



Kimberley Society

Book Note

***Mixed Relations: Asian–Aboriginal Contact in North Australia* by Regina Ganter. University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2006. 280 pages, illustrated, ISBN 1 920694 41 2, RRP \$54.95.**

Despite covering much of the northern Australian coast and parts of Asia, this book still manages to provide intimate glimpses of Kimberley people's lives. In particular, the personal stories, which are based on interviews with more than 90 Asian, Aboriginal and mixed-blood people, include material relevant to the life in the Kimberley. The family names for the region include Ah Chee, Chi, D'Antoine, Hamaguchi, Hunter, Lee Tong, Puertollano, Sahanna, and Watson.

In blending the personal stories with an overview of historical events, Regina Ganter, an Associate Professor in Australian History at Griffith University, strikes a nice balance. The overview synthesises information from well-known sources but it also draws on material that is either little known or available only on restricted access. The personal stories, placed at intervals within the overview, bring to life the impact of the laws, policy and regulations that affected Asian and Aboriginal people and, in many instances, gave the government control over their children.

While the Kimberley component of *Mixed Relations* focuses on the region's ports and its pearling industry, the book also comments on Macassan fishing on the Kimberley coast. Drawn mostly from Dr Ian Crawford's Ph.D thesis, which is not available on open access, that summary provides background to the author's coverage of today's Indonesian fishing. Her premise (page 51) that the use of the old Macassan 'trail to Australian waters recommenced in 1988' is just one of the many parts of the book that make for interesting reading.

Cathie Clement (August 2006)