

# Basedow the photographer

Herbert Basedow, like many travellers before him and since, took photographs of the people and places he encountered. But what sets Basedow apart is the places he visited. Most of Basedow's travels were to remote regions in central and northern Australia, to places rarely seen by Australians even today. He typically travelled by horse or camel, or he walked, and on the few occasions when he did travel by car it was on dirt roads or buggy tracks, or he made his own tracks.

The earliest known group of photographs by Basedow are from the 1903 South Australian Government prospecting expedition to north-west South Australia, and comprise more than 200 images on a range of subjects, including landscapes, town scenes, geological outcrops, Aboriginal people and expedition members. He continued to use photography as a tool to assist in recording his scientific work throughout his life.

Basedow's travels were during the first three decades of the twentieth century, when lifestyles were dramatically different to those of today. In some of the remote places he visited, Aboriginal people were still living as they did in pre-contact times; some, including people encountered in the Western Desert during expeditions in 1903 and 1926, and in Arnhem Land in 1928, may not have seen white people before. At most, any contact between the different cultures would have been limited to very rare exploring parties and possibly enterprising white pioneers looking

for gold or land suitable for grazing stock. In the settled districts, Aboriginal people were attached to pastoral stations and towns, usually living under poor conditions in ready-made camps.

Basedow travelled through a wide range of often rugged and challenging terrains, from wetlands, arid and desert landscapes to severely eroded and drought-ridden areas such as those he encountered in the north-east of South Australia in 1919.

Images of Aboriginal people, landscapes and expedition-related activities feature prominently among Basedow's photographs. There are also photographs of non-Indigenous people, homesteads, pastoral stations and mining activities, plants, animals and geological outcrops, as well as a small number of photographs of various family members and pets.

Basedow's photographs are a rare record of life in outback and remote Australia in the early twentieth century. He did not take many photographs in the towns that he visited, but those that exist provide an important historical perspective. A photograph taken of Derby's main street in 1916 shows a wide earth-formed road flanked by buildings and distinctive boab trees (see page 93). His photographs taken on stations show Aboriginal men and women shepherding sheep and goats in places as far-flung as the Kimberley and Oodnadatta. Others show an operating woolshed on Murnpeowie station, now a ruin (see page 110), and several homesteads, some of which no longer exist.



Herbert Basedow, with a camera, at a lunch camp beside the Katherine River, Mararoa expedition, Northern Territory 1922

photograph by Frank Feast  
reproduced from film negative

### Documenting Basedow's photographs

The National Museum of Australia holds most of the photographic output of Herbert Basedow: about 2200 negatives and 1000 glass lantern slides.<sup>1</sup> The task of sorting and analysing Basedow's photographs has been made more difficult by the patchy documentation that accompanies the collection. On his first expedition, in 1903, he maintained a detailed photography record book, noting roll and negative number, date, subject, exposure time, lighting conditions and a brief description of the subject. He also marked most negatives from this expedition with roll and negative number. But no such information has been found for subsequent expeditions. Some information can be gleaned from his diaries, especially his 1916 diary, which was published and is heavily illustrated. From

1919, Basedow sometimes wrote '(photo/s)' against entries in his diaries, and he would occasionally write 'photo' alongside sketches he made in his notebooks, especially those of rock paintings. A small number of negatives have information written or scratched into their margins. Other than this, we simply do not know how he kept track of all the photographs he took.

Some useful information about his photographs can be found in Basedow's publications, reports and labelled prints. However, this still leaves a lot of undocumented images. One fascinating source of information is in the format of the photographs themselves. Many different negative formats were in use during the early decades of the twentieth century, and Basedow used a range of cameras over his career. Some negative formats proved unique to a single



**Members of the Mackay expedition, with Herbert Basedow holding a shutter release cord, possibly near Oodnadatta, South Australia 1926**

reproduced from film negative

expedition, and others were used over a series of trips. By determining which formats were used on which expeditions, combined with the subject matter of the photographs and the already firmly documented images, many more photographs could be attributed to individual expeditions or a range of expeditions.

On several expeditions Basedow used large-format film, cut into individual negatives, probably to make it easier to print them. Piecing together the rolls and

determining the order in which the film was exposed<sup>2</sup> has enabled the documentation of a significant number of images. For the 1926 expedition, for example, a total of 15 rolls and part rolls totalling 90 images were painstakingly re-created.

Researchers have lamented the paucity of documentation of historic photographic collections, particularly those containing photographs of Indigenous people. As curator Brenda Croft reflects:

It is a curious experience to go through the photographic archives — files and dusty files of photographs of people, most of them dead now. So few of the subjects are identified — not by their own name, colonial name, or even by tribal affiliation. They are like ghosts deprived of rest. The photographers ... too are often anonymous.<sup>3</sup>

Many Aboriginal people photographed by Basedow remain anonymous, although he began recording the names of a small minority of people he photographed during his first expedition. In his 1919 expedition album he names about 75 per cent of the Aboriginal people he photographed. However, Basedow's publications rarely included people's names. Instead he assumed a scientific distance in contrast to the more personable relationships with his subjects that his 1919 photograph album suggests he may have had on the ground.

