CULTURES OF GOVERNANCE
AND THE GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE:
INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND THE STATE

By
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A thesis of published refereed works submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (by Publication),
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Frontispiece

The cover illustration is by David Mowarlijarli entitled ‘Bandaiyan: The Body of Australia’, and drawn in the early 1990s. It appears in the *Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia* (Arthur & Morphy 2005: 24) with the comment:

The artist envisions the whole continent as a human body, with the navel located near Uluru. The squares represent Indigenous communities, linked together by a grid of lines to show spiritual and social connections.
Statement of Authorship

The current draft guidelines of the Australian National University state that a PhD ‘Thesis by publication’,

in part or in whole comprises published papers, perhaps with additional material explaining the context of, and relationships between, these papers. Such a thesis is known as a thesis by publication, a thesis by published articles or a contextualised thesis.

The guidelines further state that the thesis by publication,

must have an introduction and conclusion drawing together the published papers in a cohesive manner [and] the candidate should address how the individual publications link to the theory and methodology adopted and evaluate the contribution that the research in the submitted publications makes to the advancement of the research area. The thesis may also include relevant appendices containing additional papers that are not relating to the main thrust of the thesis, raw data, programs, questionnaires and other material as deemed appropriate for each discipline.

Accordingly, I hereby state that the whole of the published works, together with the Introduction, Thematic Overviews and Conclusion which have been newly written and are submitted here as the “Thesis by Publication”, are entirely my own original work. No co-authored papers have been submitted. Where I have coordinated major research projects with other researchers, I have submitted publications that draw entirely upon my own ethnographic research and analysis. All the papers have been published and independently refereed in books, professional journals and series.

Given the period of time over which they were written, the published papers vary in format according to the styles required by respective journals and book publishers. For the sake of a more uniform ‘thesis’ appearance, and for ease of reading, the main body text of the original publications has been reformatted into a single style, and follows a sequential page numbering system.

The original page numbering is indicated at the beginning of each published paper. Each publication retains its own discrete set of published references and diagrams, and the numbering for diagrams, notes and references have stayed in their original format in
order to avoid having to make major corresponding changes to the original text of the publications. On the other hand, extraneous journal advertising, author photographs, abstracts, tables of contents, acknowledgements, and editorial pull quotes have been omitted from each of the reformatted papers. Importantly, no changes whatsoever have been made to the text or content of any published work. This ‘original content’ status means that no corrections have been made to any published grammatical or spelling mistakes that found their way into the original published versions.

In respect to the newly written Introduction, Thematic Overviews and Conclusion, the relevant bibliographical references have been placed collectively, at the end of the overall thesis; as are the related endnotes.

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Abstract

This PhD Thesis By Publication poses two concepts — ‘cultures of governance’ and the ‘governance of culture’ — as tropes by which to analyse the contemporary condition of Indigenous governance. The thesis publications enable a theoretical understanding of Indigenous governance as being a culturally self-referential field of meshed nodal networks, and as also influentially shaped by its intercultural articulation with the governmentality of the Australian state. In doing so, concepts of governance, governmentality, field, power, agency, legitimacy, network, culture and intercultural are investigated and theoretically refined.

Eight published papers are presented which have valuable synergies between them. They are laid out under five Parts which focus on particular aspects of governance and governmentality. The publications provide extensive ethnographic evidence and analyses derived from long-term fieldwork undertaken over a period of 37 years in rural, urban and remote Indigenous locations across Australia, as well as with governments and their departments. These provide the bases upon which a cohesive theoretical framework is newly developed by way of the thesis Conclusion. On a more pragmatic level, the Conclusion also highlights the significance of that framework for the ongoing relationship between Indigenous Australians and the state, and their practices of governance and governmentality.
Acknowledgements

A PhD Thesis by Publication is a strange beast and this one has been stranger than most. Along the way, many people gave me their intellectual and personal support; too many to remember in my dotage, let alone list down. But several people deserve as much acknowledgement and appreciation as I can muster. Nic Peterson and Mary Edmunds persevered over a long time with my evident reluctance, encouraging me to ‘just do it’, and then continued to offer useful advice about how to negotiate Australian National University procedures. My dear friend Mary also acted as my unofficial supervisor, stalwart support, and introduced me to Zygmunt Bauman, for all of which I am in her debt.

When the University procedures became so shambolic that it felt very much as if I was Alice in Wonderland, John Taylor stepped in to carve a pathway of common sense through the University’s surreal process. He also took on the role of my official University supervisor in early 2010, at a time when he was himself taking over the reins as Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research. I cannot say how much I appreciate his generous support and efforts on my behalf.

My official ‘supervisory panel’ of John Taylor, Mary Edmunds and Francesca Merlan was only formed in early 2010, in order to satisfy changing University procedures. They generously gave their time to read the entire thesis (two of them for the first time), then duly met together in October 2010 and provided me with helpful feedback based on their combined and considerable professional experience. Will Sanders and Howard Morphy also contributed by generously acting as short-notice referees for my ‘enrolment as a candidate’, to accord with the more standard PhD approach.

