



Kimberley Society

Book Note

***Aboriginal Paintings of Drysdale River National Park, Kimberley, Western Australia* by David M. Welch. Australian Aboriginal Culture Series No. 10, [David M. Welch Publications](#), Darwin, 2015. 322 pages, 240 x 170 mm, soft cover, prolific full colour images. ISBN 9780987138972. RRP \$40.**

This 10th publication in David Welch's Australian Aboriginal Culture Series is a very detailed account of the voluminous rock art he has documented in the remote Drysdale River National Park in the northern Kimberley.

David has been exploring the park since the 1980s and has worked with many of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park to help his understanding of the associated culture.

The book includes abundant details on the history of the park and those who have studied the art and the natural environment, as well as providing access information, permit requirements, and climate data. There are short sections on geology, flora, and fauna. Some 50 pages provide information about various routes to explore the region's art and the sketch maps should allow keen walkers to locate many of the most interesting sites accessible in several days walk.

Chapter 4 is a comprehensive description of the variety of art within the park, and the following seven chapters are devoted to the various art styles that document the chronological sequence that has been established for Kimberley rock art – the author uses his own terminology rather than the more widely published terms such as Gwions (or Bradshaws): Archaic Period, Tasselled-, Bent Knee-, Dynamic-, and Straight Part Figures, and Painted Hand, and Wandjina Periods. These chapters have abundant images of each art style, and comparisons with historic photographs of Aboriginal people wearing similar accoutrements or painted in similar patterns.

This impressive publication is another welcome addition to the literature on Kimberley rock art by one of its most industrious and dedicated researchers. The discussions on painting materials and techniques and possible interpretations have relevance to much of the Kimberley beyond the Drysdale River area. The book is highly recommended for all interested in the unique heritage represented by this ancient body of art, and hopefully it will encourage more people to put on a back-pack and walk into this wonderful wilderness.

Mike Donaldson