



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Click on the titles to navigate through the newsletter

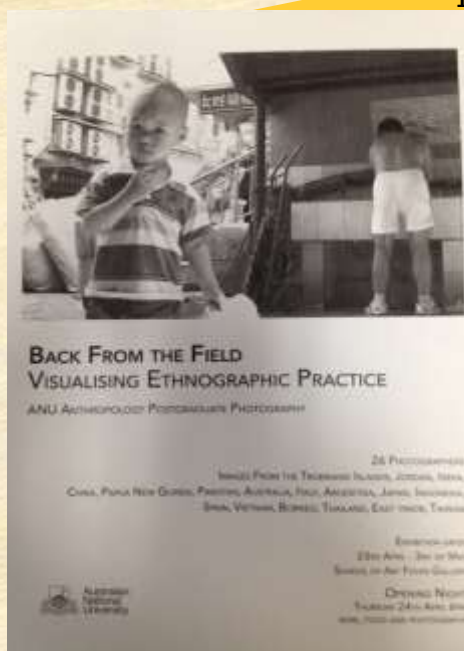
News from AAS	2
AAS conference 2015	6
ANSA	7
News from the programs	8
CONFERENCES	9
PUBLICATIONS	
Recent Theses in Anthropology	9
Journals	13
Books	13
Exhibition	14
OPPORTUNITIES	14
NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS	15

These photographs are of the exhibition 'Back from the Field: Visualising Ethnographic Practice', April 23 - May 4 2014, ANU School of Art, organised and curated by Tiffany Cone, Francesca Mosca, and Saskia Lillepuu (PhD Candidates)

1. Exhibition poster
2. Exhibition contributor, Thu Le Hoang Anh
3. Exhibition contributor, Annie McCarthy
4. Tiffany Cone, one of the organisers and curators of the exhibition

For more information about the exhibition see *this issue of The Q*, p.8

1



2



4



3



# News from AAS

## PRESS RELEASE

### PROPOSED CHANGES TO ABORIGINAL HERITAGE A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO CLOSE THE GAP

The Australian Anthropological Society raises concerns about proposed reform agenda. The national organisation of Australian anthropologists, the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS), has written to the Western Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs raising grave concerns about proposed amendments to the *WA Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972).

Many AAS members are alarmed at the possible implications of the reform agenda proposed in the Amendment Bill currently before parliament. If successful, these reforms will profoundly impact the ability of both themselves and the Aboriginal people with whom they collaborate to discharge their professional and cultural obligations in relation to the documentation and protection of Aboriginal heritage places in Western Australia.

With no provision for a formal role in key decision-making processes, the proposed changes entrench a system which treats Aboriginal people merely as informants of heritage values and leaves decision making in the hands of distant bureaucrats who are unfamiliar with both the people and the landscape **in question. What's more, the cultural and corporate rights and responsibilities of Western Australian traditional owners, who now have recognised native title rights to over more than 43% (1,090,111 sq. km) of the state, are inadequately accommodated.**

By proposing reforms that continue to exclude Aboriginal peoples from having any real say in the management of their own cultural heritage, the Western Australian government has missed an incredible opportunity to facilitate meaningful reconciliation and contribute to real improvements in the lives of Aboriginal families.

It is a well-known fact that Aboriginal people remain among the most economically and socially disadvantaged citizens of Western Australia. Aboriginal people have lower life expectancies and educational outcomes and higher rates of unemployment, disease and incarceration than the rest of the population. These inequities are even more apparent in the context of the current mining 'super-boom'.

There is a considerable and growing body of scholarship that demonstrates, however, that a strong attachment to traditional culture is found to

enhance outcomes across a range of socioeconomic indicators. This suggests the maintenance of cultural heritage should be viewed as a potential part of the solution to Aboriginal disadvantage in Western Australia rather than an obstacle to achieving it.

It follows that providing strong mechanisms by which Aboriginal people are empowered to speak about, manage and control places of significance on their own terms in the face of competing interests in land will benefit not only Aboriginal families, but the population of the state more broadly.

Far from being an impediment to development, reforming the existing regime to ensure the full and informed participation of Aboriginal peoples in the **management of the state's Indigenous heritage** would be an act of reconciliation that has the potential to contribute to the physical and emotional health and well-being of Aboriginal families and bring about real change in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Western Australians.

The AAS urges the government of Western Australia to listen to the many voices of Aboriginal Western Australians who have expressed their opposition to the proposed amendments to the Aboriginal Heritage Act and withdraw it from Parliament. Before further reform is attempted, the issue of the management of Aboriginal heritage in Western Australia should be referred to a Parliamentary inquiry and full and informed consultation with Aboriginal people and their representatives should be undertaken.

For more information, please contact:

Dr Pamela McGrath  
President Elect  
Australian Anthropological Society  
[pammcgrath@bigpond.com](mailto:pammcgrath@bigpond.com)  
0439 958 646

## OPEN LETTER

### ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO 'CLOSE THE GAP'

The Hon. Peter Collier MLC  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
10th Floor, Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street WEST PERTH WA 6005

We are writing to you to draw attention to concerns raised by our members about proposed amendments to the *WA Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972) and associated changes to the interpretation and administration of the Act that are currently being implemented. We are gravely concerned about the current and future impacts of

these changes on the capacity of Western Australian Aboriginal peoples to manage and protect their place-based cultural heritage into the future.

