

**Negotiating Place in Colonial Darwin**  
**Interactions between Aborigines and whites, 1869-1911**

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### **Certificate of Authorship/Originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis draws on the documentary historical record to examine the interactions between the indigenous Larrakia people and the white settlers in the colonial township of Darwin between the years 1869 and 1911. The colonial recognition of the Larrakia as the traditional owners of lands in the Darwin region and the historical question of their land rights is discussed in some detail.

Rather than seeing interactions between the Larrakia and the colonisers as polarised into either accommodation or resistance, this thesis looks at various interactions to highlight the complexities of the encounter. One of the more complex of their interactions was the negotiation of what is best described as an abstruse alliance which benefited both the Larrakia and the colonisers in various ways.

The colonisation of the Darwin region had a considerable impact on the Larrakia people's ability to live on their country as they had done prior to the invasion. This thesis seeks to understand the negotiations, compromises and decisions the Larrakia made to survive in their changing landscape.

Another complexity that is highlighted in this thesis is the tension within the white settler population about how to deal with what was presented as the 'Aboriginal problem'. This thesis shows that the ideology of compensating Aboriginal people for having invaded their land and undermining their means of subsistence was understood and condoned by the colonisers. The distribution of government rations, the allocation of reserves and the ongoing recognition of the Larrakia's right to be within the township were all ways that some colonisers attempted to compensate Aborigines for invading their land.

This thesis shows that while the Larrakia people were recognised as the prior occupants of Darwin and, as such, accorded a distinct status within the township in the whole period under study, the colonisers ultimately failed to give tangible expression to the Larrakia's land rights.