If more of Basedow's albums had survived, it is likely even more people in his photographs would be accounted for. That he went to some lengths to record people's names at a time that many of his contemporaries did not, is an indication that he saw Aboriginal people as individuals rather than an amorphous group of people. However, the collection of such information in the field would have depended on Basedow's ability to communicate with his subjects. On trips to the Western Desert, in 1903 and 1926, and Arnhem Land, in 1928, Basedow came into contact with people who lived far from settled districts and spoke no English. On these trips he rarely recorded people's names.

## The technology of Basedow's photography

Photography was a complex and cumbersome activity at the time Basedow was engaged in his work. While we know nothing of how Basedow learnt to take photographs, we do know that he did his own printing, at least in the 1920s. In a letter to renowned geologist Sir Edgeworth David, Basedow wrote:

I am sending you two copies of aborigines which happen to be the only prints I can lay my hands on at the present moment[.] When the weather gets a little cooler, I shall start printing again and will be able to give you one or two more.<sup>4</sup>

In the three decades during which Basedow practised his photography there was considerable variety in the cameras and negatives available. Both glass and film negatives came in many sizes, ranging from slightly larger than the 35-millimetre format used today, to twice the size of the 5 x 4 inch large-format acetate negative in use today. Basedow used cameras that accommodated a wide variety of negative formats and apart from a handful, all are large format.

We have information on only some of the cameras Basedow used. Because several types of cameras could take the same negative format it is impossible to be certain what cameras he used on the other expeditions. During the 1903 expedition, Basedow used two Kodak cameras: a 'No. 2' pocket folding camera that took rolls of 12 square negatives and a 'No. 1' panorama camera that took rolls of six panoramic negatives.<sup>5</sup> The only other information we have relates to one of three cameras Basedow took with him on his 1916 expedition to Western Australia's Kimberley region. In his published journal he stated

that 'Messrs. S. P. Bond & Co., of Adelaide, kindly lent a valuable reflex camera'.<sup>6</sup> This is presumably the camera that took glass plate negatives of a size unique in Basedow's collection.<sup>7</sup>

As indicated by the negatives themselves, Basedow was again to employ a pocket folding or similar model of camera in 1916 and throughout much of the 1920s, including the 1922 expedition to the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory, a short trip to the Tennant Creek area in 1924, and the Mackay expedition to central Australia in 1926. He also used a panorama camera on the 1916 and 1922 expeditions.

It is interesting to speculate why Basedow used such a variety of cameras. As he was publishing illustrated articles from 1901 onwards, his choice to use glass plate negatives was probably determined by what he was likely to publish. On the whole, glass plate negatives provided higher quality images, but they were also more expensive to use than film negatives.<sup>8</sup> On three of his trips, in 1903, 1926 and 1928, Basedow avoided using glass plate negatives altogether. This was probably because these expeditions were to remote areas where it would be impossible to replace any broken glass plate negatives with fresh supplies.

Of course, no format is foolproof, and an incident towards the end of the 1928 Arnhem Land expedition almost resulted in the loss of exposed movie film. The expedition party included a cinematographer, Walter Sully, whose horse carrying the precious cargo lost its footing while crossing a river and the entire load was immersed in water. Fortunately the containers were well sealed and no water penetrated. Similarly, on the 1903 expedition, Basedow was fortunate not to lose his cameras when his riding camel threw its load:

While I was taking a few observations at this outcrop [in the vicinity of present-day Indulkana, South Australia] my riding camel, Buxton, seeing the rest of the string disappear behind the dark stems of the mulga, became restless. Jack, who was with me, attended to the animal, but in spite of his endeavours it became unmanageable and started to buck, kick and bellow in a manner I had never experienced before. The furious 'hushtas' and remonstrations of Jack were without avail. Buxton did not desist until he had snapped the surcingle and pitched the whole of my belongings to earth. Then, with a sudden jerk of the head, he broke the noseline and bolted after the caravan, retaining only the empty saddle upon his hump. A cry of alarm from our natives announced the mishap to the others as Buxton came dashing through the scrub at a galloping pace. While Jack pursued the fugitive, I collected my belongings and took note of the damage done. Apart from a broken thermometer and shattered compass and barometer glasses, there were no serious breakages. The cameras had fortunately been thrown out of their cases and thus missed being trampled upon, as the latter were.<sup>9</sup>

Where expedition transport included a car or buggy, Basedow tended to use glass plate negative cameras, typically in conjunction with cameras taking film negative. But this was not always the case. In 1919, for example, while travelling in far north-eastern South Australia by horse-drawn buggy, he used just a Graflex camera taking glass plate negatives. Similarly, in 1923 while travelling by car in the vice-regal tour of central Australia with the Governor of South Australia, Sir Tom Bridges, he again only took a Graflex or similar camera.





