Beyond Coranderrk

Station era Aboriginal political resistance in the Victorian archives

'Beyond Coranderrk: station era Aboriginal political resistance in the Victorian archives', *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, issue no. 15, 2016–2017. ISSN 1832-2522. Copyright © Tiernan Morrison

Tiernan Morrison is a graduate of the undergraduate history program at the University of Melbourne. This article stems from research undertaken as a part of his final semester history project for which he won the University of Melbourne Gyles Turner Prize. He is currently working as a consultant in the higher education sector and a freelance writer.

Author email: morrisontiernan@gmail.com

Abstract

The Coranderrk inquiries and subsequent petition during the 1870s and 1880s have long been considered defining moments in the history of Aboriginal political resistance. By defying colonial authority and making the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians better known to the Victorian public, the people of Coranderrk under William Barak struck an early blow to the oppressive station system under which the lives of Aboriginal people were organised. While the events at Coranderrk are remarkable and important in and of themselves, there has been a tendency to misinterpret their significance to the wider project of Aboriginal political resistance. Far from emblematic of the mission station system as a whole, Coranderrk and the events that happened there reflect a unique set of people and circumstances. Furthermore, the inquiry undertaken by the Victorian Government ultimately supported the mission station system more than it harmed it. I suggest that the nature of 'resistance' must be re-evaluated when considered alongside the unique milieu of the Aboriginal stations. In such restrictive conditions, we cannot expect political resistance to be reflected in large demonstrations but in quiet acts of rebellion that the colonial archive does not acknowledge as such. By re-evaluating historical sources with this fact in mind, the ostensibly banal bureaucratic documents created by the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines actually reveal a dense history of micro-resistance on the Aboriginal stations.

In the foreword of the recent performance project based on the Coranderrk rebellion *Coranderrk: we will show the country*, the author emphasises the unique historical significance of the rebellion and argues that we view its leaders as 'the forerunners of reconciliation'.[1] This project is one of a number of historiographical texts that frames the rebellion as an early antecedent of the organised Aboriginal political resistance that took place in the twentieth century.[2] These texts are right to exult the rebellion as a remarkable moment in Aboriginal history, but they often overstate its significance to the wider project of Indigenous political liberation. While Coranderrk's compelling narrative and ample documentation make it easy to privilege in accounts of Indigenous history, doing so risks marginalising the experience of the majority of Aboriginal Australians who were not in a position to rebel so directly. As James Scott notes in his book, *Weapons of the weak*, focusing on these moments of explosive resistance misses the fact that 'most subordinate classes throughout history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organised, political activity'.[3] Emblematising the Coranderrk rebellion also ignores the way in which its perpetuation served and continues to serve the image of colonial authority as a benign power. To uncritically emphasise Coranderrk as the first-time Aboriginal resistance was heard ignores the implications of the fact that non-Aboriginal Victoria chose to listen, while remaining deaf to so much else. Understanding why this event seemingly sparked the conscience of non-Aboriginal Victoria when little else did is crucial to understanding the imperial ontology of colonial Victoria and the place of Coranderrk within it.

I suggest that to truly understand and appreciate Aboriginal political resistance at the height of the station era, we must broaden our understanding of what constitutes politics under these conditions. As Steven Hahn writes in his study of American slave politics before the Civil War, 'what could sensibly be regarded as political activity at one time and place might not be regarded as political activity at another … a slave who defies the authority of his or her owner does something very different than a free worker who defies the power of his or her employer'.[4] While the system of slavery in the American South and the Victorian station system differ

in terms of the nature and the extent of the control they exerted, the point stands that we must contextualise and historicise the behaviour of subaltern groups in order to see the cracks of resistance in the relationship between the oppressed and their oppressors. This essay suggests that Aboriginal political resistance was always expressed in a form particular to the cultural and material conditions in which it fomented. As such, the essay will argue that we should consider the Coranderrk rebellion as an expression of a peculiar culture endemic to the Coranderrk Station at a particular point in time. Rather than privileging the Coranderrk petition in historical accounts of Aboriginal political resistance, appreciating the nature of Aboriginal subjugation allows us to understand the many and various ways in which Indigenous Victorians enacted political resistance. When considered in this light, the administrative documents created by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines reveal the quiet rebellions interlaced throughout the history of Aboriginal Victorians under colonial rule.

