



Kimberley Society

Book Note

Cologne to the Kimberley : Studies of Aboriginal Life in Northwest Australia by Five German Scholars in the First Half of the 20th Century, translated by Margaret Pawsey, edited by Kim Akerman. Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 2015. Soft cover, A4, 384 pages, illustrated, ISBN 978-0-85905-594-9. RRP \$70.00.

This book contains 18 papers written by Father Joseph Bischofs, Helmut Petri, Dr Gisela Petri-Odermann, Agnes Schulz and Father Ernest A Worms. Each author has a brief biography.

In his introduction, Kim Akerman states that most Australian anthropologists have ignored works that were not initially presented in English. That began to change with the publication of translated works by Andreas Lommel and Helmut Petri.

The papers in the anthology were selected 'to illustrate the scope of the knowledge and information recorded by the anthropologists concerned'. They contain detailed information about change in technology, economy, social interactions and ritual; 'information that is not to be found in the works of English and Australian anthropologists who have worked in the northwest of Western Australia'.

Commencing with Bischofs' comments on the Njol-Njol people from the Dampier Peninsula, the anthology moves to four papers by Worms on initiation ceremonies, religious concepts, culture, magic, tools and legend. 'The Gorañara-Ceremony in the Australian Kimberley', with extensive footnoting, offers intriguing insights into black magic beliefs and practices. Petri's 'Kuràngara – New Magic Cults in North-West Australia' then offers further insights. Other coverage of mystical and spiritual powers and objects is found in two further papers by Petri and in one that Odermann titled 'Healing arts of the Njañomada, northwest Australia'.

Rock art enthusiasts will welcome 'Rock Engravings from North-West Australia' by Petri and Shultz, and 'Badurr' (Parda-hills), a rock art and culture centre in the north of Australia's Western Desert' by Petri. Rock art also features in Petri's 'Ritual Increase Activities in the Kimberleys', a paper in which the coverage extends to stone arrangements. The latter topic is then discussed in a paper by Odermann.

The remaining papers, mostly by Odermann, cover ownership, sign language, the sea, women, and vitamins. In selecting them, Kim Akerman wanted to draw attention to the work of Odermann, offsetting the extent to which it has been overshadowed by her husband's work.

A thorough reading of the anthology—a somewhat daunting task—is required to appreciate the mass of information contained within it. For those less hardy souls, it will be equally rewarding to read only the papers that hold personal appeal.

Cathie Clement