Tree marked by the RT Maurice and WR Murray exploration party in 1902, Ernabella, South Australia 1926

reproduced from film negative

Bark containers collected by Basedow on Bathurst Island, Northern Territory, in 1911 and photographed in Adelaide, South Australia 1911-13

reproduced from glass plate negative

### Capturing a different time

As well as the sciences, Basedow had a keen interest in history, which is reflected in the subjects he chose to photograph. For example, he would make a photographic record of the people who were present on the expeditions (including himself), modes of transport and expedition activities. At Ernabella, where there is now an Aboriginal town, the 1926 Mackay exploring expedition came across several trees marked by explorers, including Ernest Giles, William Christie Gosse and Richard Thelwall Maurice. Recognising the historical importance of the markings, Basedow photographed the blazes.

Pastoralist and expeditioner Donald Mackay correctly foretold that, 'in a few years the ravages of white ants will have made them unrecognisable'.<sup>10</sup> The markings have long since disappeared.

As a scientist, Basedow collected evidence to support his ideas and discoveries. He was a dedicated collector of geological, plant and animal specimens, and Aboriginal artefacts. He sometimes photographed examples from his collection to illustrate his writings. This is most evident in the article 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island', where 14 plates depict a total of 80 objects, almost all of which are now in the collections of the National Museum of Australia and South Australian Museum.<sup>11</sup>

Basedow held the contemporary view of Aboriginal people: they were destined to become extinct. This provided the impetus to document all aspects of their life so they could continue to be studied, even if the people themselves were no longer around. He encountered Aboriginal people on all of his major expeditions. Some were living on the fringes of settlements, while others had had such little contact with outsiders that they were still living a 'traditional' life. In the case of the latter these were fleeting encounters in which Basedow tended to just photograph the people themselves; rarely were they photographed engaged in activities. But things did not always go as planned. In 1903, for example, when Basedow was about to take a photograph of a man, his two wives and children, one child, too late for Basedow to stop the photograph, ran and hid behind her father (see page 49). This episode, which took place in north-west corner of South Australia, provides important information on how Aboriginal people with very little contact with Europeans reacted to cameras:

The females and children were called and presented. They seem to dread the camera as though it were a gun, and shudder when I direct it towards them. However, on showing an old man the image of his piccaninny [child], he looked more kindly upon the instrument, and helped to arrange the tribe in groups. But even then some of them bolted at the critical moment.<sup>12</sup>

To assist his broad documentation of Aboriginal cultures, Basedow would have no doubt hoped to photograph every aspect of Aboriginal life that he could. However his encounters with Aboriginal people

were typically brief, rarely lasting more than a day or two — hardly adequate time to build relationships where people felt totally at ease and would let outsiders share the more intimate aspects of their lives. One rare example shows men involved in playing a game. In these photographs, taken at Humbert River station in 1922, men and boys are seen playing a game that tests their skill at spear-throwing by trying to spear a bark disc rolled along the ground (see page 34).<sup>13</sup>

Like many anthropologists of his time, Basedow was interested in the ceremonial life of Aboriginal people, much of which would have been secret and therefore rare for outsiders, let alone complete strangers, to witness. However, Basedow was able to gain permission to observe some of these ceremonies because of his status as a government representative or medical officer. On one such occasion he was probably unwittingly removed before the most secret part of the ceremony was conducted. It was his Aboriginal assistant on the second 1920 medical relief expedition, Arrerika (or Punch), who led him away:

'Come on, boss!' Punch now declared, 'that's all. We go back to camp now. That fellow'll dance all night.'

I followed him into the darkness. It did not dawn upon me until next day that in all probability my removal from the place had been a 'put-up job' and that Punch had been instructed to take me away by the man who had chatted with him for some time. The reason for this, if my conjecture was correct, was no doubt that the further proceedings were of a most secret nature. I was annoyed with myself for having acquiesced so



Men and boys playing a game of  
'gorri', Humbert River station,  
Northern Territory 1922

reproduced from glass plate negative

promptly. What followed may have been the transcendent part of the whole ceremony, and I was sure that at the time I could have retained my place with a little discretion and gentle bribery.<sup>14</sup>

The following day Basedow went to photograph the ceremonial place, which had an intricate design 'painted' on the ground, but in this effort he was also thwarted:

I took a stroll to the ground in the morning to photograph the great emu-design, but the place was deserted and the beautiful

work of Aboriginal art completely wiped off the surface.<sup>15</sup>

The brevity of Basedow's encounters generally meant that he was limited to photographing only what people happened to be doing when he came across them. Occasionally, though, he persuaded people to enact activities for him — a practicality, given that many Aboriginal ceremonies take place at night, and photographing with artificial lighting was a cumbersome process in Basedow's time. In fact, he is known to have photographed at night on only one occasion, during a secret ceremony in central Australia when he took two 'flashlight' photographs.