The Aboriginal stations

With concern for the welfare of the Aboriginal people increasing, the Victorian Government established the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines (CBPA) in 1860 to oversee their management. The CBPA formalised a series of organised communities or 'stations', centralising the Aboriginal population of Victoria so as to better control and monitor them.[5] The passage of the *Aborigines Protection Act 1869* saw the CBPA morph into the new Board for the Protection of Aborigines (BPA), giving this statutory authority further control of Aboriginal people and ensuring that policy relating to Aboriginal Victorians would largely be actioned through the stations. Although the station system was in theory a total system, it is important to note that just over half of this population lived on the stations in 1877.[6] That said, after the passage of the *Aborigines Protection Act* it became increasingly difficult for an Aboriginal person to avoid having some ties to the station system. Though established with broadly defined humanitarian intentions, these stations were often driven by a desire to inculcate western Christian values into the Aboriginal population. As Richard Broome states, the impetus for the stations can best be understood from the perspective of 'paternalism', a hierarchical relationship of ruling and guiding from above with deference from below in return for protection.[7] By viewing the Aboriginal people as 'childlike' and in need of protection, colonial authority could present itself to itself as a benign and even charitable force, while continuing the destruction of Aboriginal people on a cultural level. The Aboriginal station became the site at which the Aboriginal subjects were reified by the state's colonial ambitions and the ideological constructions of race and civilisation they depended upon. To use the analogy of Clare McLisky, these sites isolated from the outside world by distance and decree became something of a colonial laboratory, places in which 'the related goals of Aboriginal pacification, protection, conversion and civilisation' could gradually be worked towards.[8] In efforts to 'civilise' the Aboriginal people, Bain Attwood shows how almost every aspect of their lives, from marriage to work and even hygiene practices, became scrutinised and regulated. Indeed, Attwood argues that the panoptic nature of the Aboriginal stations were their defining feature, existing as they did to 'imbricate the ideas and values [of non-Aboriginal civilisation] into the very fabric of the Aborigines consciousness and way of being'.[9] We get a sense of this quality through the writing of station managers. Speaking of the 'progress' made at the Ramahyuck Mission, Reverend Hagenauer describes the way his Aboriginal charges have been 'changed from their wild savage state … and now enjoy the blessings of religion and civilisation'.[10] This fact is further reflected in the very nature of the reports that the managers submitted, presenting as they often did a highly detailed account of the activity of Aboriginal people on the stations. The 1885 report on the status of Lake Tyers Station provides the details of everything from attendance at church services ('very well attended'), the progress of the education program ('strictly carried out') and the nature of the work carried out by the residents ('satisfactory').[11] We can conclude that if there is a defining feature of the station system, it is the way it sought to completely and totally shape the lives and consciousness of its Aboriginal subjects.

Coranderrk

While the Aboriginal stations theoretically shared certain ideological underpinnings, difference inevitably arose between them over the course of their development. No station illustrates the potential for radical difference ina putatively homogenous system than Coranderrk. While many of the stations were established through government mandate, the community that would be

Coranderrk came about in part through the persistent deputations and petitions of the Kulin people for land of their own. With the aid of the government appointed Guardian of Aborigines, William Thomas, the Kulin people pioneered what was known as the Acheron land north of Melbourne in 1860.[12] By the end of the year, the Acheron Reserve had been taken over by non-Aboriginal settlers and Coranderrk Station was established in its place on a traditional camping site of the Kulin people. Overseen by Manager John Green, Coranderrk was unique for the autonomy it granted its residence and for being the largest and most socially complex of the stations.[13] Green shared leadership of Coranderrk with William Barak and Simon Wonga, elders of the Wurundjeri people who were generally acknowledged to be the leaders and spokesmen for the community. Though comprised of many clans and divided by language and beliefs into moieties, the Coranderrk community came to form strong intertribal alliances through marriage between clans.[14] As it was united under recognised leadership, Coranderrk was able to speak as a unified community. The differences between Coranderrk and the other stations is aptly illustrated by the Coranderrk rebellion, an event hitherto unprecedented in the history of Aboriginal colonial relations. Prompted by the removal of popular station manager John Green, the increasingly restrictive policies of the BPA and the threat of removal, the people of Coranderrk under William Barak organised wide-scale petitions and protest marches. The Coranderrk rebellion involved numerous written petitions to the BPA and the Victorian Government, and numerous in-person deputations. By gathering influential allies and attracting the attention of the press, the Coranderrk people brought about two parliamentary inquiries that gave significant voice to the concerns of the community. The 1881 inquiry, which was made up of members of the BPA and a collection of other interested parties including society figure and activist Ann Bon, saw the removal of manager Reverend Strickland and an end to the question of re-locating the Coranderrk people.

