wrote, “can with some justification be cynically regarded if they appear to be blurring the boundary between the anthropologist as expert and the anthropologist as partisan or advocate.” He did not pretend that it was easy to maintain that boundary or even to know where it should be drawn. But there was no doubt that if it was shifted too far or eroded altogether,

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the status of anthropology as a branch of knowledge would disappear.

Ken's public defence of that status was both courageous and painful. To some within the profession he became a hero, to others an enemy. Whatever soreness he may have felt on that account would be mollified by testimonies to his integrity already beginning to appear, some of them from colleagues with whom he found himself in dispute. I believe the healing process will continue and that anthropology as Ken knew and loved it will in time re-emerge as a scholarly discipline, more mature and leaner in appearance perhaps, but acknowledged as having played a leading if not dominant role in shaping the humanities during the twentieth century. Ken's contribution to that era, as a fieldworker, thinker, and scholar committed to the values of science, is assured of an honoured place.

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### **A Report on Post-graduate Research at The University of Melbourne**

Corridor conversations among Anthropology postgraduates at Melbourne University have taken on an altogether more meaningful tone lately. This follows two highly successful "work-in-progress" conferences held by postgraduates in the past 6 months. In all, 14 postgraduates presented papers dealing with aspects of their work, all of which were followed by generous, critical and engaged discussion from staff and fellow students. These were not conferences packed with 15 minute presentations. Forty five minutes per presentation enabled detailed papers and rich and reflective discussion.

Presenters at the first conference had all completed or partially completed their fieldwork and the focus was very much on the varying processes involved in moving from 'fieldwork to text'. The breadth of topics was as impressive as the content of the papers. They included a critical examination of the relation between anthropology and culture in the highlands of Chiapas; a reflective paper setting out some thoughts on potential contributions of anthropology to current theorising and research on globalisation and another on ways in which anthropologists 'interpret' cultural difference. A paper on children and images analysed the ways in which two pre-schools worked with children and art.

A paper drawing on fieldwork in a fishing village in South Korea traced changes to women's work and space emerging from cultural and economic change in Korea, while fieldwork at-home examined some of the issues emerging from changing tenure in a Victorian lake fishery. Stories that young Vietnamese-Australian women tell about themselves were presented in an attempt to theorise something of the link between telling stories and writing ethnography.

The second and most recent conference enabled postgraduates to present their current thinking about their research proposals prior to undertaking fieldwork. Again, topics and thematic concerns were broad and eclectic involving thoughts about anthropology-at-home,

migration and place, mining and social change in PNG, political dissent in Malaysia, singing rituals and social life in China, machismo and working class masculinities and an analysis of the problematics of time and space in refugee 'warehousing' arrangements.

The conferences have been both stimulating and rewarding for all those involved. Walking in the corridors has become more risky and exciting. An environment where we are now all cognisant of each others work means that a simple stroll to the printer to collect a final draft of a chapter may mean a rewrite after someone suggests another idea, article or perspective relevant to your work. But it's good!!!!

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### **Non-Attached Consumerism**

Impressions by an anthropology graduate employed to teach English in Japan.

Catherine Smith

Japan is a nation of self-confessed shop-aholics. Virtually the entire archipelago is a string of shopping venues – most of which offer very good quality, expensive, high fashion, and high tech merchandise. The streets are full of beautiful women and fashionable men, donning the latest fashion garments and playing with expensive electronic toys. Where do they wear these outfits? Shopping of course, and everywhere else they go. I'm not just talking about fashion enthusiastic young yuppies. Fashion simply is a very high priority for mainstream Japan. Like many other issues of outward appearance, it is usually taken very seriously indeed, and by men and women of all ages and levels of income. Shopping districts are claustrophobically crowded seven days a week, more so on public holidays, and the high level of domestic consumption really does fuel the economy. So how do people keep up with it? Where does it all go at the end of the day? Quite simply, in the garbage.

Japanese footpaths are dotted with piles of garbage (*gomi*), composed of furniture, fully functioning electrical appliances in last season's colours, high tech and super cute toys for all ages that people have tired of and any number of items that would sell for quite a high price in a second hand store in Australia. What's more, nobody touches it, (except the occasional stray anthropology graduate come English teacher wanting to furnish her apartment at bargain rates), until its monthly collection. This *gomi* phenomenon often left me and other foreigners I knew bewildered. How can they just throw out such good stuff? It wasn't so much the sheer volume of consumption that bothered me (although it did), but the nonchalant manner in which it was discarded. Of course it was discarded to make way for more consumption, but the lack of attachment by Japanese to their possessions seemed almost obscene to foreign eyes at times. On the one hand Japanese people seemed obsessed with fashion, while, on the other, they couldn't care less about throwing it out six weeks later. The paradox plagued me. I had never considered myself a hoarder before but in this country I most certainly was. Am I really nothing but a

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greedy Westerner guarding my possessions? Is the Japanese attitude toward consumption a manifestation of the Buddhist psyche? Or is it just that they don't have a spare room to stash it all in?

As someone who considered herself a bit of a minimalist and environmentalist, this was confronting for me at times. Is it more virtuous to cherish a few possessions, or to remain non-attached to many? I ended up half-converted. I now have lots of fancy toys and when I left Japan, my unwanted possessions went largely into *gomi*-but it hurt.

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### **AAS Office Bearers**

The nomination forms for positions on the Executive Committee and the Accreditation Committee, and for the position of Publications Officer were sent to members to be returned by 1st July 2003.

To date (14 July) nominations for all positions except Treasurer have been received by the Secretary.

All nominations are uncontested except for the two Executive Member positions. A ballot is required for these positions. Ballot papers are returnable to the AAS Secretary no later than 15 August, 2003.

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### **From the Office Manager**

Invoices for 2003/04 membership fees have been sent out. I would like to say a big 'Thank You' to those members who have paid theirs so promptly, and remind the rest of you that there will be a discount on conference fees for those who are paid up members at the time of registration.

In an effort to make it easier to pay your AAS membership fees we have removed the minimum limit of \$30 for Credit Card payments, and introduced direct deposit payments which can be done through your bank or your internet banking service. Please contact me if you have any queries or difficulties with payment.

*Liz Bell*