**Luritja man posing to demonstrate an attack with a boomerang and shield, central Australia 1920**

**Kolaia man wearing a headdress worn in a fire ceremony, Forrest River, Western Australia 1916**

reproduced from glass plate negatives

While in the Kimberley in 1916, Basedow was at Forrest River Mission when a series of ceremonies were held one night. Basedow persuaded a man to pose wearing the headdress from one of the ceremonies during the day.<sup>16</sup>

In his photography, Basedow clearly wanted to document Aboriginal cultures as they had been in pre-contact times and, at times, he went to some lengths to contrive such scenes. This is best demonstrated by comparing photographs taken by both Basedow and Frank Feast of an Aboriginal shelter at Arltunga in 1920 (see page 36). In Feast's photograph five clothed men are standing to one side, whereas in Basedow's photograph a single naked man sits in the entrance and the European accoutrements seen in Feast's

photograph have been removed. This construction ensured that Basedow's photograph depicted a 'traditional' scene.<sup>17</sup>

Aboriginal people living in the settled districts during the early decades of the twentieth century, when Basedow was undertaking his expeditions, were generally clothed and living in makeshift huts. However this did not suit Basedow's purpose of wanting to photograph people living in the 'traditional' way. While he did photograph some people as he came across them, wearing clothes and engaged in activities such as breaking-in horses, on other occasions he played an interventionist role by arranging photographs to suit his purpose. In some cases, he had people partially or completely strip and strike poses or re-create activities.



One group of five photographs, for instance, show two Luritja men in 1920 engaged in various posed activities including stalking kangaroos and throwing spears (see example, page 35).

Basedow was known to have had a dominating, but not overbearing, personality. Like many of his contemporaries he believed Aboriginal people, as a 'race', to be inferior to his own. In one colourful passage Basedow refers to Aboriginal people and Caucasians respectively as 'he the bud, we the glorified flower of human culture'.<sup>18</sup> In terms of his photography this enabled him to arrange many of his photographs in the way he wanted, and justified his asking people to remove their clothing. In some cases, however, his actions in requiring people to undress were motivated by the practicalities of photographing medical conditions. For example, in 1920, Basedow wanted to photograph an unspecified medical condition presented in a man named Tommy at Henbury station in the Northern Territory:

He was dressed in European garments; but the pathological trouble I wished to show demanded that he should pose for my camera in the nude. He acquiesced with apparent complacence, after which each of us adjourned to our respective quarters.<sup>19</sup>

Soon after going their separate ways Basedow heard a commotion coming from Tommy's 'quarters' and went to investigate. Tommy was arguing with his wife, who felt that Basedow should have given him 'five bob' (five shillings) for taking off his trousers. Basedow thought money was of no use to Tommy so gave him tobacco and food instead and so 'peace was restored'.<sup>20</sup> This raises the question of whether Basedow routinely paid his subjects to be photographed.

It is interesting to compare photographs of activities that seem certain to be staged with those that appear entirely natural. On two separate occasions Basedow photographed Aboriginal women fighting. While the

**A comparison of photographs by Herbert Basedow (left) and Frank Feast (right) reveals how Basedow arranged his image by removing 'non-traditional' items, Arltunga, Northern Territory 1920**

reproduced from glass plate negative (left) and original print (right)

photographs are undocumented, there is evidence attributing them to particular places and times. The first is a single photograph that was probably taken in 1920 at Henbury station, in the south of the Northern Territory, and is mentioned in Basedow's diary. It shows two women posed as if fighting with long clubs. The woman preparing to defend herself has a loose grip on her weapon, is not standing in a bracing position and seems to have a smile on her face. There is no sense of movement in the photograph and the definition of the photograph is very clear. And, unusually for women living on a pastoral station, they are naked.

The others, a set of four photographs, were probably taken in the Victoria River district in the north-west of the Northern Territory in 1922 and seem to match Basedow's description of a fight between two Aboriginal women described in *Knights of the Boomerang* (see page 153).<sup>21</sup> Although Basedow stated that he filmed the fight with his cinematograph, he did not mention taking photographs. These photographs are clearly of an actual fight. The action of the clubs is blurred and the women are moving about the camp. Both are fully clothed, unlike other photographs showing Aboriginal people engaged in 'traditional' activities, suggesting that Basedow did not have time to ask them to remove their clothing.

A number of portraits in the collection show people with relaxed expressions, occasionally even smiling. These were typically of people attached to Basedow's expeditions, who were used to the ways of Europeans, having been in their midst for some time. This is in contrast with people who had had little or no prior contact with non-Indigenous people and who were unfamiliar with photography. Among

the 1903 photographs there are a number of group photographs. Given that no-one on the expedition could speak the local language, it must have been some achievement for Basedow to get across to his subjects that he wanted them to stand still while he took their photograph.