This sort of organised resistance was not a unique occurrence during the station era. In 1913 the residents of Lake Tyers mounted a letter-writing campaign petitioning the forced eviction of their manager's elderly widow, Caroline Bulmer.[15] The residents of Lake Condah organised a similar protest against the closure of the station.[16] One major difference between the Coranderrk rebellion and the petitions of other stations is scale. The Coranderrk rebellion took place over a number of years, attracted a great deal of media attention and involved several in-person deputations. Another significant difference between Coranderrk and other contemporary Aboriginal protests is the way it spoke directly to the issues facing Aboriginal people as a whole rather than their immediate manifestations. The opening salvo of the rebellion was a letter to the *Leader*, in which Barak stated that he would not leave Coranderrk as 'the Yarra is my [his] father's country'.[17] Another participant in the rebellion was quite famously heard to have uttered; 'the white people have only left us a miserable spadeful of ground, and now they want to take that away from us'.[18] These statements mark some of the first times that the notion of 'Country' and its importance to Aboriginal identity appear on the public record of colonial Australia. In this way, Coranderrk can be seen as foreshadowing the Aboriginal civil rights struggles of the twentieth century that centred on land rights and claims to Country. At the time, the Coranderrk rebellion was unique in the way it spoke directly to the colonial disinheritance of Aboriginal people and their desire to win back the land and identity they had lost.

There were a number of cultural and material factors peculiar to Coranderrk that made the rebellion take the form that it did. While other stations were formed by missionaries or the state and comprised of a mixture of different groups, Coranderrk was founded by and for its Aboriginal residents who were a uniquely cohesive social group guided by a number of traditional leaders. As Jane Lydon notes in her study of photographs taken at the station, Coranderrk also became a place where meanings of Aboriginal culture and identity were forged and maintained both for Aboriginal people and colonial Victoria. In a remarkable image entitled 'The Yarra Tribe Starting for Acheron', Lydon shows how 'the blacks' journey to Coranderrk was configured in biblical terms', an exodus of sorts to a chosen land. Lydon argues that the notion of Coranderrk as a special place and its residents as a chosen people suffused the imaginations of the Coranderrk Aboriginal people and the white public.[19] The pride of ownership that the Coranderrk residents felt was furthered by the fact that the station was profitable after a few years of operation. The BPA Report for the year 1874 shows that Coranderrk made a profit of £1,840 while the next highest grossing station made only £300.[20] Self-governance and pride of ownership were fostered by the leadership of station manager John Green. Green treated the Coranderrk Aboriginal people as free and independent men and women, respecting their freedom and their right to the land that they occupied. All of this

combined to make Coranderrk an egalitarian community unique among the Aboriginal stations of this period. We can therefore understand the political resistance of the Coranderrk community as an expression of their peculiarly liberal social and cultural circumstances.

Coranderrk in the archive

If Coranderrk does not provide an accurate picture of the nature of Aboriginal resistance in the station era, it can tell us a great deal about the way subaltern political resistance is shaped and translated by colonial authorities. As Ann Laura Stoler argues, colonial archives 'produced as much as they recorded the realities they only ostensibly described'.[21] In the inclusions, occlusions and structuring of the archive, we can discern a narrative authored by the State, what Achille Mbembe calls a 'montage of fragments that create an illusion of totality and continuity'.[22] Keeping this in mind, we must ask ourselves why the Coranderrk rebellion was granted such a prominent space in the archive through the comprehensive media coverage and well-documented government inquiry it received. While the actions of the Coranderrk Aboriginal people are remarkable, Coranderrk was comprised of at most a few hundred people who were disenfranchised political non-entities in relation to the Victorian Government and therefore easily ignored by it. As the previous petition efforts examined here show, organised Aboriginal political activity in the station era was far more likely to become administrative detritus than it was to result in governmental inquiries. Without diminishing the extraordinary efforts of the Coranderrk people to be heard, it is important to understand the reasons they were listened to. To do this, we need to interrogate the role that the Coranderrk rebellion and the inquiries it brought about played in the political discourse of the time.

