

BOOK REVIEW

Legacy of a Longitudinal Growth Study in Central Australia. By Tasman Brown, Grant C Townsend, Sandra K Pinkerton, James R Rogers. Published in Adelaide by University of Adelaide Press, 2011. pp. 327. ISBN: 978-0-9807230-9-0, price A\$35.00, paperback. 978-0-9870730-0-6, Free, e-book PDF.

Aboriginal Australians have been in their island setting for at least 40,000 years (Crane 2013), but most change has occurred via immigration of Europeans over the past two centuries (Singh 2013). (Australia was “discovered” in 1606 by the Dutch vessel *Duyfken*, captained by Willem Janszoon—though some claim an earlier European discovery). The social history of native Australians unfortunately mirrors the deceit and abuse of American Indians as the United States was peopled westward by Europeans (Prucha 1997).

It is inspiring, then, that this nicely-written book, “The Yuendumu: Legacy of a longitudinal growth study in Central Australia” describes positive experiences for both Aboriginals and academicians. This readable book is structured as a narrative history with chapters devoted to themes as diverse as tooth crown sizes (the well-known works of Maury Barrett 1963a,b on tooth crown sizes) to anthropometric dimensions of a cohort of Aboriginal measured annually during the 1960s. It was written as a group effort but principally by Tasman Brown and Grant Townsend, both longtime participants with the Yuendumu. The book is an homage to Professor Brown who devoted much of his professional career to the physical anthropological study of the Yuendumu. A singular feature of this wonderfully-illustrated book is its ready availability. It can be purchased in the conventional paper format, but it can also be downloaded gratis as a PDF. The hard copy functions for highlighting and notation, but the electronic version is available everywhere, has the same colored plates, and can be annotated with any PDF reader.

The book is presented from a historical vantage point, high-lighting the seminal dental and anthropological investigated spearheaded by Dr. Murray James Barrett (1916-1975) of the University of Ade-

laide, a student of Thomas Draper Campbell (e.g., Campbell 1925).

Yuendumu is a settlement northeast of Alice Springs in Central Australia. Its attraction was a steady source of water that evolved into a sheep ranch and Baptist mission with outreach to the Aboriginals. Today, the settlement consists of wooden houses, cars, and a native contingent of about 300. The book emphasizes that,

From its inception, Yuendumu was a government settlement and not a mission, with the responsibility for policy and daily affairs being that of the government. Thus the missionaries were required to operate within the bounds of such policies as assimilation. However the Baptists were involved in much more than meeting spiritual needs. They helped supply clothing and medical supplies, taught sewing, commenced and ran the first store, helped build and often staffed the hospital, commenced a kindergarten, and commenced the first school.

Early work at Yuendumu involved Barrett (and students and collaborators) making dental casts of the children and adults, though attrition and antemortem loss commonly affected the adults. This work was remarkable for the Adelaide team’s repeated visits. The resulting mixed longitudinal nature of the study design is quite uncommon in the anthropological literature. The feat is the more remarkable because of the paucity (and, often, absence of) institutional funding for the teams. The semi-serial design was possible largely because of the Aboriginals’ sedentism plus the trust and alliances between the researchers and the host population. Group leaders even were given Warlpiri names. Murray Barrett became a member of the Jungarrayi group and Tasman Brown became a Jakamarra. This rapport between the cultures—attributed mostly to Barrett’s exuberant personality—formed the backbone for the years of study of this one Aboriginal lineage.

Another fascinating feature of the “Yuendumu Study” was its multifaceted outlook. Dental casts formed the base of the study, but many other data were collected, including kinship patterns, anthropometrics, lateral and posteroanterior head x-rays, genealogies, and more. While Barrett’s classical studies of tooth size (1963a,b) are familiar to most dental anthropologists, other information is not—and it is all detailed in this book (including numerous useful references).

The book offers much more, but it serves as a useful primer dealing with the logistics and organization of the ever-varying team from Adelaide to Yuendumu—originally a several-day safari some 285 km northwest from Alice Springs. Over the course of the study, many renowned clinicians and scientists from abroad, including Arne Björk, William Proffit, and Tsunehiko Hanihara, accompanied the group, always extending the scope of studies with their particular interests. This history—well-documented in the text—also promotes the value of a multidisciplinary approach and how the components build synergistically on one another. Björk suggested the addition of cephalometric radiographs; Proffit took telemetry recordings of the people's masticatory patterns. The resulting breadth of the data collection forms a uniquely broad-ranging picture of an otherwise little-known non-European group.

One of the other joys of the book is the careful and thorough list of references stemming from the decades of study. Comprehensive lists are provided at the end of the chapters as well as an appendix. These collections of citations alone make the book invaluable.

One message of the book is the irreplaceable value of a visionary and dedicated leader (Murray Barrett; Tasman Brown) coupled with a multidisciplinary approach—which are at the heart of anthropological studies—in combination with the merit of involving researchers with diverse but well-organized projects. Funding for the Yuendumu project was always meager, but the diversity of the studies permitted the broadest sources of funding, both in Australia and internationally.

This book is written by people deeply committed to the Yuendumu project who described its history in detail. The Yuendumu have continued to change, of course, including falling under the blight of unemployment. This book commemorates some of the positive histories of this group—a wonderful coming together of the Aboriginals and researchers, and now documented for all time by a select group of dedicated researchers.

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