



Book Review

by Stephen Tate

Bruce Pascoe- Dark Emu **Black seeds: Agriculture or accident?**

Author Bruce Pascoe identifies as a Bunurong man and is a member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. He has been the director of the Australian Studies Project for the Commonwealth Schools Commission and has had a varied career as a teacher, farmer, fisherman, barman, fencing contractor, lecturer, Aboriginal language researcher, archaeological site worker and editor.

‘Dark Emu’ is important reading to understand what Australia was before European arrival. The evidence is gleaned from early explorer and settler reports and previous academic studies to prove that Aboriginal people used domesticated plants by sowing, harvesting, irrigating, and storing them. The records of explorer meetings with villages of friendly, hospitable and curious people is confronting. It cites evidence of pre-colonial agriculture, engineering and buildings undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – stone houses, weirs, sluices, fish traps and game management.



Given that modern archaeology has proven that the first nations people survived successfully in this continent for over 50,000 years, you are left wondering where the local evidence is. Apparently much of it was deliberately destroyed or removed for other purposes. It was also evidence of an inconvenient truth that the Europeans did not want to recognise as they commandeered resources and displaced the previous owners without much care. I was left wondering why there is so few sign-posted historical locations of previous habitation beyond Cairns for massacres and pogroms conducted against Indigenous Australians.

Dark Emu is available in both an audiobook and ebook version.