Murray Garde and Apolline Kohen-Raimondo have recently reappraised Basedow's ethnographic legacy. In a discussion of the 1928 expedition to Arnhem Land, they talk about the significance of the photographs of rock art taken by Basedow, and point out that the photographs are the earliest European records of rock art in west and central Arnhem Land, and that some of these art sites are known to the local Aboriginal residents of the Mann and Liverpool rivers districts. This record, in giving us a minimum date for the artworks, provides an invaluable benchmark against which can be measured the rate of deterioration of the paintings. In the case of paintings that have been added to the sites since the photographs were taken but still beyond living memory, it provides information on the continuity of an art tradition:

Basedow's photographs of rock-art shelters, the first ever taken in the Liverpool and Mann Rivers districts, have also demonstrated to the Kuninjku that interest in their art by non-Aborigines extends back to early last century when the first contacts between the Eastern Kunwinjku and *Balanda* 'Europeans' were occurring.<sup>22</sup>

## Sharing his experiences

Basedow often illustrated his publications and the many lectures he gave with his expedition photographs.

In his 50 articles and two books — mainly dealing with Aboriginal cultures, but also geology, landscapes, plants and animals — Basedow published more than 500 of his own photographs (a few of these images occur more than once).

As Nicolas Peterson points out in his discussion of how Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen made use of photographs in their book *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, there are limits to being able to describe activities, in this case a complex ceremonial performance.<sup>23</sup> Photographs add an extra dimension to the narrative and make lengthy description unnecessary. Similarly, in *The Australian Aboriginal*, the photographs enhance and amplify the text. If Basedow could have managed it, the book would have been even more heavily illustrated:

In the present volume I have endeavoured to sift my subject matter in such a way as to keep the text in a suitable sequence and to make it of general interest. The principal difficulty has been to delete matter in order to keep down the bulk of the book. The latter remark applies equally well to the selection of illustrations; it was with a heavy heart that I found myself obliged to reduce the number of plates, all of which illustrated interesting points referred to in the text.<sup>24</sup>

Some of Basedow's photographs appeared in newspapers, particularly in Adelaide, but also Sydney and Brisbane. Sometimes these accompanied interviews with him or his own articles. On his return from the 1903 prospecting expedition, Adelaide's *Chronicle* published 10 'valuable' photographs showing landscapes, Aboriginal people,

Basedow on a camel and expedition members digging out a water soakage.<sup>25</sup> Sensitivities of the time were dealt with by adding pubic covers to the naked men in two of the photographs.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to his published works, Basedow also compiled photograph albums of his trips. Only two of the expedition albums are extant: one contains photographs from the 1903 expedition and the other, photographs from the 1919 and 1923 expeditions.<sup>27</sup> Unpublished reports provided further scope for Basedow to make use of his photographs. It is highly likely that there are more of his reports yet to be located, and of the seven that are known, only four, from the 1919–20 medical relief expeditions, are illustrated with photographs — 64 in total (including one image in duplicate).

Basedow also used his photographs to illustrate the many lectures he gave to learned societies, interest groups and the general public. While in Europe in late 1931 and early 1932, Basedow lectured on Australian Aborigines, geology and his travels to many societies, including the prestigious Royal Anthropological Institute and the Royal Geographical Society, both in London. By all accounts his public lectures were popular events, with Basedow highly regarded as an entertaining and informative speaker, and topics typically being his travels or Aboriginal cultures, or elements of both. As well as using lantern slides, Basedow sometimes illustrated his lectures with movie films, none of which appear to have survived.

## Basedow's development as a photographer

Although Basedow was primarily motivated to take photographs to augment and illustrate his





**Herbert Basedow beside  
a cinematograph near  
Burke's burial site,  
Innamincka district,  
South Australia 1919**

photograph by Richard  
Grenfell Thomas  
reproduced from original print

scientific work, a sense of aesthetics also exists in his photography. It is clear when viewing his work over time that there was a development in his technique, from his first expedition in 1903, to his later travels in the late 1920s. Of course, this development is tied into the photographic technology of the time. As a rule, Basedow's glass plates are better composed, have more accurate exposures, are sharper and have greater artistic merit than roll film negatives taken at the same time. This may have to do with the optics and designs of the glass plate cameras over the negative roll film cameras. It may also indicate a different approach in

the mechanics of the photography between the two mediums. For example, if Basedow's glass plate camera required a tripod and had been fitted with a focusing plate, he would have been able to compose, correct his focus and spend time creating his image. His roll film camera may have had only a very basic rangefinder focus system which would not allow for the same degree of control.

Although there are some stunning landscape images in the collection, it is within Basedow's portraits and people studies that his development as a photographer is most evident. His 1903 images have





**Kolaia men displaying styles of  
hair adornment, Cambridge  
Gulf, Western Australia 1916**

reproduced from glass plate negative

a sense of removal from his subjects; they are almost 'snapshot' in style. There is no attempt at intimacy, no exploration of the subject.

By 1916 Basedow's images reveal a striking portrayal of Indigenous Australia. One image, of three men, is well composed and shows a strong aesthetic sense — no longer a snapshot, it is a carefully constructed case study utilising strong elements of form and focus. Another, of children playing in the sea, is a beautiful

image that goes beyond its ethnographic roots (see page 82). The radiating lines of water and rock draw strong attention to the children, the central subject of the photograph. By the 1920s, Basedow's portraits have become much more intimate. From a technical perspective, he is now filling the frame by either using longer lenses, or by getting closer to his subjects. This shift in his working distance may be an indication of his improved comfort with his subjects.



