

Collecting, Ordering, Governing: Anthropology, Museums, and Liberal Government.* Tony Bennett, Fiona Cameron, Nélia Dias, Ben Dibley, Rodney Harrison, Ira Jacknis, and Conal McCarthy. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 360 pp.

Reviewed by Alison Petch

This book forms the published outcome of the Discovery Project, “Museum, Field, Metropolis, Colony: Practices of Social Governance,” funded by the Australian Research Council. It is a co-authored work (or, as they put it, “a collective enterprise”), though the acknowledgments make it clear that each of the authors took a primary role in writing specific chapters and carrying out specific editorial functions. (xviii) The authors state that they locate the concepts of this study...at the intersections of museum studies and the history of anthropology. This potentially gives the book a wide readership. They go on to outline their interest in exploring how museum practices have been shaped by their “relations to mechanisms for the governance of populations,” thus widening the potential audience even further (1). The authors’ confirm that their object of inquiry centers “on the role of anthropology in mediating the relations between the collecting practices of fieldwork, the ordering practices of museums, and the practices of social governance” (255). Given the wide scope of their interests, their collective focus is necessarily limited to a relatively narrow time-frame: the “closing decades” of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries—the zenith of Western imperial power. Rather than taking an encyclopedic approach, they choose to concentrate on a number of examples and case-studies ranging from the much-studied Torres Straits expeditions of the 1880s and 1890s through to the (perhaps) less well-examined fieldwork of the Musée de l’Homme of the 1930s. Several of their case histories deal with professional and personal interests of mine, and it is, of course, to these that I paid most attention: Mass-Observation and General Pitt-Rivers in the UK (sadly the latter two were not linked: in reality or in the text) and Australia.

The latter case study is perhaps more widely explored (as one would expect given the source of the original research funding). Several sections (31-35, 57-60) explore F.J. Gillen and more particularly Walter Baldwin Spencer’s central Australian fieldwork in some detail, seeing it in the light of Spencer’s later practice as an occasional colonial administrator (74 et seq.). They also reference Spencer’s earlier assistantship at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the influence that its then evolutionary and typological displays had upon his intellectual development and his own museological practice at the National Museum of Victoria (now Museum Victoria; 10-12). The placing of Spencer as wholly dominant in his and Gillen’s professional partnership is unfortunate. I also quibble at the lack of historical depth in their critique of these particular anthropologists’ work, whilst wholly accepting the many unforeseen (by the protagonist), and tragic, implications of aspects of Spencer’s colonial practice upon the indigenous population. In this center of inquiry, at least the authors bring their scrutiny of the implications of anthropological investigations and colonial practice right up the twenty-first century: examining

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the Northern Territory Intervention launched in 2007 (the Australian administration's attempt to protect indigenous children from sexual abuse and victimization; 265 et seq.)

Other chapters consider Mass-Observation; the influence of the Boasian culture concept on the development of American assimilationist policies in the 1930s and 1940s, reviewing the field work carried out by the American Museum of Natural History and in particular Clark Wissler's expeditions on the American Plains; and the final chapter concentrates on the processes of collecting, ordering, and governing in Aotearoa, or New Zealand, looking specifically at the rationalities of rule that emerged from 1900-1945, particularly the notions of pre-European Maori life and the construction of a classic Maori cultural tradition.

In Mass-Observation (M-O), they see a form of "anthropology of ourselves:" they suggest that "M-O's fieldwork *agencements* operated oligoptically in the relations of the government they produce" by the extension of the collective self-monitoring of "liberal collecting institutions" (89). They examine Mass-Observation in the light of earlier experiments in carrying out wide population surveys (principally Haddon's survey of the Aran Islands in Ireland and the ethnographic survey of the UK in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century), which also attempted to use "amateur" fieldworkers to analyze local populations. They argue that M-O's fieldwork practice was distinctive in bringing together ethnographic methodology for collection and assemblage together with "collective self-watching" (6).

This book is a useful addition to the ever-increasing literature exploring the history of the anthropological discipline. Through its examination of particular case studies, it suggests many useful lines of inquiry for anyone exploring the histories of anthropology in different geographical localities.

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