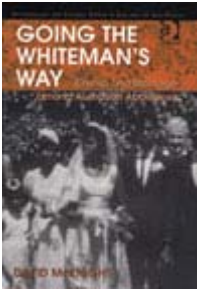


**Going the whiteman's way: Kinship and marriage among Australian Aborigines** by David McKnight. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing, 2004, pp. 284, £45.00, hardback, ISBN 0 7546 4238 0.



*Going the whiteman's way* provides an insightful and thorough treatment of the central role that 'kinship' plays in Aboriginal history and politics. McKnight weaves skilfully a complex analytical argument which rests on the belief that:

...gender is only a facet of kinship and marriage and conversely kinship and marriage is not the only domain in which gender operates (p. xvi).

All of the arguments are nuanced by current scholarship in anthropology and cultural history, balanced by first-hand fieldwork covering nearly three decades and presented in a manner which will appeal to a wide array of scholars.

McKnight divides his arguments into three sections: 'Kinship and Affinal Relationships', 'Classes and Identity' and 'Marriage Disputes'. Within this paradigm issues relating to kinship roles, group membership, patrilineal/matrilineal transmissions, and 'right' and 'wrong' marriages are fully delineated. McKnight uses the Lardil people of Mornington Island off Queensland as a lens into the cultural dynamics of Aboriginal peoples.

At various points the text considers cultural history, the influence of missions, the breakdown of cultural cohesion, the specifics of the kinship system and the importance of 'right' marriage among the Lardil people. McKnight's ability to gather and synthesize a large body of knowledge will appeal to experts and scholars; however, the strength of the arguments rests on the dynamics of specific cultural relationships within the group. This book is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in very specific relationships and responsibilities (i.e. wife's brother-sister's husband) and more common levels of discourse (brother-sister). The coherence and nuanced nature of the arguments reflect McKnight's keen interest and thorough immersion in the topic. He extends the discussion to the vexing issue of kinship and marriage and the public role that community leaders play in assessing the appropriateness of the marriage ('right' versus 'wrong' marriages).

Overall, *Going the whiteman's way* provides valuable arguments for those interested in cultural anthropology and Aboriginal issues. The structure and content of the book is clearly geared to an informed and scholarly audience. Despite the complexity of the arguments, McKnight provides a concise introduction which gives an appropriate context, develops the main arguments in a logical fashion, and uses a conclusion to summarise the findings and to posit provocative ideas.

*Going the whiteman's way* is carefully researched, well written and clearly organised. The text would benefit from a brief survey or glossary which defines specialised and technical terms. This minor criticism aside, McKnight has made an important contribution to the topic of kinship and marriage among Aboriginal peoples.

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