**Mr Thomson, a dog scalper,  
and unknown girl, north-west of  
Oodnadatta, South Australia 1926**

reproduced from film negative

When we look at photographs taken from 1916 onwards, we find a collection of beautifully composed landscapes and detailed character studies. Incorporating strong composition and great use of light, one particular photograph of a man and child reflects a tender moment reminiscent of Dorothea Lange's Depression-era photographs.<sup>28</sup> Another photograph of a mother and child is a poignant and detailed exploration that is particularly well-

composed, utilising a shallow depth of field and critical focusing to draw the viewer to the child.

When seen as a collection, Herbert Basedow's photographs are a powerful record of early twentieth century people and place, taken in some of the most remote and inaccessible regions of Australia. This valuable archive of places, people and times is one of Herbert Basedow's enduring legacies: a window on a different time.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Nell Basedow to Colin MacKenzie, 22 July 1933, National Archives of Australia, Series A2645 50/2/1. Presumably it was MacKenzie who underlined the section in this passage.
- 2 For example, different photographs of the same Aboriginal man were published in *The Australian Aboriginal*, Basedow's first book, and *Knights of the Boomerang*. In the former he is said to be a Wardaman man, which we can assume to be correct given that Basedow was involved in its publication. In *Knights of the Boomerang* he is said to be a Warramunga man. In 'Manipulation of photographs: A case study', *COMA: Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists*, vol. 14, 1984, 2–20, I corrected many of these errors (corrections in *COMA*, vol. 15, 1984, 25).

## Basedow the man

- 1 Ian Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Martin Peter Friedrich (1829–1902)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070205b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070205b.htm).
- 2 Some of his studies were undertaken at the South Australian School of Mines and Industries (now the Institute of Technology), where his brother Erwin (1875–1939) also studied.
- 3 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 May 1900.
- 4 *Register*, 19 September 1911; Robert Lucas to Basedow, 15 November 1901; SLSA, PRG 324, vol 1.
- 5 *Prince Alfred College Chronicle*, 8 March 1895.
- 6 *Journal*, 19 April 1919. His Cape Barren geese bred 'regularly' and by 1921 he had reared 36 birds.
- 7 See 'Basedow the scientist', p. 18.
- 8 This was a high-level visit that involved Basedow in a lot of organisational matters for a period of about two months. An extensive program was organised for the nine-day visit, including receptions, on-board tours, balls, dinners and excursions for the sailors.
- 9 Donald Mackay, 'The Mackay Exploring Expedition, Central Australia, 1926', *Geographical Journal*, 1929, 258–64.
- 10 Herbert Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XV, 1915, 57–242 (p. 66). Basedow also recounted another tale of

his early unease with his strange surroundings. On the night of 13 June 1903, the party had been so full of apprehension regarding the natives in the neighbourhood that they had extinguished their fire and loosed a volley of shots at a tree stump they mistook for an Aboriginal scout (ibid., p. 139).

- 11 He particularly looked at stones suitable for building materials as well as certain minerals like clays, gypsum and lignite. Herbert Basedow, *Report on Recent Development in Economic Geology*, Special Intelligence Bulletin No. 17, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1910 [p. 5].
- 12 Baldwin Spencer regarded Basedow's qualifications with 'contempt' (DJ Mulvaney & JH Calaby, *'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer 1860–1929 A Biography*, University of Melbourne Press, Carlton, 1985, p. 276), while South Australian anatomist F Wood Jones described Basedow's credentials as an 'impudent parade of degrees, real or assumed; and knowledge, borrowed, stolen or feigned' (quoted in Mulvaney & Calaby, p. 276). Spencer's disapproval of Basedow seems to have developed over time, as he and EC Stirling made 'valuable criticisms and suggestions on various points' of the first of Basedow's 'Anthropological notes' ('Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51 (p. 47)). Stirling, but not Spencer, provided 'kind assistance' three years later (Herbert Basedow, 'Anthropological notes on the western coastal tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXXI, 1907, 1–62 (p. 59). Regarding Wood Jones's charge of plagiarism, at worst, Basedow could be accused, on occasion, of not sufficiently or appropriately acknowledging the work of others when he should have, excusing himself for not doing so: 'for the simple reason that, had I started looking up all necessary references, the volume might never have been completed. My time at headquarters has been so limited during the last fifteen years that, in the absence of a library near at hand, it was impossible for me to adopt any other method than to write up my observations at first-hand and run the risk of a certain amount of trespass. Nevertheless, I trust that the authors so affected will realize that there was no slight intended and will treat my transgression in the spirit of independent corroboration' (Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, p xii).
- 13 He used the same titles in 'Diseases of the Australian Aborigines' in

