We Are Here: Politics of Aboriginal Land Tenure
Edited by Edwin V. Wilmsen
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"The notion of [foragers'] legitimate tenure rights in land," Edwin Wilmsen reminds us, "has only recently gained legal status, with severe restrictions and in a few countries only" (p. 1). *We Are Here* examines anthropologists' contributions to such gains in Canada and Australia, where some progress has been achieved, and in Namibia and Botswana, where it is urgently needed. The volume grew out of a conference, and the papers fit together better than conference proceedings usually do.

Let us begin with Canada, represented here by Harvey Feit and Michael Asch. Asch begins by explaining what Canadian Natives mean by aboriginal rights; these include a broad range of rights, by no means confined to land tenure. He explores the constitutional basis for developing such rights. This selection was whittled down from a longer work, and the operation was not entirely a success. Readers who wish to know exactly what he has to say concerning the means of protecting indigenous communities within the nation-state would be well advised to turn to his *Home and Native Land* (Methuen, 1984).

Feit writes about the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement – its background, provisions, successes and failures. The Agreement marks the Cree attempt to protect hunting rights in the face of hydroelectric megaprojects. At present, the Agreement seems to work passably well, although whether or not it and Cree hunting rights can stand up to the next spate of dam-building remains to be seen.

Two Australians, L.R. Hiatt and Kenneth Maddock, and an American, Fred Myers, provide lively accounts of the aborigines of Northern and Western Australia. Myers' piece shows that Pintupi ideas of ownership extend very widely indeed, to lands, sacred boards, cigarettes and motorcars. Hiatt takes up the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976, which provides a forum for land claims. It seems that anthropology has affected the claims process and vice versa. Maddock deals with a similar theme. Is anthropology advancing, he wonders, through involvement in land claims? His answer is a qualified yes.

Robert Gordon, himself a native of Namibia, believes that the aspirations of the Namibian San run much beyond foraging. The San, he argues, would like to acquire grazing lands and cattle, but San aspirations may be overshadowed in the play of interests leading up to Namibian independence. Next we turn to a chapter on neighbouring Botswana, where, as the editor reminds us, "Europeans have no monopoly on dispossessing aboriginal peoples" (p. 2). Not a cheerful picture, but there we are.

The work covers seven authors, eight chapters and four countries, although the title seems to promise wider coverage. Nevertheless, for specialists in the places discussed the book gives good value.