The Australian Anthropological Society (AAS) is the national representative organisation of Australian anthropologists. We have a membership of over 600, many of whom are involved in social research and cultural heritage projects with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, including with groups whose traditional lands are located in Western Australia. The AAS provides national leadership on issues relevant to the professional practice of our members and the well-being of the peoples with whom they work. It is with this mandate in mind that we make the following comments.

The AAS believes that reform of the Act is long overdue and desperately needed. Existing processes for the management of Aboriginal sites in Western Australia are currently poorly and chaotically implemented and there have been few successful prosecutions of breaches of the Act. The regulation of Aboriginal Heritage in Western Australia has not kept pace with significant national and international developments in heritage management best practice, nor has it adequately responded to the legal recognition of native title rights.

While we acknowledge that the task of reforming the Act is a challenging one and recognise the need to balance the specific, local interests of Aboriginal people against the interests of the State more broadly, the AAS does not believe that the proposed changes fairly balance public interest with the rights and interests of Western Australian Aboriginal peoples. Many AAS members are alarmed at the implications of the Bill, which will have a profound and negative effect on the ability of both themselves and the Aboriginal people with whom they collaborate to discharge their professional and cultural obligations in relation to the documentation and protection of Aboriginal heritage places in WA.

**The Australian Heritage Commission's guide to managing Indigenous Heritage, *Ask First* (2002),** sets out a number of principles that the AAS believes should underpin the Western Australian **government's approach to the regulation of** Aboriginal place-based heritage. These include that all parties concerned with identifying, conserving and managing this heritage should acknowledge, accept and act on the principles that Indigenous people must be afforded a primary role in:

- Informing Indigenous Heritage values and places
- The planning of Indigenous Heritage management processes
- The making of decisions about the management of Indigenous Heritage

- Controlling related information assets and associated intellectual property.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from the proposed changes to the Act along with recent developments that have seen the removal of sites from the Aboriginal Heritage Register with only limited consultation with Aboriginal parties, that the WA government is failing to meet those principles. Further comment on this failure is provided below.

#### *A lack of Aboriginal involvement in planning and decision making*

There is very little in the proposed amendments to the Act that provides Aboriginal people with any real voice in the management of Indigenous Heritage. The Amendment Bill does not provide Aboriginal people with a formal role in key decision-making processes, such as issuing of permits and declarations, and the management of the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects. Instead, the proposed changes entrench a system that treats Aboriginal people merely as informants of heritage values and leaves decision making in the hands of public servants who are unfamiliar with both the people and the landscape in question.

#### *Poor processes for the evaluation of sites and their removal from the Heritage Register*

Any act to remove an existing site from the Register should be conducted with the full and informed consent of the Aboriginal informants for that site, or their next of kin. The de-listing of sites without consent is inconsistent with the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which was endorsed by the Australian parliament in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Forced disclosure of cultural information*

The proposed changes offer insufficient protection for Aboriginal parties and their advisors who choose not to disclose information on the grounds that such information is subject to ritual or gender restrictions. We do not support any changes to the Act and associated process that have the effect of compromising the capacity of Aboriginal people to protect their heritage because they are unwilling to divulge private cultural information without due cause.

#### *Failure to adequately recognise the rights of native title holders*

The native title rights of Aboriginal Western Australians are increasingly being recognised. At time of writing, 30 Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate (RNTBCs) were responsible for managing native title rights over more than 43% (1,090,111 sq. km) of the state.<sup>3</sup> These figures are set to grow in coming years.

The AAS is concerned that the Amendment Bill does not adequately recognise the rights of native title holders in regard to the management and



protection of places of significance, and offers no direction on how the AHA and the Native Title Act should properly interact.<sup>4</sup> Nor does the Amendment Bill compel the government or proponents to consult native title holders or their RNTBCs about the management of Aboriginal Heritage in areas over which they hold native title rights, which will usually include a right related to the management and protection of cultural significance.

The AAS believes that decisions about the recognition and registration of Indigenous Heritage places, sites or objects ought to give primacy to the views of the relevant Aboriginal people, who have the requisite knowledge and cultural authority to determine the nature and value of places of significance. In areas where native title rights have been recognised, the views of the native title holders should be given primacy.

The proposed amendments do not address the existing incommensurability between native title and heritage management regimes recently identified by the Productivity Commission as of concern to both Aboriginal parties and industry, albeit for very different reasons.<sup>5</sup> As the amount of land and the numbers of native title holders grows, this lack of articulation between the two regimes will continue to undermine the rights of Aboriginal people as well as the efficient operation of regulation.

#### *Poor and inadequate consultation*

We are concerned that the Amendment Bill was developed without adequate consultation with Aboriginal peoples and their representatives. The intention of the Act, first and foremost, is to ensure that all places in Western Australia which are of traditional and cultural significance to Aboriginal people are properly recorded and their importance evaluated. Aboriginal peoples are intended to be the primary beneficiaries of this law, and it is they who stand to gain or lose the most through any amendment to the Act.

It follows that the full spectrum of Aboriginal opinion and interest should be canvassed when considering possible changes to the current legislative regime. Such consultation should be conducted in a way that enables genuine and widely representative participation of Aboriginal people across the full spectrum of age, gender and geographical differentials.

#### *Legislating for the ongoing destruction of Aboriginal Heritage*

The AAS considers it essential that the views of Aboriginal people who are responsible for sites of significance are given priority in considerations about the issuing of permits to impact sites under s 18 of the Act.