- 1932 (*Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. XXXV, no. 12, 177–85; vol. XXXV, no. 13, 193–8; vol. XXXV no. 14, 210–13; 1 August, 229–33; 15 August, 247–50 and vol. XXXV, no. 18, 274–8).
- 14 *South Australian Government Gazette*, 11 August 1910, p. 290.
- 15 In the *South Australian Government Gazette* of 1 December, Basedow's Christian name was given as 'Hubert'. This was corrected in the following *Gazette* (8 December 1910, p. 1184).
- 16 *Express*, 25 January 1910.
- 17 Heidi Zogbaum, 'Herbert Basedow and the removal of Aboriginal children of mixed descent from their families', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 121, 2003, 122–38.
- 18 *ibid.* (p. 132). In Neville's view the 'full-blood' was doomed to extinction, while the 'half-castes', if cross-bred with whites, would inevitably produce whiter children, to the point where they would reach the standard of white Australians.
- 19 *ibid.* (p. 123).
- 20 Basedow met the South Australian Commissioner of Public Works on 3 June 1914 to discuss the matter and followed up the meeting with a letter the following day (SLSA, PRG 324, Item 2).
- 21 In 1929, for example, when he was president of the Aborigines' Protection League, he made a public appeal for fruit to send to Hermannsburg Mission in the Northern Territory to supplement meagre rations and, according to one newspaper, 'so that the blacks may not die of scurvy' (*Bunyip*, 30 August 1929).
- 22 *Register*, 7 May 1919.
- 23 *Critic*, 14 May 1919.
- 24 These were the only expeditions on which Nell accompanied her husband. Sometimes while her husband was away, she travelled overseas. On one trip in 1929 she visited Japan, China, Java and Singapore (see Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story: A German South Australian Heritage*, The Author, Adelaide, 1990, p. 125).
- 25 The reports included itineraries, a list of personnel, information on the nature of the country travelled, climate, geographical features, background information on the Aboriginal groups encountered including broad reasons for health problems, lists of individuals examined, diseases encountered and concluding remarks.
- 26 Herbert Basedow, 'Report upon the third medical relief expedition among the aborigines of South Australia', State Records of South Australia, GRG 23/1, 1921, 330, p. 30.
- 27 Herbert Basedow, 'Relic of the lost Tasmanian race: Obituary notice of Mary Seymour', *Man*, 14, 1914, 161–2.
- 28 Quoted in Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story*, p. 147.
- 29 Facsimile in *ibid.*, p. 146.
- 30 *ibid.* Bernard Basedow says the girls were treated 'extremely well, despite the fact that some people felt they were only servants'. A photograph in Adelaide's *Register* newspaper (8 January 1929) shows them serving Basedow with refreshments; the caption is headed 'Aboriginal girls as servants in Adelaide'. Other photographs in Basedow's collection show Tjikanna and Unndela with Nell at the zoo and with family pets and an unknown toddler. When Basedow died in 1933 both Tjikanna and

- Unndela 'deeply mourned the untimely death of Dr. Basedow' (*ibid.*, p. 147). Nell wanted to return the girls to the Northern Territory but Herbert's three sisters 'took them over and befriended them, in deference to their brother', creating a rift that led to Nell moving overseas for about 20 years (*ibid.*, p. 145).
- 31 *Register*, 12 August 1914.
- 32 Basedow to Richard L Butler, 26 August 1927, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4; Secretary for Lands to Basedow, 16 September 1927, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4.
- 33 Brown to Basedow, 28 March 1911, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 2.
- 34 S Roy Burston, Mervyn J Holmes, JT Beckett & JH Kelly to Basedow, 24 August 1911, NAA: Series A1 1912/2149.
- 35 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. vii.
- 36 *ibid.*, p. ix.
- 37 *Advertiser*, 28 February 1925.
- 38 Sir Arthur Keith to Basedow, 6 April 1925, SLSA, 572.994b.
- 39 *The Times*, literary supplement, 17 September 1925. This review strongly reads as having been written by an anthropologist familiar with Aboriginal cultures and the literature that had been written on the subject. Nevertheless, the reviewer goes on to acknowledge that the book 'has given us much, and we must be grateful to him for it; it is a compliment rather than a reproach to him that we wish he had given us much more'.
- 40 This reputation was acknowledged when Basedow was asked to write the contribution 'How should the visiting scientist approach the primitive Australian Aboriginal?' for a series entitled *Practical Hints to Scientific Travellers*, published in The Hague, 1926.
- 41 Both T Werner Laurie Ltd, and Thornton Butterworth Ltd, London-based publishers, approached Basedow.
- 42 Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Herbert (1881–1933)', [www.adb.online.cdu.au/biogs/AO70204b.htm](http://www.adb.online.cdu.au/biogs/AO70204b.htm). Basedow had stood unsuccessfully in 1924.
- 43 Unreferenced newspaper item, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 4.
- 44 Harmstorf, 'Basedow, Herbert'.
- 45 *Mail*, 13 August 1927.
- 46 'Certificate of discharge', SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 47 Unreferenced newspaper article, SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 48 Unreferenced newspaper article, SLSA, PRG 324, vol. 6.
- 49 *Leader*, 8 June 1933.

