

**Murray Arnold, *A Journey Travelled: Aboriginal-European relations at Albany and the surrounding region from first contact to 1926*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, Western Australia, 2015; pp.388; RRP AU \$39.99 (Paperback).**

*A Journey Travelled* is the outcome of Murray Arnold's 2012 PhD thesis, which tells the story of relations between European settlers and the Aboriginal people from Albany and surrounding region and 'how they interacted with each other during the extended period following the invasion that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'(p.1). Arnold examines historical sources, along with ethnographic and archaeological research, in order to produce a comprehensive chronological narrative relating to the contact period in Western Australia's South West region. Arnold partitions the history of relations between European settlers and the Aboriginal people (the *Menang*) from first contact through to 1926 into six chapters, which highlight major events that altered relations between the Indigenous community and settlers in the region.

Australian historiography tends to be centred on the national level, or at the level of individual colonies or states. However, these studies 'lack the immediacy, intimacy and gritty relevance of works that focus on the story at the local level' (p. 6). National histories tend to skim over or even fail to mention more than a paragraph about the people who originally inhabited the area. Yet '*A Journey Travelled*' is representative of a significant transition in Western Australian historiography, which has taken place over the last few decades. Arnold's research is an excellent example of this trend to re-write Australian history in a more comprehensive fashion. Since King George Sound (Albany) is the place where European settlement on the western shores of Australia began, it was an excellent place for Arnold to start the process of re-writing the history of Western Australia's South West in a way that includes the history of Aboriginal-European relations.

I majored in archaeology and history at university, and I can honestly say that during almost every lecture I found myself wanting to cry, as I was presented with an abundance of historical records highlighting the injustices suffered by the Indigenous people at the hands of European settlers. There is no doubt that some truly horrendous injustices occurred after Europeans arrived on these shores. A combination of ignorance and contempt from a whole range of people (including sealers, whalers, kangaroo hunters, pastoralists, government officials and even missionaries) resulted in an enormous amount of suffering for Indigenous people throughout Western Australia.

While I was reading Arnold's publication I came to realise that we simply don't know the whole story. Arnold highlights that historians, in their enthusiasm to document the bloodiness of colonisation, have not been as interested in documenting and highlighting what is perhaps the most significant characteristic of Aboriginal-European interaction: accommodation. Western Australian historiography tends to focus on the injustices and tragedies associated with colonisation. Either that, or it skims over the everyday experiences that Indigenous people had while interacting with the settlers. Much of the historical literature, particularly publications prior to the 1970s, give an impression that that the Indigenous people simply faded out of existence as Europeans pushed the frontier and gradually settled on ever increasing tracts of their homelands (p.5). This tends to be a common theme with local histories for towns and districts throughout Western Australia.

Arnold rectifies this issue in *A Journey Travelled* by focusing more attention on cultural change that occurred, by emphasizing things that were gained as well as things that were lost, for both the Indigenous people and Europeans, through the process of cultural adaptation. Once the British Government decided to establish a settlement on the west coast of the continent, it was inevitable that long-term relations could be devoid of injustice as there was no pre-emptive plan to prevent injustices from happening. Many actions should have been approached in a different manner with appropriate planning. This does not preclude us from acknowledging, however, that men and women from both the Aboriginal and European communities around Albany managed to negotiate the complex circumstances and relationships that came with colonial invasion in ways that have few parallels. In this way, Arnold presents a more comprehensive viewpoint that includes both the bad and the good.

Reading Arnold's work helped me to realise the extent to which historical literature has emphasized conflict and resistance from the local Indigenous people toward the invasion of European settlers. While there were isolated cases of extreme violence, Arnold (pp. 5-10) highlights that historians have been wrong to assert that 'Aboriginal resistance to invasion' was a standard response throughout the continent. Historical literature tends to emphasize a period of initial resistance along the frontier but then fails to discuss how the Indigenous people were integrated into communities as they developed or left to dwell in fringe settlements; ignored in reality as they were in literature until someone disturbed the air of blissful ignorance. What historians have largely failed to convey, however, is the richness of change; all the things that were gained and lost through the process of accommodation and adaptation to a foreign invading culture throughout the colonial period. A lack of emphasis on other aspects of interaction between Aboriginal people and European settlers also gives a general impression that Aboriginal people simply faded away as the frontier expanded.

Arnold adopts 'a fresh and fundamentally different approach' by focusing on Aboriginal-European relations in one major town and its hinterland over a period of one

hundred years' (p. 6). Murray Arnold has made a really significant contribution to our current understanding about the lifeways of Aboriginal people from the South West of Western Australia during the early contact period. I would recommend this book to anyone with even a vague inclination to broaden their knowledge about the history of Western Australia's South West region. It is a thoroughly enjoyable and educative read, and would not be too complex for the high-school curriculum. Arnold's bibliography is also an excellent starting point for further reading. This publication will be useful to students, researchers and the general public.

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