The *State of Indigenous Cultural Heritage 2011* report found that one of the main threats to

Indigenous place-based heritage is the current level of government-authorised destruction of heritage places to make way for development.<sup>6</sup> In Western Australia, most newly identified Heritage sites are legally impacted shortly after documentation in order to make way for development, with little attention paid to the cumulative impact of multiple destructions. Indeed, most of the more than 1200 sites reported to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the period July 2013 to May 2014 were submitted along with notices lodged under s 18 of the Act.<sup>7</sup>

The Native Title Tribunal has acknowledged that the **'protective regime' of the Aboriginal Heritage Act is** sometimes insufficient to protect Aboriginal heritage, and the Auditor General of Western Australia has also criticised your government for not actively monitoring the activities of operators in relation to Aboriginal heritage sites.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The undermining of expert advice*

The AAS is very concerned about proposed changes to the composition and role of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee in relation to defining and impacting Aboriginal sites. The proposal to privilege the opinion of the CEO of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in relation to the definition of **an 'Aboriginal site' over that of the APMC** undermines the objectivity of Heritage decision making and further marginalises Aboriginal opinions about how best to recognise and protect significant Heritage places.

Similarly, the proposal to remove the position of Specialist Anthropologist from the APMC undermines the robustness of the advice that informs decisions about the management and protection of Aboriginal Heritage places. We believe that all those charged with making decisions about Aboriginal Heritage—Aboriginal parties and government officials alike—should have access to the widest possible range of advice about the potential values of Indigenous place-based Heritage. Aside from those Aboriginal people appointed to the committee, the Specialist Anthropologist is currently the only member professionally qualified to speak on any of the **matters relating to the committee's functions.**

#### *The way forward*

In other states, such as Victoria where they have implemented a system of Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Indigenous Heritage regimes have been amended so as to provide Aboriginal people and native title holders specifically with a primary role in decision making about their Heritage. The Western Australian government could do the same. We encourage your government to consider reforming the Act so that it empowers Aboriginal people to have greater input into the protection and management of their Heritage at all stages of the process. Enabling free, prior and informed consent

is standard ethical practice across all social science disciplines including anthropology, and should be a cornerstone of future Indigenous Heritage management legislation and policy in Western Australia.

It is a well known fact that Aboriginal people remain among the most economically and socially disadvantaged citizens of Western Australia. Aboriginal people have lower life expectancies and educational outcomes and higher rates of unemployment, disease and incarceration than the rest of the population. These inequities are even more apparent in the context of the current mining 'superboom'.

There is a considerable and growing body of scholarship which demonstrates, however, that a strong attachment to traditional culture is found to enhance outcomes across a range of socioeconomic indicators.<sup>9</sup> This suggests the maintenance of cultural heritage should be viewed as a potential part of the solution to Aboriginal disadvantage in Western Australia rather than an obstacle to achieving it.

It follows that providing strong mechanisms by which Aboriginal people are empowered to speak about, manage and control places of significance on their own terms in the face of competing interests in land will benefit not only Aboriginal families but the population of the state more broadly. We encourage those within the Western Australian government who are responsible for overseeing the amendments to the Act not to lose sight of this fact as they proceed with what could, with adequate consideration and consultation, be an extraordinary opportunity to reform the management of Aboriginal heritage to the benefit of future generations.

The AAS urges your government to listen to the many voices of Aboriginal Western Australians and their representatives who have expressed their opposition to the proposed amendments to the Act and withdraw it from Parliament.<sup>10</sup> We suggest that before further changes are attempted the matter be referred to a Parliamentary inquiry and comprehensive consultation with Aboriginal people and their representatives be undertaken.

Far from being an impediment to development, reforming the existing regime to ensure the full and informed participation of Aboriginal peoples in the **management of the state's Indigenous Heritage** would be an act of reconciliation that has the potential to contribute to the physical and emotional health and well-being of Aboriginal families and bring about real change in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Western Australians.

For more information, please contact Pamela McGrath, AAS President Elect, on

[pammcgrath@bigpond.com](mailto:pammcgrath@bigpond.com) or on her mobile 0439 958646.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Chris Houston (President)

Prof. Ghassan Hage (President Emeritus)

Dr. Pamela McGrath (President Elect)

Dr. Hannah Bulloch (Secretary)

Dr. Christine Helliwell (Treasurer)

Dr. Gerhard Hoffstaedter (Executive Member)

Dr. Natasha Fijn (Executive Member)

1 Australian Heritage Commission 2002, *Ask first: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values*, Indigenous Heritage Section, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

**2 Article 8 of the UNRIP states that, "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities". Article 31 states that, "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions." The article goes on to state that, "In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights."** See [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf) (accessed 1 June 2012).

3 National Native Title Tribunal 2015d, *Determinations of Native Title as at 31 December 2014*. Commonwealth of Australia. Available from: [http://www.nntt.gov.au/Maps/Determinations\\_map.pdf](http://www.nntt.gov.au/Maps/Determinations_map.pdf). [3 February 2015].

4 Productivity Commission 2013, *Mineral and energy resource exploration (Inquiry Report No. 65)*, Canberra. Available from: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/resource-exploration/report>. [6 January 2015], p.164.

5 Productivity Commission 2013, *Mineral and energy resource exploration (Inquiry Report No. 65)*, Canberra. Available from: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/resource-exploration/report>. [6 January 2015], p.188.

6 S Schnierer, E, Ellsmore, S & Schnierer, S 2011, 'State of Indigenous cultural heritage 2011', *Australia — state of the environment 2011*, report prepared for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra, <http://www.environment.gov.au/science/soe/2011-report/contents>, p. 721.