As noted above in the discussion of photography at the station, Coranderrk was the site at which the non-Aboriginal Victorian public constructed their ideas of Aboriginality and negotiated the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Diane Barwick demonstrates that the Secretary of the BPA, Robert Brough Smyth, viewed Coranderrk as the colony's flagship station, and a 'secular experiment' in the management of Aboriginal people.[23] As Bain Attwood states, Coranderrk more than any other station also became a hub for tourists, authors and ethnographers seeking out 'the exotic' and a chance to inspect 'the last of a dying race'.[24] The government adviser William Thomas based many of his influential accounts of the Aboriginal people on his encounters with the Kulin people from the 1830s, many of whom would go on to comprise the Coranderrk population. Popular writing about Aboriginal people by Brough Smyth and others drew heavily on Thomas's work, and thus furthered the idea of Coranderrk as a metonym for Aboriginal people in the popular colonial imagination.[25] Indeed the construction of Coranderrk as a proxy for the entire Aboriginal population made it a rallying point for progressive journalists and wealthy philanthropists like Ann Bon, without whose vocal support the rebellion would not have received the hearing that it did. The role of Coranderrk as a standard bearer for the management of Aboriginal people is further shown by the fact that managers of other stations in their annual reports commented upon how the rebellion was being received by people on their stations.[26]

An article in the *Sydney Illustrated* News from 1884 summarises the unique role of Coranderrk in conversations about the treatment of Aboriginal people at the time:

> The unfortunate Yarra Yarra aboriginals of Coranderrk have been preached at, written about, and made the pegs for ambitious leader writers to hang attacks on the Government on; have been inspected, superintended, catechised and missionaryised, and generally badgered around the world till the wonder is that at some of the deputations or royal receptions at which they have assisted they have not used their nullahs [sic] and show boomerangs on the thick skulls of the tormentors, who will allow them neither to live or die in their own fashion … Now there is an unholy notion afloat that these poor fellows should be removed to Gippsland, to tear them from their homes, from where their children were born … and transport them virtually to another climate where to a certainty they will soon be improved off the face of the earth.[27]

Though itself disregarding the agency of the Coranderrk people, the article reflects a sense that the conversation surrounding their welfare showed little regard for their own beliefs or their long term survival. Indeed it can be argued that as Coranderrk became a proxy for Aboriginal people as a whole, engaging with their concerns became a means of absolving the conscience of non-Aboriginal Victoria for the crimes of colonialism. While some objected to the most grievous examples of cruelty towards Aboriginal people, few objected to the white supremacist civilising discourse that underwrote it. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that the infamous 'Half Caste Act' was

implemented only five years after the conclusion of the Coranderrk Inquiry. This Act, which historian Michael Christie refers to as 'an attempt at legal genocide',[28] greatly expanded the control of the BPA over the Aboriginal population and saw almost half of the population of the stations forced to move elsewhere.[29] While the Coranderrk Inquiry resulted in short-term material improvements in the condition of the Coranderrk people, the report of the board appointed for the purpose of the inquiry still recommended arbitrary limitations on their autonomy like not allowing them to own more than one cow or horse.[30] Ann Bonn, champion of the Coranderrk cause, said little about the ensuing decimation of the Coranderrk Station[31] and is later on record attempting to remove the station manager at Lake Condah for allowing a party for the marriage of two Aboriginal residents to carry on into the night.[32] Considering the shallowness of non-Aboriginal Victorian support for the Coranderrk petitions and the overwhelming and fatal silence that followed them, it seems clear that taking up the Coranderrk cause was an act of tokenism for the government and its allies in society and the press. The symbolic role that Coranderrk played in colonial discourse about the welfare of Aboriginal people allowed the inquiry to act as a ritual of absolution for non-Aboriginal Victoria. This aligns with Stoler's understanding of the commission as a colonial tool that allows the State to 'demonstrate its moral conscience and disinterested restraint, its willingness and commitment to critically reflect on its own mishaps'.[33]

Thus, while the Coranderrk Inquiry produced important short-term gains for the people of Coranderrk, it ultimately supported the narrative of benevolence that undergirded the State's treatment of Aboriginal Victorians.

