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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Proisxozdenie i Rannjaja istorija Aborigenov Avstralii by V. R. Kabo

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The last part of the book, the section that supplies the title, is concerned with the custom called *abutu*, the giving of food to a rival as a means of making him ashamed. This is common enough throughout Melanesia but in Goodenough seems to have developed to fantastic proportions. Dr. Young argues that it is a substitute for the now forbidden warfare and raiding.

Abutu is a competitive display, exchange, and distribution of vegetables and sometimes pigs between two groups which regard each other as enemies. Each party is made up of four status sets; on the one side challengers, their unconditional supporters (defined by tradition), their matrilineal kin, and their residual kin—on the other the challenged, their unconditional supporters, matrilineal kin, and residual kin. Challengers and challenged ostentatiously stand apart and partake of nothing: the organizing, speech-making, and sharing out are exclusively in the hands of the unconditional supporters. The intention is to humble the antagonist by giving more and better supplies than he can immediately return. Success demonstrates greater virtue and power. At the same time, there is no formal pronouncement of the winner, and it is often difficult to say who has in fact come out on top. Usually each party offers some type of food that is not repaid in kind, and the question is therefore whether the yams balanced the taro or the pork the bananas.

Ideally, *abutu* should transform conflicts into contests by bringing disputes into the public arena. In practice the extent to which it is a redressive device or a technique of social control and hence integrative is problematical, as Dr. Young points out. A mode of social control which can conceivably aggravate rather than soften hostility may be more disruptive than integrative; and an institution that allows the possibility of an offender coming off best is surely not redressive at all (p. 213).

“But since [*abutu*] is resorted to by people with grievances as a mode of remedying the wrong done them, they must be the judges of whether or not they gain satisfaction—and on the whole they appear to do so. From the point of view of the community as an entity, its functions are perhaps more unequivocal. *Abutu* is socially regulative to the extent that it publicizes offences, and thus shames offenders regardless of the actual outcome of the contest. In most cases, perhaps, it also shows an offender to what extent the community disapproved of his behaviour, and so would seem to discourage conduct which is generally unacceptable. Moreover, it acts to redress the balance of political sections within the village, when this is disturbed or threatened by conflict between individual members of these groups. Generally speaking, the more serious the conflict in terms of a threat to the status quo, the more concerned will parties be to the *abutu* be to avoid defeat. The harder they try to out-give each other, the more balanced will be the outcome, and the status quo will be preserved. An even contest brings about a form of *détente*.” (P. 222.)

IAN HOGBIN.

Proisxozdenie i Rannjaja istorija Aborigenov Avstralii. (Origin and Early History of the Aborigines of Australia.) By V. R. Kabo. “Science” Publishing House, Moscow. 1969. Pp. 408. No price given.

Professor Kabo will be known to any scholar who reads Russian, because he has already written articles dealing with the subject of this book. In it he has gathered together the results of his studies into a useful and interesting work.

The book is in Russian, but has a lengthy summary in English (pp. 497-507) in small print. The author's reading is immense: the bibliography contains 812 items, of which only the first 104 are in Russian. He seems to have missed little or nothing by Australian students up to the year 1968, and has thus done much to offset the fact that he has not worked in Australia himself.

The book is divided into three chapters, with subdivisions in each. The first is on the "Origin of the Australians in the light of anthropology and geology" (pp. 25-106). The second chapter deals with the "Origin and Prehistory of the Australians on the data of archaeology" (pp. 107-259); and the third section with "the Origin and Prehistory of the Australians in the light of ethnography and linguistics" (260-352). A "Conclusion" (pp. 353-365) gathers up the facts studied in these sections.

The material has been examined carefully and most of the conclusions would seem to be acceptable to Australian students. Kabo admits that much is still uncertain (p. 353), and does not try to "put over" any particular viewpoint which might be regarded as unscientific or partisan. It must be admitted, however, that some of the details of the work remain impressionistic, things that presumably must have been. The present reviewer found much to interest him in the chapter on Linguistics, and which suggested future enquiries in work in which he is at present engaged.

This work would be valuable to Australian students, though very few of them could read it except in translation. It serves to impress on us the value of much Soviet writing, and to point up the value of the Russian language to Western students.

A. CAPELL.

The Army in Papua-New Guinea. No. 10 of Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence. By Robert J. O'Neill. Australian National University Press, Canberra. 1971. Pp. 31. Price \$A1.50.

The subject of this short publication is extremely topical. Discussion of independence for New Guinea inevitably involves discussion on the role of the Army. This is unavoidable when one considers that probably more than a third of countries in the third world are now governed by military régimes. Not of course that military régimes are restricted to the third world.

The publication provides a concise and comprehensive review of the subject and is essential reading for those interested in New Guinea affairs.

On page 8, in a discussion of border patrolling and public relations, the author writes: "... it is wishful thinking to imagine that the villagers on the western side of the border are any less favourably disposed to their rulers than those on the eastern side." A review of the evidence leading to this conclusion would have been useful here: perhaps the thinking is not wishful.

The author makes a favourable judgment on civic action on pp. 9-11. The present reviewer confesses to a prejudice against it, and perhaps therefore finds the arguments unconvincing. Certainly it is reasonable to assume that civic action patrols do something to develop national feeling, but their effect in this regard may be very small compared to the operation of other national organizations. Research in this