7 L Vaughn 2015, 'Aboriginal Heritage Act Amendments', <https://aboriginalheritagewa.wordpress.com/>

8 Productivity Commission 2013, *Mineral and energy resource exploration (Inquiry Report No. 65)*, Canberra. Available from: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/resource-exploration/report>. [6 January 2015], p. 164.

9 See Dockery, A.M (2009), 'Culture and wellbeing: The case of Indigenous Australians', Centre for Labour Market Research Discussion Paper 09/01, Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology. Dockery's findings were based on an analysis of data collected from recent research using data from the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*. Other examples of relevant research include: Halloran, M. (2004), 'Cultural Maintenance and Trauma in Indigenous Australia', *Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law*, 11(4).

10 'Speaking with one voice – WA's changes to Aboriginal Heritage law rejected at bush meetings', *The Northern Myth* (30 Sep 2014), <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/northern/2014/09/30/speaking-with-one-voice-was-changes-to-aboriginal-heritagelaw-rejected-at-bush-meetings/>; see also KLC 2014, 'Speaking with one voice' (20 Nov 2014), <http://www.klc.org.au/docs/default-source/Media-Releases/aboriginal-coalition-rejects-wa-heritage-changes-atparliament.pdf?sfvrsn=4>



## AAS Conference 2015

### Moral Horizons

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 1-4 DECEMBER, 2015

Call for Panels: opens 23 March

Call for Papers: opens 4 May

Registration: opens 10 August

We are thrilled to welcome Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Joel Robbins and Akhil Gupta as keynotes addressing the conference theme:

#### Moral Horizons

**Anthropology's emergence at the intersection** between colonial modernity and non-modern cultural traditions has always put it face to face with moral questions unique to its field of study. The various ways of negotiating the relation between cultural and moral relativism is perhaps one of the most important. But there are many others such as the morality of modernisation and capitalist development, the morality of racial classification and the morality of different forms of patriarchal domination. All are as the old as the discipline itself and have given rise to a particularly anthropological mode of confronting moral questions. While this engagement with morality began timidly, it has continuously grown to become far more explicit today. It can even be said that since the turn of the century it is one of the growth areas of anthropological research and reflection.

**Today, anthropology's moral horizons are** continuously expanding. This expansion is related in part to the extension of the spaces of anthropological research and the multiplicity of moral issues that has arisen within them. These have not only grown geographically to include the entirety of the globe, but have also come to include non-spatially localised phenomena. Topics such as the intensification and the opposition to neo-liberal globalisation, the spread of social media, the internet and online social relations, the re-emergence of national and international neo-colonial forms of interventionism, the intersection of religion, anti-colonialism and terrorism, the continuing rise of forced and non-forced migration, and the ecological crisis all have widened the scope of anthropological research while highlighting new moral questions and dilemmas.

At the same time the morality of ethnographic and anthropological practices has itself become a wider and more intense space of reflection. It has become so institutionally as the discipline becomes entangled with the imperative of 'ethics clearance'

that faces all university research. It has become so theoretically amidst an effervescence in ethnographically grounded philosophising. Last but not least, it has also become so politically. The radical object of anthropological attachment, and the bearer of 'the good', continues to move between 'natives', 'colonised', 'exploited', 'oppressed', and 'excluded', all general categories that remain signifiers of at least one dimension of the lives of a variety of populations. There is, however, an increased acceptance, such as with indigenous governance, that contrary to what radical anthropologists like to believe, the category of the good can be located even if ambivalently among 'investors', and 'bureaucrats', etc.

The conference theme is an invitation for ethnographic research and anthropological theorisations that can contribute, critically or otherwise, to widen and multiply those moral horizons.

We seek papers from all the domains of anthropological research: social, cultural, political and economic that directly or indirectly relate to the above themes raising questions such as:

How do moral discourses shape social life in various ethnographic contexts from formal politics and activism to everyday practices of class and gender making?

Are moral judgements at the heart of all social distinctions?

Are political values being replaced by moral ones in a post-political age? Should this make us wary of an increasing anthropological interest in morality?

Is a moral anthropology an applied anthropology, an engaged anthropology or development studies?

Do we need new ways of considering ethical research beyond the strictures of the university ethics committee?

Is anthropology conceived as a moral project a departure from a commitment to cultural relativism?

Do changes in university funding systems and opportunities for employment have moral implications for anthropological teaching?



## ANSA

### MICHELLE O'TOOLE (ANSA CHAIRPERSON)

Since our election at the last AGM, Kara, Ainslee, and I have been reviewing the achievements of past ANSA committees and considering the **direction ANSA will take in 2015. We've also reviewed comments and suggestions made by our members and aim to implement some of them throughout the course of the coming year. We've decided to shape ANSA's approach in 2015 around the annual AAS conference and will be able to share more details about this once we're a little further along the track, including information about the photography competition and the travel grants.**

For now, I'm pleased to share that on 26 February, ANSA held its **first Twitter chat**. Our guest host was Vittoria Grossi, Language and Learning Adviser at **Deakin University**. While we would've preferred a higher number of participants, we aim to learn from, improve, and expand upon the event. Our Web Officer, Ainslee, is working on the details of the **next chat, which will be held in a couple of months'** time. Keep an eye out on our social network feeds and monthly emails for more information!

