



Fighters and Singers: The lives of some Australian Aboriginal women

Isobel White, Diane Barwick, Betty Meehan

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The literature on Australian Aborigines is vast, but much of it is strangely silent about the experiences and activities of women. This collection of stories of the eventful lives and strong characters of a number of Aboriginal women offers a more intimate and personal view. Their lives span a century of history in fifteen communities scattered from Cape York Peninsula, Arnhem Land and East Kimberley to the Western Desert, the Centre, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

One of these stories is an autobiography and each of the others contains transcriptions or translations of a woman's own reminiscences, with additional details given by the author. Some women recall the first time they saw a European in their land, others tell how Europeans had influenced their communities generations before they were born. While the authors lived in Aboriginal communities in order to study some particular aspect of the society, the women they describe here became their close friends, companions and helpers, and this book is a record of friendships formed against differences of background, experiences and age.

Allegiance to family and familiar territory shapes the personal histories of Aborigines in ways scarcely appreciated by people reared in nuclear family households in cities. The strength of family and community ties can be better understood through reading about the women who contribute so much to the maintenance of these communities.

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