State inquiries also have the power to define what does and does not represent legitimate political expression and enshrine this consensus in the archive. By defining certain events as worthy of archiving, the State inquiry silences other forms of political expression through omission. As Michel Foucault said, the archive is 'the law of what can be said and the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events'.[34] Evidence that the BPA was concerned with presenting Coranderrk as a singular event can be found in the way they framed the debate as one about whether the protests of the Coranderrk people could be considered legitimate, self-authored political action. It is easy to discern this debate between the lines of the Coranderrk Inquiry Report. The rhetorical strategy of the representatives from the BPA placed on the report committee was to emphasise Coranderrk as an aberration; a settlement stirred to a frenzy by the political agendas of outside agitators. Members of the BPA sitting on the Coranderrk Inquiry claimed in the report that they had received 'ample testimony that they are satisfied with the management' of the 'five other stations besides Coranderrk' under the control of the board.[35] The 'Remarks of the Board' on the final report of the Coranderrk Inquiry expand on this theme, suggesting that 'the people of Coranderrk are well fed and clad' and claiming that the 'gross untruthfulness of many of the witnesses is patent to anyone who reads the evidence'.[36] This rhetorical strategy can be discerned years earlier in the report of the outgoing General Inspector of the BPA, CS Ogilvie, wherein he states that 'Coranderrk Station will not bear favourable comparison with any of the other stations, either as to its climate or to its state of discipline'.[37] While the Coranderrk people and their allies successfully refuted claims of deception and outside influence, debating on these terms still allowed the BPA to determine the criteria for what could be considered political action by Aboriginal people. With the remarkably high bar that the Coranderrk people set, it is no surprise that much of the quieter forms of resistance I will go on to examine were considered sub-political concerns. Thus, staging the Coranderrk Inquiry served both to allay the conscience of non-Aboriginal Victoria and marginalise Aboriginal political expression. By uncritically using the Coranderrk narrative then, as historians we risk reproducing what Spivak termed the epistemic violence of colonial authority.[38]

Political resistance on the stations

To truly appreciate the nature of the political resistance era, we need to re-evaluate the way in which we use and understand the colonial archive. When seen as a tool through which colonial authority constructs its vision of itself and its subjects, the colonial archive loses its claim to transparency. One possible way of recovering lost Aboriginal voices of resistance is to broaden our understanding of political resistance. As Colin Gordon is quoted as saying in James Scott's *Weapons of the weak*, 'the binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one' and 'the existence of those who seem not to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies'.[39] While writers like Patricia Grimshaw and Jan Critchett

have studied these 'untold stories', few have sought to frame these quiet acts of dissent as the micropolitics of the disenfranchised.[40] I will examine two of the 'strategies' that Aboriginal Victorians exhibited here to demonstrate some of the breadth and character of station-era political resistance.

'Laziness'

One of the great stereotypes about Aboriginal people during the station era and one of the greatest causes of complaint by station managers was their perceived laziness and tendency to shirk routinised labour.[41] While no doubt this perception is partially built on the institutionalised racism that Syed Alatas described in *The myth of the lazy native*,[42] in the Victorian context it has its basis in a sort of fact. The archive is full of complaints about Aboriginal men in particular making seemingly concerted efforts to avoid the labour imposed on them by station managers. A letter from the Lake Condah station manager in 1915 complains of three 'half castes' 'strong and big enough for anything' who 'will not work, getting away at every opportunity and also keeping others from working'.[43] A similar letter from the Lake Condah manager in 1917 states that 'the natives are getting beyond all reason … taking no interest in their work and even refusing to get out of bed'.[44] Viewed with an understanding of Aboriginal colonial experience, what authorities termed laziness can be read as a form of passive resistance. Frantz Fanon observed the disruptive power of indolence when he described laziness as 'the conscious sabotage of the colonial machine'.[45] The contemporary European understanding of time was for most of history one of a number of competing temporal cultures. While the European temporal order emphasises punctuality and productivity in line with modern labour practices, Bain Attwood notes that an Aboriginal understanding of time 'had a rhythm centred in a subsistence economy on meeting immediate needs'.[46] Inculcating Aboriginal people with this system of time through forced adherence to a regular routine was an essential aspect of colonial hegemony. The Aboriginal station reports regularly provided updates on the nature and quality of Aboriginal labour as proof of 'progress', with one report from Lake Tyers in particular speaking of the dangers of the 'do-as-please' way of living in contrast to a life of settled labour.[47] Given this, the 'laziness' described by the aforementioned station managers should really be thought of as a means of frustrating colonial order, representing a refusal to abide by the arbitrary demands of colonial authority.