You can **follow us on Twitter @ANSA\_web**. ANSA's official hashtag is #ANSAweb. Use it to organise, navigate, and disseminate information within the ANSA and postgrad communities on Twitter. ANSA also circulates a **monthly email** to members. The network is free to join. All you have to do is complete a short online form, which can be found here: <http://www.ansa-aas.net/join-ansa.html>. We also regularly distribute information via the **ANSA Facebook page** (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ANSA-Australian-Network-of-Student-Anthropologists/315477696226>).

The ANSA Committee is dedicated to supporting Anthropology postgrads as they expand upon their skill sets and build up their networks. Do you have any comments or suggestions for us? The ANSA Digital Suggestion Box is now available [here](#). We look forward to hearing from you.

#### Michelle O'Toole

ANSA Chairperson

Australian Network of Student Anthropologists

6 March 2015

Email: <[ansa.exec@gmail.com](mailto:ansa.exec@gmail.com)>

Website: <<http://www.ansa-aas.net/>>

Facebook: <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ANSA-Australian-Network-of-Student-Anthropologists/315477696226>>

Twitter: @ANSA\_web / #ANSAweb



# News from the Programs

## THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Congratulations

Promotion of Katie Glaskin to Level D,  
Anthropology and Sociology

### Call for Papers

Mixed Race in Australia and the region  
Convener: Farida Fozdar  
Monday 8th – Wednesday 10th June, 2015  
University of Western Australia (UWA)

**People of 'mixed race' are often seen as marginal individuals managing cultural and psychological tensions, or alternatively valorised as the vanguard of an integrated, post-racial, cosmopolitan world (Edwards et al. 2012). Such dichotomies ignore the complex lived reality of being mixed – ranging from 'passing', to constructing multiracial identities, to embracing a cultural identity not necessarily reflected in one's appearance (see Perkins, 2007; Paradies, 2006; Song and Aspinall, 2012; Jones, 2011). Mixed identities are not singular and fixed, but multiple and fluid (Nandi & Platt 2012; Tilbury, 2007; Paradies, 2006), often characterised by 'ordinariness' (Caballero, 2012). The lived experience of being 'mixed' is strongly influenced by political and social context (Luke and Luke, 1999). While a growing body of research exists on 'mixed race', more productive approaches are needed to investigate the cultural production of 'mixedness'.**

Perhaps surprisingly, Australia and the region lag **behind the rest of the world in research on 'mixed race'.** There has been little public debate about the place of 'mixed race' in Australia and New Zealand (see Fozdar and Perkins, 2014). The subject does rate a hearing in Australia, however, in regard to people of mixed Aboriginal descent (Andrew Bolt style) (see Paradies, 2006). The social and political contexts of mixed race in Australia, New Zealand and the region offer complex histories of colonisation and migration, making this region an important counterpoint to the large bodies of research undertaken in the UK and US.

We invite papers on mixed race in Australia and surrounding countries, with a particular focus on mixed race across the life course (Csizmadia, 2012), the health and development of young people and families; cross-country comparison, and transgenerational effects. We are keen to include papers on mixed race of all types.

Please email your paper title and abstract (200 words) to Brian Spittles ([B.Spittles@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:B.Spittles@murdoch.edu.au)) by 28 March, 2015. Please include a brief bio (50 words) including your affiliation and position details.

Invited speakers include: Prof Rosalind Edwards (Southampton), Dr Chamion Caballero (LSE), Prof Yin Paradies (Deakin), Prof David Trigger (UQ) and Dr Kirsten McGavin (UQ).

Symposium registration details will be available soon on the website below (free registration).

<http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/research/clusters/MoB/events>

Funded by the UWA Research Collaboration Award held by A/Prof Farida Fozdar, with Prof Ros Edwards (Southampton), Dr Chamion Caballero (LSE); Prof Yin Paradies (Deakin) and Dr Kirsten McGavin (UQ); and in collaboration with the UWA Mobilities and Belonging Network (<http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/research/MoB/>).

## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

### Photograph exhibition: report

*Back from the Field: Visualising Ethnographic Practice*, April 23 - May 4th 2014, ANU School of Art. Organised and curated by Tiffany Cone, Francesca Mosca, and Saskia Lillepuu (PhD Candidates).

*Back from the Field: Visualising Ethnographic Practice* was an exhibition of ethnographic photographs taken by postgraduate anthropology students during the time of their fieldwork. It spanned across several continents and touched on different aspects of anthropological research. The aim of this exhibit was twofold: to showcase current anthropological work to a wider public, and to explore visuality and art-making in the context of ethnography. The choice to have an exhibition for fieldwork photographs was largely informed by a commonality of experience – that of being in the field. 26 graduate photographers/ethnographers displayed their work, with images coming from the Trobriand Islands, Jordan, India, China, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Australia, Italy, Argentina, Japan, Indonesia, Spain, Vietnam, Borneo, Thailand, East Timor and Taiwan.

An important motivation for this exhibit was our sense that photographs can bring the viewer into intimate contact with people and places they have never directly experienced, and this can happen instantaneously, in one frame. As such they are a powerful medium that can complement the largely written body of anthropological work.

Despite the widely different subject matter covered in the displayed photographs, there was a



shared ethos, a commonality of purpose: that of giving a glimpse into the worlds of the people that told us their stories and invited us into their lives.

