chemical basis greatly decreases its ethnobotanic flavour.

Due to its methodology *Traditional Bush Medicines* cannot be said to present an Aboriginal view of medicinal and healing practices. To understand Aboriginal uses of medicine one must consider Aboriginal concepts about the cause of disease, the properties of medicines (many of which are tied to Aboriginal mythological and cosmological systems), as well as the important sociological role of Aboriginal healers. A chapter treating these issues would have greatly increased the value of this book as it would have provided the reader with a greater insight into the nature of Aboriginal relationships to the Australian landscape. However, although a somewhat Eurocentric view of Aboriginal medicinal practices, the book does provide some new data and hints at the complexity of Aboriginal knowledge of the environment.

Philip A. Clarke

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**THE MAKING OF THE ABORIGINES**

BAIN ATTWOOD. ALLEN & UNWIN, SYDNEY, 1989. 181 PAGES.

This book signals an important development in the study of Aboriginal history. Namely, the growing ability among historians to analyse the cultures of both the 'colonising' Europeans and the 'invaded' Aborigines and to begin to understand the complexity of the contact that has taken place and still is taking place between the two. In *The Making of the Aborigines*, Bain Attwood concentrates on ideological change and the development of a new identity among Aboriginal people in nineteenth century Australia. He structures his book around the following assumption:

...the aboriginal peoples who lived in this continent 40,000 years or more before the coming of the Europeans in 1788 were not the homogeneous group implied by the name 'Aborigines'; rather, they were named and have named themselves 'Aborigines', 'blackfellows', 'Kooris' or 'Murris' etc. only in the context of colonization and of their ensuing relationship with Europeans - who, conversely, came to be 'Australians'. (Attwood 1989: x)

One of the main techniques he uses to develop his argument, is to construct detailed analyses of the lives of key people. He provides illuminating descriptions of change in Aboriginal society by following the lives of Aboriginal people living through the traumatic times of colonial Australia. He also traces the lives of important Europeans of the period, such as the Missionary Friedrich Hagenauer.

Henry Reynolds', in his book *The Other Side of the Frontier*, was the first to give prominence to the Aboriginal reactions to the early
period of contact. Bain Attwood's book is a reaction against one-dimensional approaches of this nature and he presents an analysis of the two cultures, with a focus on the results of their interaction. From this starting point he sets out to explain the major ideological changes occurring in the Aboriginal society of Victoria's Gippsland area during the nineteenth century. His book comprises six separate thematic chapters. They are not chronological and he suggests they can be read in any order. I was to some extent distracted by this structure. I found that often, closely related issues have to be pursued in separate chapters. I also found that Attwood's detailed, but separate presentation of related themes dealing with the same Aboriginal communities, enabled only a patchwork understanding of the communities he is describing. For example, in the first chapter about the missionaries and their control of Aboriginal life, a strong impression of the destructive impact of missions upon pre-European Aboriginal society is presented. However, the chapter, 'In accordance with the custom', looks at the impact of Aboriginal tradition on the changes taking place in nineteenth century Aboriginal culture situation and shows examples of the failure of the missionary's objectives. Attwood never really brings the two together with an explanation of how they co-existed, interacted and produced a new sense of identity. On the whole, however, I enjoyed the thematic structure of the book and found that it allowed a more detailed investigation of specific themes, not possible when bound by the restrictions of a chronological approach.

Central to Attwood's argument is his belief that the impact of European policies, ideologies and institutions upon the construction of 'Aboriginal' identity, was more significant than the influences of the particular Aboriginal cultures. Although, in a narrow sense I agree with this generalisation, I also think that it restricts the understanding of the process of interaction. Firstly, I think that it would be more useful when trying to understand the changes that took place in Aboriginal cultures during last century, to investigate the role that different aspects of Aboriginal culture had on the process of cultural change. It may be argued that in some areas, such as kinship, Aboriginal culture has played a critical role in the process. I also think that Attwood gives the reader an impression that there was a homogeneity of 'Aboriginal' identity at the end of the nineteenth century. To counter this he should perhaps have provided more of an analysis of what was created by the making of the Aborigines'.

The last chapter in the book is Attwood's explanation of his theoretical approach and its place in the writing of Aboriginal history. In his discussion of recent Aboriginal historical work he tends to over react against what he sees as emotional, pro-Aboriginal political history, which he argues is based on Aboriginal views of the past held by Aboriginal people of the present. This has certainly occurred in recent Aboriginal history, but for him then to recommend an avoidance of interaction with Aboriginal people, if historians want to produce balanced objective histories shows a lack of understanding of the potential of anthropological techniques in the study of history. He ignores the wealth of historical anthropological works that have been produced over recent years and shows a lack of understanding of the more general anthropological literature available that deals with Aboriginal culture. I would argue from my experiences with Aboriginal people in South Australia, that the culture of many Aboriginal groups from the 'settled' areas of the state changed very little from the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s. For example, there are still many Aboriginal people who have very similar ideological views to their parents and grandparents, some of whom lived in the nineteenth century.

I hope that my review does not appear too critical of Bain Attwood's book. If it does, then I think this is because I am working in a very similar area of historical research to him. His innovative and original approach to Aboriginal history pushed me into reassessing my own theoretical approach to its study. The Making of the Aborigines is, however, a major contribution to the literature dealing with Aboriginal history and I strongly recommend it to anyone with an interest this area.

Steve Hemming