Family and kinship

Determining the structure and composition of the family unit was one of the main forms of control exercised by colonial authorities. Manipulating familial bonds was a way of ensuring compliance and of inculcating Aboriginal people with colonial ideology. Restricting families was also important because if they were left unregulated, they had the potential to form the nucleus for organised political action on the stations. Much like Steven Hahn comments on the kinship networks between American slaves, 'familial obligations and responsibilities … could give slaves support in daily contests of will with owners and managers, and in negotiating the personal travails that could have left them isolated and exposed'.[48] This bore out in Coranderrk where traditionally-maintained kinship structures formed part of the organisational scaffold for rebellion. Regulating and dividing families developed new importance after the introduction of the 'Half Caste Act', as it became the tool by which the 'Aboriginal population' as defined by the Act could be reduced. Here the story of Effie Mobourne, an Aboriginal woman living on Lake Condah Station is highly instructive. After Effie left her first husband, the manager of Lake Condah asked the BPA for advice on how best to deal with her. The BPA recommended that Effie should be married again, but only to a 'half caste' because 'it would be against the intention of the Act to allow her to marry an Aboriginal'. The letter further states that 'if you could persuade her, you may be able to get her settled away from the station, but it is necessary that you proceed very carefully … to avoid any suspicion being aroused in the matter'.[49] Whether due to the machinations of the manager or not, Effie was married shortly after to the 'half caste' Eddie Mullett and ordered to leave the station. Seen from this perspective, the reports of Aboriginal people seeking to exercise autonomy over their family lives represent another form of political resistance. The determined effort made by Harry Rose to keep his children with him at the Framlingham station and the attempts that Winnie Austin and her family made to be reunited represent radical campaigns for freedom in the face of colonial hegemony.[50] The efforts of Aboriginal people to retain their familial connections takes on greater significance when the importance of kinship to Aboriginal identity is considered. The Western

notion of the 'family unit' is itself a colonial imposition that differs from traditional Aboriginal understandings of kinship. As Andrew Strathern writes in the preface to Sally Babidge's study of the Aboriginal family and the State, Aboriginal Australian societies were in earlier times 'marked by elaborate systems of descent coupled with prescriptive or preferential marriage rules and governed by a cosmology linking people in special substantive ways to Country through the expressive images of the Dreaming Time'.[51] The centrality of kinship networks to Aboriginal identity makes the struggle of Aboriginal Victorians to determine them for themselves a defence of Aboriginal identity as well as a practical political strategy.

Conclusion

We cannot understate the strength, courage and ingenuity of the Coranderrk protestors, whose struggle marks an important moment in the history of Aboriginal political resistance. We should be careful, however, that by exalting the Coranderrk story we are not mischaracterising the nature of Aboriginal life during station era colonial rule or diminishing the smaller gestures of political resistance that surfaced within it. As examined above, disguising and denying the political capacity of Aboriginal people helped to maintain the myth of benign authority that underwrote white hegemony. Acknowledging this fact and accepting that Aboriginal political resistance took a variety of forms helps us to 'decolonise' the historical record. Bound by a highly restrictive system of control, Aboriginal Victorians on the stations fought their battles when and where they could. For most, struggle against colonial domination took the form of a struggle against its immediate manifestations. Forced labour, separation of families and countless other cruelties and indignities comprised the lived reality of Aboriginal people in the station era and in resisting them they were resisting the colonial system that authored them. These stories, disguised as the flotsam of colonial rule in the archives held by Public Record Office Victoria and so many others, are an essential part of Aboriginal history and deserve to be understood as such.

Endnotes

[1] Giordano Nanni & Andrea James, *Coranderrk: we will show the country*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2013, p. 7.

[2] Diane Barwick, Richard Essex Barwick & Laura E Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, Aboriginal History Monograph: 5, Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra, 1998; Penny van Toorn, 'Literacy, land and power: the Coranderrk petitions', in *Writing never arrives naked: early Aboriginal cultures of writing in Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2006, p. 123, available at <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=660744775401051;res=IELIND>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[3] James C Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, p. xv, available at <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10579301>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[4] Steven Hahn, *A nation under our feet: black political struggles in the rural south from slavery to the great migration*, Kindle edn, Belknap Press, 2003, p. 3.

[5] The Aboriginal stations in Victoria included four major church stations: Lake Tyers (established in 1861), Ramahyuck (1861), Ebenezer (1861) and Lake Condah (1867), as well as two major government stations: Framlingham (1861) and Coranderrk (1863).