## Conferences

### Previous listings

[Click on titles for more information]

Alternative Pathways to Outcomes in Native Title Anthropology [Centre for Native Title Research, ANU and Native Title Services Victoria, University of Melbourne, 12-13 February 2015]

ASA 2015: Symbiotic Anthropologies: Theoretical Commensalities and Methodological Mutualisms [University of Exeter, UK, 13-16 April 2015]

National Native Title Conference 2015: Leadership, Legacy and Opportunity [Sheraton Mirage, Port Douglas, QLD, 16-18 June 2015]

1st AIBR International Conference of Anthropology: The Human Being: Cultures, Origins and Destiny [Facultad de Psicología, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain, July 7-10 2015]

Moral Horizons [University of Melbourne, 1-4 December 2015]

### Forthcoming conferences

[Click on titles for more information]

CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC POLICY  
RESEARCH SEMINARS 2015 SERIES 1

Australian National University, unless otherwise noted  
4 March–3 June 2015

MIXED RACE IN AUSTRALIA AND THE REGION  
University of Western Australia (see this issue of *The Q*, p8)  
8–10 June 2015

9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EASTER  
ISLAND AND THE PACIFIC (EIPC 2015):  
CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS  
Ethnological Museum Dahlem, Berlin  
21–26 June 2015

MORAL HORIZONS  
University of Melbourne (see this issue of *The Q*, p6)  
1-4 December 2015

ANTHROPOLOGY CONFERENCES WORLDWIDE:  
Upcoming events in anthropology, cultural studies

and related fields. A website hosted by 'Conference Alerts'



## Publications

### New theses in anthropology

BELINDA BURBIDGE

PhD 2014

Department of Anthropology, The University of Sydney

TITLE

Contemporary Wiradjuri Relatedness in Peak Hill, New South Wales

ABSTRACT

Wiradjuri Aboriginal people in Peak Hill, a small economically-declining town in central rural New South Wales, have been subjected to a century of government policies included segregation, assimilation, and forced relocations. Despite this local, colonial history Peak Hill Wiradjuri continue to experience daily life in a distinctively Wiradjuri way. **To 'be Wiradjuri' is to be embedded within a** complex web of close relationships that are socially, morally and emotionally developed with both kin and friends, human and non-human subjects.

Despite dramatic social and cultural transformations in Wiradjuri meanings and practices of relatedness, the Wiradjuri social world and their ways of self-experience remain informed by past practices. To understand contemporary socialities, and thus the significance of these transformations, this thesis is an examination of the ways in which the moral and emotional order of relatedness governs relatedness, where daily lived experience of shared emotional states can be understood in terms of a language for the self and moral framework. Specifically, this thesis is an exploration of how Wiradjuri people negotiate relatedness in a space in which shared and contrasting Wiradjuri and non-Wiradjuri inter-subjectivities are experienced. This study draws on historical research and ethnographical fieldwork to move beyond an analysis of kinship in terms of structures, roles or values to explore the deeper foundations of emotions and states of being in everyday life.

## MAX DE VIETRI

PhD 2014

Department of Social Science and International Studies, Curtin University

### TITLE

The Petroleum Industry and Socio-political Change in Mauritania: 2001-2011

### ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the establishment of a petroleum industry in Mauritania, from its beginning in 2001 to 2011. It focuses on the interaction of the oil industry and the changing political character of the country, and assesses the role played by the oil industry in political changes that occurred at national and sub-national levels during the period. The theoretical starting point of the thesis is the **debate over what has come to be known as the 'oil curse', an hypothesis that has taken on differing meanings as proponents applied it to various cases.** The study examines the argument that the discovery of oil contributes to political instability, focusing on Mauritania from 2001 to 2011. It argues that contextually grounded root-causes with long historical linkages are much more important precipitants to instability and socio-political upheavals than the development of the oil industry. Of particular importance in the understanding of political instability is the complex relationship between state authority in its civil and military forms and long-standing tribal and ethnic institutions in Mauritania. Another important precipitant of political upheavals in Mauritania is foreign interference in **Mauritanian affairs by France and Mauritania's** neighbours, which pre-dates the country's independence. The original contribution to knowledge of this research thesis is that it argued **that while oil has played some role in Mauritania's** political development from 2001 to 2011, it has been of minor importance in the competition among political elites for control of the state and the wider civil society. The study is based on primary research in Mauritania using a variety of qualitative techniques, including interviews and conversations with a range of state and non-state actors, supplemented by documentary and other secondary sources.

## SHANNON DOHERTY

Master of Arts (Research) 2014

Department of Anthropology, The University of Sydney

### TITLE

Collective Watching and Faith Exploration: The Alpha Course in a Sydney Evangelical Congregation

### ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the Alpha Course, a ten week introductory class on the nature of Jesus Christ and Christian beliefs, within an evangelical congregation in Sydney. Alpha is a course that utilizes both a Christian themed audio-visual presentation and subsequent facilitator led group discussion. This course is given across multiple denominations, teaching people interested in exploring Christian concepts about basic tenets such as the nature of sin, the Holy Spirit and prayer. A small group of Alpha Course participants with diverse backgrounds was studied ethnographically, using participant observation and semi-structured interviews to learn about their history, motivations, and experience while attending. Inspired by the work of scholars such as James Bielo and Robert Wuthnow on small group Bible study, the thesis examines the discursive space that opens up when people meet to discuss religious concepts in an informal, non-judgmental atmosphere. Drawing on **Bielo's theory of "collective reading" as a dynamic interaction of text interpreted through personal and institutional influences,** Alpha is shown to inhabit **this discursive space through "collective watching",** or a small group watching of a religiously themed video. It is in this context that the thesis analyses **what Kelly Besecke has called "invisible religion",** a social space where conversations take place about religious meaning separate from a private or institutional setting. The thesis aims to gain understanding of this dynamic space of knowledge production and negotiation as participants explore the foundations, dimensions and expressions of their faith.

