
We Won the Victory: Aborigines and outsiders on the North-West Coast of the Kimberley

Ian M. Crawford

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Crawford, who writes that he is now a 'retired' archaeologist, demonstrates a unique combination of archaeological knowledge and oral historical communication with his Aboriginal friends. The friendly as well as ethically sensible narrative starts in the title of the first chapter 'Enjoying the Journey' — I instantly liked it.

This book explores the dynamic history of Aboriginal–outsiders relations on the coastal part of the Kimberley. Such 'outsiders' include Indonesians (Macassans), explorers, missionaries, pearlers, pastoralists, beachcombers, military people, and most recently, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Crawford 'sadly' put the present appearance of CALM in the context of the contact history of the area: 'when once they held hands as a sign of friendship with Aborigines then shot them at Narrin, now they offer assistance at the Mitchell Plateau then steal it' (p.308). Among these 'outsiders', some of them managed to exploit Aboriginal land and labour, and some of them failed. But the overall picture is, as Crawford convinces us, that Aboriginal people in this region have kept their country relatively sound and their dignity strong. The title of the book comes from an Aboriginal man, Sam Woolagoodjah, telling the story of Aboriginal people who succeeded in defending their country from the white people's invasion (p.133).

I acknowledge Crawford's sensible ways of using Aboriginal people's historical narratives. He does not necessarily use them simply as 'statements/evidence' that need to be cross-examined by written or archaeological records in order to find 'the right story'. At the same time, he does not indulge himself in the so-called post-modern relativism of 'everything is discursive'. Rather, he sincerely 'listens to' and 'discusses with' Aboriginal people, and also utilises his archaeological and archival knowledge to seek

what I call, 'experiential historical truthfulness' (Hokari 2002) that can be shared cross-culturally.

I, as a Japanese, may be expected to comment on chapters in which Crawford and his Aboriginal friends are dealing with (or not dealing with) the appearance of Japanese people in their country. It was surprising for me that in a chapter dedicated to the stories of pearlers (pp.148–64), Crawford does not say much about (but does not totally ignore) Japanese–Aboriginal relationship in the pearl shell industry given the fact that the majority of the pearl divers in northern Australia since the late nineteenth century were Japanese (Nakano 1980; Ganter 1994). Comparing this relative absence of Japanese stories in pearling history, it is a quite a contrast in another chapter on 'Japanese War' (pp.245–69) that Crawford emphasises that because of the fear of being caught and shot by Japanese, Aboriginal people in the bush sought shelter with Australian authorities. Crawford does not hesitate to state that 'the Second World War probably did more to disrupt traditional life along the northern coasts of the Kimberley than any other single factor' (p.245). I must say that I am not fully convinced that the 'fear of Japanese invasion' created the most devastating impact on 'Aboriginal traditional life' in the entire Australian colonial history. It seems to me, the 'real invasion' by pastoralists, miners, missionaries or other colonial agencies could have been much more destructive of Aboriginal lifestyles. Furthermore, we can always question the long-debated notion of 'traditional Aborigines' if Kimberley Aboriginal cultures have always been, as Crawford himself demonstrates, dynamic.

Nonetheless, I consider that what the 'Japanese factor' may imply is profound. I have explored ways of connecting Indigenous and immigrant histories in order to 'de-nationalise' Aboriginal history (Hokari forthcoming). Aboriginal reconciliation is not an exception. Reading the painful stories of Japanese planes bombing the Kalumburu Mission, which killed five Aborigines and Father Thomas Gil (pp.246–52), it becomes clear to me that it is not only Australians who need to acknowledge past mistakes and seek possible reconciliation: Aboriginal reconciliation must cross the national boundary.

This book also explores the role of missionaries in Aboriginal contact history. Crawford's relatively defensive manner towards 'better' mission activities by contrasting them with 'bad' pastoralists may be debatable. However, since I am not at all a specialist

on the Aboriginal–mission relationship, rather, I want to suggest that readers compare it with other related works (e.g. Swain and Rose 1988; McDonald 2001).

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Goodbye Bussamarai: The Mandananji land war, Southern Queensland 1842–1852

Patrick Collins

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Patrick Collins' book makes a valuable contribution to the current debate over the extent of frontier violence. It is also a useful pastoral history of southern Queensland, beginning with Mitchell's exploration in 1842 and explaining the land deals between Major Mitchell and his well-heeled mates.

In *Goodbye Bussamarai* (pronounced bassamurray) Patrick Collins has tackled an extremely violent frontier. It is not the Kimberley or Far North Queensland but the Maranoa district of southern Queensland. The history spans only ten years, but the death count of white and Indigenous combined runs into hundreds. It not just another history of violence. Collins has been meticulous in researching the early explorations and leasing of vast estates that were legalised by the *Wasteland Acts* of 1842 and 1846. But,

as Collins observes with some sadness, the clause in these statutes that gave Aborigines legal access onto pastoral leases, insisted upon by the Colonial Secretary Earl Grey, was ignored from the outset by the colonial administration and the pastoralists.

The title, *Goodbye Bussamarai*, refers to a little known figure of history. For most of the book he is one of hundreds of nameless people who lived, fought and died for their land in southern Queensland. The choice of Bussamarai is explained in the introduction. He was the only named person, white or Indigenous present in the region throughout the ten years of what Collins described as the Mandandany Land War. On the Australian frontier, European settlers had names, while the Aborigines beyond the station boundaries were nameless figures, and within the boundaries they were given names of the squatter's choosing. Nearly all the Aboriginal men and women who died or moved away in this tragic decade are symbolised in the one name: Bussamarai.

For the professional reader the book is thoroughly referenced, well indexed and has an excellent bibliography. Events are seen through the eyes and journals of different characters, some eyewitness, some hearsay, some reliable and some suspect. And all from the side that had much to hide. Even Collins had difficulty sorting fact from fiction and after a while the uncertainty becomes a distraction. Also, without a chronology of violent encounters or a table of some sort, it is difficult for the reader to follow these events when the same story is told from different sources.

No one reading frontier history can doubt that Queensland was more heavily populated with Aborigines than any other Australian colony. The quest for land and gold took Europeans far ahead of police supervision. From all accounts the Native Police served as a paramilitary force to 'disperse' Aborigines and 'quieten' the survivors. They were active in the Maranoa district during the period covered by Collins.

Counting the dead is problematic in situations where the European victims are usually recorded, Asians are often recorded, and Aborigines are only occasionally considered. Noel Loos in *Invasion and Resistance*, has a 55-page table of 470 Europeans, Chinese, Kanakas and Aboriginal servants killed in North Queensland but there was insufficient data to compile a corresponding table of other Indigenous dead. Maurice French in *Conflict on the Condamine* estimated that one thousand Aborigines died on the