In other respects, this was probably the best way for me to do a PhD. I had the space and time to indulge myself by sitting back, thinking and reading. And I have been able to draw upon my field research conducted over a period of 37 years, in order to mull over data, ideas and intuitions. In undertaking this journey, a number of friends and family gave me their insightful assessment of various drafts written by way of introduction and conclusion to the thesis. In particular Michael Dillon, Mary Edmunds, Neil Westbury and Peret von Sturmer provided detailed critiques which helped clarify my thinking on several issues. I appreciate their frankness and am greatly indebted to them.
Several colleagues made thoughtful comments on various stages of the draft text and proposed layout. A number have engaged with me in spirited conversations over the years, in different parts of the country and abroad. I would particularly like to thank Toni Bauman, Maggie Brady Stephen Cornell, Anne Daly, Mick Dodson, Jason Glanville, Janet Hunt, Bill Ivory, Frances Morphy, Neil Sterritt and John Taylor for their insights over many years; from very different but equally valuable perspectives.

Back in October 1998, I co-convened (with Julie Finlayson) a specialist workshop of the Australian Anthropology Society, to explore the implications of recent Canadian legal cases, for the implementation in Australia of the *Native Title Act 1993*. We raised funds from ATSIC to bring Neil Sterritt from British Columbia to Canberra as the keynote speaker. He generously introduced me to the governance issues facing his own *Gitxsan* First Nation, firstly through his extraordinary contribution to the *Delgamuukw* case, and then more widely via his writings, innovative governance workshops, and our many conversations here in Australia and during a road trip adventure around BC and the Yukon with he and his wife, Barb Sterritt (Dawson City will never be the same). He remains an inspiring mentor.

That early friendship with Neil and Barb led me to Stephen Cornell who generously shared another set of governance stories and experiences from Native American Tribal Governments. Since Stephen’s influential participation in Reconciliation Australia’s conference on *Building Indigenous Governance* in Canberra 2002, he and his partner Maura Grogan have been enthusiasts for all things Australian; including a good red. Like Neil Sterritt, Stephen has made a remarkable contribution to the robustness of debate about Indigenous governance in Australia, and continued to inspire and mentor many people here; including myself. Given the parochial tendencies that sometimes narrow down academic and policy horizons in Australia, Stephen and Neil’s openness with their ideas has been a breath of fresh air.

I would also like to acknowledge my important institutional debt to the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research and my colleagues there. Over many years, the Centre enabled me to lead a very privileged research life, spending a great deal of time working on the ground with Indigenous people across Australia; and directly engaging with the wider government, political and policy contexts shaping Indigenous lives.

As part of that professional experience, I was able to play a central role in instigating the *Indigenous Community Governance Project* at CAEPR, in partnership with Jason Glanville at Reconciliation Australia. We were lucky to draw together a fine team of
experienced and emerging researchers, and benefit from the hard work of an extremely able research manager, Janet Hunt. I would like to acknowledge them all for the intellectual energy they bought to our project research. In particular, I thank Jason Glanville for his steadfast support during that project, his tireless leadership on issues of Indigenous governance in Australia, and for the many ‘governance gigs’ we have enjoyed together around the country; including a memorable discussion in Broome and a best-forgotten night of governance karaoke in Mt Isa.

In regard to my recent fieldwork, Bibinj simply wants to say thanks to Harry Appo, Leanne Evans, Luthor and Margie Siebert, Ronald LamiLami and James Marrawal — the WCARA mob — for their friendship, resilience under fire, and for the bad jokes and Santa Claus. The same deep thanks go to Leah Armstrong and the Yarnteen mob in Newcastle — for opening their doors to me and offering a privileged insight into an extraordinary; and for the line dancing. Sometimes ‘fieldwork’ is just plain fun.

My late academic journey into PhD territory has only been possible because my ‘other half’, Neil Westbury, without complaint, took on the major responsibility for earning our crust while I sat in my ivory tower. He not only supported me financially, but also shared his own remarkable expertise and deep intellectual insights into Indigenous Affairs, while remaining patient and good humoured. Thank you.

And to my son, Peret von Sturmer, what can I say. He accompanied me as a young two-year old boy on my first, long period of field research. We lived on a remote Cape York outstation and he made no fuss about sleeping in a swag and cooking over a fire, and then subsequently spending his early years travelling in ‘troopies’ around distant parts of West Arnhem Land and Cape York. He also accompanied me on this present journey, placing regular phone calls to me from the ‘department of equivocation and malingering’ to make sure I was keeping to schedule. Thank you.

Finally I would like to thank Kitty Eggerking and Hilary Bek who proofread the new text written specifically for the thesis; and Karen Clark and John Hughes who undertook the major challenge of re-formatting the original published papers into a single format to accord with University style guidelines. Given all that input, any inaccuracies or failures of argument and understanding are, most certainly, entirely my own.

This thesis is dedicated to Peret Arkwookerum and his family, and to Nugget Coombs.

Diane Smith
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