## GENG LI

PhD 2015

Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University

### TITLE

Popular divinatory practice in urbanizing China

### ABSTRACT

Anthropology has had an extensive interest in divination, but little attention has been given to the **problem of divination's social and political** legitimacy. Divination in China has often been **stigmatised as immoral and illegal 'superstition',** and **contemporary Chinese diviners' practice is often** shaped by the ways in which diviners counter such **stigmatising discourses.** China's rapidly changing society is forcing people to confront and reinterpret the relationship between individual agency and fate. As a consequence, divination enjoys a revival. As **'daily metaphysicians' operating in this environment,** diviners answer the need to develop new strategies **to conceptualize and deal with the business of 'fate'.** How do professional diviners legitimize themselves when they are regarded as being engaged in an immoral and irrational occupation? What does the

widespread interest in divination say about a Chinese society that otherwise identifies with modernity, science and rationality? This thesis attempts to shed light on each of these questions.

Although there are many types of diviners, I have focussed on one that is most apparent in public life, especially in cities, namely literate diviners offering face-to-face consultations in fixed business locations, and using indigenous divination techniques that do not attempt to invoke spirits. The main data were collected through long-term ethnographic observation of diviners and their customers in a prefectural city in northern China. This data was supplemented with research conducted in several other cities. I examined **diviners' rhetoric and practice from four perspectives**: their invocation of morality, their use of cultural nationalism, their self-comparisons with psychological counselling, and their attempts at professional institutionalization.

I show that diviners achieve legitimation by associating their occupation with modern knowledge production systems, by forming academic associations and by representing their work as a **form of psychological counselling**. **Diviners' claims** to moral authority and traditional culture also play a role in building a positive social image for their **occupation**. **Moreover diviners' legitimation efforts** are not only matters of image management, but also inhere in the basic social relationships and the fundamental cultural values they develop in their practice.

Drawing on divination consultations with typical **customers**, I also reveal how individuals' need for self-governance and self-responsibility in China still has to contend with overwhelming social coercion and political uncertainties. I argue that the standard definition of good fortune and happiness in indigenous Chinese divination dovetails well with contemporary social contexts. As a result, it is easy **for diviners to exploit customers' anxieties** about high levels of uncertainty by implying that divination is able to predict what fate has in store for them.

**Diviners' efforts to seek legitimacy provide an** opportunity to observe how meaning is negotiated in contemporary Chinese society and to learn about implicit social tensions. The processes of legitimation described in this thesis are likely also to be found among other social actors. Therefore this inquiry may also prove useful for understanding justification processes among a range of marginalized social groups or those engaged in various forms of stigmatised behaviour.

MOKHLESUR RAHMAN

PhD 2014

Department of Social Science and International Studies, Curtin University

## TITLE

Community Perceptions and Adaptation to Climate Change in Coastal Bangladesh

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the ways in which the inhabitants of two coastal communities of southwestern Bangladesh perceive and encounter weather /climate related hazards in their everyday lives. The study villages border the Sundarbans Reserved Forest – **the world's largest single unit of mangroves**, which is exposed to various climate related hazards such as cyclones, storm surges, sea level rise, salinity intrusion and erosion. It explores **local people's understanding of changing weather** patterns and related impacts on their local environments and livelihoods and the measures they undertake to adapt to such impacts. The study also examines within resilience and transformation frameworks the effectiveness and sustainability of such community level adaptation measures in response to the impacts and uncertainties associated with current and future climate and non-climate related stressors. The study analyses the impacts of various past development interventions, such as coastal polders, upstream river water diversions, shrimp farming, conversions and privatization of canals and rivers on local environment and livelihoods and their implications for weather/climate induced vulnerabilities.

A mix of qualitative (focused group discussions, key informants interview, trend analyses, case studies) and quantitative (household census, questionnaire survey, knowledge attitude and practice survey) approaches was employed to gather data from various occupational groups, local government representatives, NGO staff and primary schools teachers. A Livelihood Vulnerability Index tool was employed to analyse the climate vulnerability of the study communities. Land use and GIS mapping was done to measure village changes in resource systems over time. Field surveys were aided by two part-time research assistants and field study findings were supplemented by desk-based reviews of relevant literatures.

Field findings revealed the study area was impacted by various exogenous and endogenous past development interventions that had increased the risks and magnitude of weather/ climate change impacts on local social-ecological systems. Local people observed warmer and longer summers with erratic rainfall and shorter and warmer winters, frequent rough sea conditions. They understood these changes to be both historically grounded and relatively new and linked to both weather-related and non-weather-related processes in the local environment. Thus, corrupt practices and poor maintenance of embankments intensified the impact of cyclonic activity while over-fishing, poor management of fish sanctuaries in the Sundarban, and official failure to implement fish conservation



acts combined with prolonged pre/early monsoon drought in affecting fish migration, low recruitment and lower yields. The two villages, while geographically close to each other, showed differences in their perceptions and concerns about climate related stressors. Social vulnerabilities were shaped by geographical location, socio-economic conditions, local resource systems, land uses, livelihood options, and access to resources and institutional governance, which interacted with biophysical hazards to bring about variations in **local people's capacity to respond to such hazards.**

Community adaptation initiatives to weather stressors were mostly short term and resilience-based rather than medium to longer term transitional or transformative forms. Some initiatives (water management and rice, wetland and mangrove restorations) were based on ecosystems approaches to adaptation with potential to benefit communities in a changing climate. A lack of awareness, capacity and focus on weather/climate change, institutional weakness, poor governance and a lack of local readiness to adapt were barriers to translating local adaptive capacity into actual adaptation. The study suggests that a combination of community-based adaptation (CBA) and a focus on ecosystems based approaches (EbA) that go beyond a traditional resilience framework may help local communities to deal sustainably with weather and non-weather stressors in the longer term. This requires a more proactive role by government agencies, NGOs and local government with the active participation of local communities to make transformational change in the face of climate change impacts.