[6] Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005, p. 146.

[7] Ibid., p. 128.

[8] Claire McLisky, 'Managing mission life, 1869–1886', in Leigh Boucher & Lynette Russell (eds), *Settler colonial governance in nineteenth-century Victoria*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2015, p. 117, available at <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/aboriginal-history-monographs/settler-colonial-governance-nineteenth-century-victoria>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[9] Bain Attwood, *The making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p. 23.

[10] Report for 1894 Aboriginal Mission Station Ramahyuck, PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 15.

[11] Report for 1885 Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station, PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 15.

[12] Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, p. 125.

[19] Jane Lydon, 'The experimental 1860s: Charles Walter's images of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Victoria,' *Aboriginal History*, vol. 26, 2002, pp. 78, 89.

[20] Tenth report of the *Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1874, available at <https://digitised-collections.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/21345>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[21] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial archives and the arts of governance', *Archival Science*, vol. 2, 2002, pp. 87–109.

[22] Achille Mbembe, 'The power of the archive and its limits', in C Hamilton, V Harris, M Pickover, G Reid, R Saleh, & J Taylor (eds), *Refiguring the archive*, Springer, Netherlands, 2002, p. 22.

[23] Barwick, Barwick & Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, p. 78.

[24] Bain Attwood, 'Coranderrk', *eMelbourne: the encyclopedia of Melbourne online*, available at <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00405b.htm>, accessed 3 October 2015.

[25] Rachel Standfield, '"Thus have been preserved numerous interesting facts that would otherwise have been lost": colonisation, protection and William Thomas's contribution to *The Aborigines of Victoria*', in Boucher & Russell (eds), *Settler colonial governance in nineteenth-century Victoria*.

[26] Church of England Mission of Victoria to the Aborigines Annual Report 1882,
PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 15.

[27] 'Coranderrk', *Illustrated Sydney News*, 2 September 1882, pp. 9–10, available at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64034116/5786581>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[28] Quoted in Nanni & James, *Coranderrk: we will show the country*, p. 184. The official title of the 'Half Caste Act' was the *Act to amend an Act entitled 'An Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria' 1886*.

[29] Ibid., p. 184.

[30] *Report of the Board appointed to enquire into, and report upon, the present condition and management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, together with the minutes of evidence*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1882, available at <http://www.minutesofevidence.com.au/static/media/uploads/coranderrk_moe_digitized.pdf>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[31] Nanni & James, *Coranderrk: we will show the country*, p. 185.

[32] PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 4.

[33] Stoler, 'Colonial archives and the arts of governance', p. 106.

[34] Quoted in Sandhya Shetty & Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, 'Postcolonialism's archive fever,' *Diacritics*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1 April 2000, pp. 25–48, 27.

[35] *Report of the Board appointed to enquire into, and report upon, the present condition and management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, together with the minutes of evidence*.

[36] *Remarks of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines on the Report of the Board*, available at <http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/92919.pdf>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[37] *Thirteenth report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria*, 1877, available at <http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/24686.pdf>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[38] Gayatri Spivak, *Can the subaltern speak?: reflections on the history of an idea*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010.

[39] Scott, *Weapons of the weak*, p. vii.

[40] A notable exception is the work of Penny van Toorn, who uses James Scott's theory of hegemony to re-assess the writing of the Aboriginal people at Lake Condah on a textual level in order to uncover 'hidden transcripts'.

[41] Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. 20.

[42] Syed Hussein Alatas, *The myth of the lazy native: a study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*, Frank Cass, London, 1977, available at <http://www.citizens-international.org/ci2012/http:/www.citizens-international.org/ci2012/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/the-myth-of-lazy-native.pdf>, accessed 8 March 2017.

[43] PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 4.

[44] PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 4.

[45] Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, Grove Press, New York, 2008, p. 250.

[46] Attwood, *The making of the Aborigines*, p. 60.

[47] Church of England Mission of Victoria to the Aborigines Annual Report 1882,
PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 15.

[48] Hahn, *A nation under our feet*, p. 19.

[49] PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 4.

[50] PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 6 and
PROV, VPRS 1694/P0, Unit 8.

[51] Quoted in Sally Babidge, *Aboriginal family and the state: the conditions of history*, Ashgate, Burlington, 2010, p. 28.