**BO KYEONG SEO**

**PhD 2015**

**Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University**

**TITLE**

Suturing the World: The Micro-practices of Care and the Politics of Life in Chiang Mai

**ABSTRACT**

Based on eighteen months of fieldwork between 2010 and 2012, this thesis examines how universal health coverage is shaped and experienced in Thailand. How might such an ambitious social project that aims to ensure every citizen access to a full-range of health services become feasible in a socially divided, politically unstable, lower-middle-income country like Thailand? This thesis investigates the establishment of universal health coverage not as a given condition but as a political and moral work in progress. How is the provision of care perceived, enacted, and assembled in the frontline of the Thai public health care system? What kinds of political

subjectivities are implicated in the mundane and extraordinary struggles to make care accessible and durable? With special focus on the human stakes of health care for poor Thai and non-citizen Shan migrant populations, this thesis offers new ethnographic insights into the significance of micro-practices of care for the politics of life.

Situated in a district hospital on the periphery of Chiang Mai City, I examine the multiple circuits of care threaded through everyday socio-cultural practice. Practices of care and their implications are multi-dimensional. Beginning with the workings of the public hospital, I show how caring and governing are interrelated. While the promise of the universal health coverage policy is mitigated by **rules of eligibility and entitlement, hospital staff's** aspirations to realize a government of care make this policy substantively universal. Ethnic minorities and Shan migrants in vulnerable situations actively utilize Thai public hospitals, navigating the perils of receiving the gift of care. I show how they elicit state care and secure a foothold in the political community through artful practices of being governed. In their struggles to maintain their family amidst structural violence and precariousness Shan women also employ tactics of creative subsistence that make life liveable. At junctures when the desire to care exceeds the boundaries of belonging and sameness, I explore how critically ill neonates and spiritual entities—alien others who hover at the margins of life—are drawn into alliances of care.

**I conceptualize the 'desire to care' as a** conjunctural expression of the life-intensifying proclivities of medical, state, and spiritual sovereignty and argue that practices of care, even in micro forms, nourish potentials to create a sphere of relations and a politics of life. Highlighting **people's intertwined experience of freedom and** obligation, autonomy and dependence, I demonstrate how individual and collective pursuits of formulating relations of care dismantle and reassemble the notion of universal citizenship and entitlement. At its core, this thesis reorients care as a suturing and sutured state, practice that acts upon the world, and value accumulated by practice, which repairs, envisions, and transforms the human condition in a provisional but concrete manner.

**MUHAMMAD ADLIN SILA**

**PhD 2014**

**Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University**

**TITLE**

Being Muslim in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia: Practice, Politics and Cultural Diversity

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis argues that religious practice remains vigorous in present Bima. It examines the various ways in which Bima Muslims constitute their Islamic identities and agencies through rituals and festivals. The title being Muslim is intended to express how Muslims in Bima consider their religious practices, politics and culture as Islamic. The focus is on the productive agency of Muslims within the embodied meanings of being Muslim in everyday life. The thesis investigates Islam in Bima as experienced by the local Muslims.

Given the importance of social context, I approach Bimanese Muslims as social actors. Although Islamic practices are unified in the name of Islam, varied expressions of Islamic practices among Bima Muslims reflect particular historical cultural legacies and socio-political contexts. As part of an Austronesian culture, Bima belongs to a dyadic socio-political organisation: the Sultan and the Raja Bicara. This duality has resulted in the dynamics of Islamisation and being Muslim in Bima.

The thesis is ideally suited to exploring the reproduction of religious meanings among the local Muslims. The Islamic observance in Bima makes up what it means to be Muslim as a socially constructed reality that exists in the minds of the local Muslims and differ between social groups. Islam is represented between the traditionalist Muslims and the reformist Muslims, between the royal family and the ordinary Muslims, and between Muslim clerics and lay people. Hence there is no single picture of Islam. As Bima Muslims construe their Islam in response to their surroundings, what it means to be a Muslim is constantly negotiated. The complexity of religious life is said to have been a result of the duality of socio-political settings in Bima that stems from the early period of Bima Islamisation to the present.



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### OCEANIA

Volume 84, Issue 3, November 2014

Special Issue: Melanesian Gambling as Analytic  
Issue edited by: Anthony J Pickles

### ETHNOS: JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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## AAS Newsletter Contributions

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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 co-editors are Malita Allan and Klara Hansen. Contributions should be sent to [the.q.editors.aas@gmail.com](mailto:the.q.editors.aas@gmail.com)

The next issue of the Newsletter will be circulated in June 2015. Recent issues, and back issues from December 1978 to December 2009, are available on the AAS web site: <http://www.aas.asn.au>.

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