## Basedow the scientist

- 1 Although he did not publish in botany, he produced published work in geology and zoology.
- 2 Herbert Basedow, 'On the occurrence of Miocene limestones at Edithburgh, and their stratigraphical relationship to the Eocene of Wool Bay, with description of a new species by Professor R. Tate', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXV, 1901, 145–8.
- 3 *ibid.*, (p. 148).
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Herbert Basedow, 'Descriptions of new species of fossil mollusca

- from the Miocene limestone near Edithburgh (including notes by the late Professor Ralph Tate)', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVI, 1902, 130–2.
- 6 Herbert Basedow, 'On Naticoid genera Lamellaria and Caledoniella from South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 181–6; Herbert Basedow & Charles Hedley, 'South Australian Nudibranchs, and an enumeration of the known Australian species', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 134–60.
  - 7 These papers described, for example, 'new species of Orthoptera' (JGO Tepper, 'Descriptions of some new species of Orthoptera from north-western South Australia — No. 1', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 162–7); 'the Mollusca' (Charles Hedley, 'Report on the Mollusca collected by Mr. Herbert Basedow on the South Australian Government North-West Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 161–5); and 'insects including new species of Mantidae and Phasmidae' (JGO Tepper, 'Insects collected in the north-western region of South Australia proper by H. Basedow; with descriptions of new species of Mantidae and Phasmidae — No. 2', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 1905, 237–45). In his 1904 paper, Tepper named a new species of cockroach *Periplaneta* (now *Ataxigamia*) *basedowi* after Basedow, the specimen being one of a swarm attracted by the light of the expedition campfire at Hector Pass in the Mann Ranges.
  - 8 Basedow was, however, adept at the complex science of taxonomy and, as the following excerpt from his diary of the 1928 expedition to Arnhem Land shows, he was familiar with the characteristics to look for in identifying known species and recognising new ones: 'About these exposures a species of pandanus I have not seen before. Grows on the dry surfaces of sandstone with roots like a mangrove. The whole plant is peculiarly branched and in mature specimens reminds one of araucaria. Leaves very much smaller and less jagged than other species. Fruits quite distinct. From 15–25 feet. 2 Photographs and specimens' (Diary, 5 June 1928, Mitchell Library, MSS Set 161/5, Item 19). The pandanus was indeed a new species. Basedow submitted specimens of the plant to Kew Gardens in England and it was later named *Pandanus basedowii* (see CH Wright, '*Pandanus basedowii*', *Kew Bulletin*, 1930, 158).
  - 9 See Robert Burn, 'Notes on a collection of nudibranchia (Gastropoda: Dorididae and Dendrodorididae) from South Australia with remarks on the species of Basedow and Hedley, 1905', *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria*, vol. 25, 1962, 149–71; Seaslugforum, www.seaslugforum.net. The other specimen mistaken for a new species by Basedow and Hedley was in fact a juvenile form of a previously described species. One retains the name they assigned it (*Halgerda graphica*). The specimen collected by Basedow remains the paratype for this species, or one of the specimens against which future scientific determinations should be made.
  - 10 As an undergraduate student at the University of Adelaide Basedow undertook research into Tertiary age deposits and fossils. In 1907 Basedow travelled to Germany to undertake postgraduate studies. His PhD thesis was an Australia-wide examination of the country's geology, submitted to the University of Breslau in 1908 with the title 'Beitrage zur Kenntnis der Geologie Australiens'. It was published with the same title the following year (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 1909, 306–79).
  - 11 This medal was awarded for the best original work in geology and in 1904 Sir Edgeworth David, Professor of Geology at the University of Sydney, was the examiner. There were only two candidates but David judged Basedow's contribution to be the more worthy of this significant honour, commenting: 'I have no hesitation in recommending that the medal be awarded to Mr. H. Basedow. His description of his geological explorations in the Musgrave and adjacent ranges and his detailed petrological description of the rocks is an interesting and useful contribution to Geological Science, and in every way worthy of the high distinction of the award of the Tate Memorial Medal' (David to CR Hodge, Registrar, University of Adelaide, 22 July 1904, University of Adelaide Archives, Series 200, No. 579/1904).
  - 12 Bernard O'Neil, *In Search of Mineral Wealth: The South Australian Geological Survey and Department of Mines to 1944*, Department of Mines and Energy Special Publication No. 2, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1982, p. 148.
  - 13 Herbert Basedow, *Catalogue of Minerals in the Technological Museum of the South Australian School of Mines and Industries*, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1907.
  - 14 He wrote reports on these, but the only resultant geological publications were the 'Extracts of reports' that appeared in six-monthly Mines Department printed reports.
  - 15 His mentor Tate and Howchin had been involved in a feud over glacial deposits, and Basedow continued the cause after Tate's death. Howchin had been studying these deposits since the late 1800s. Basedow and a colleague, JD Iliffe, another of Tate's students, presented a paper titled 'On the formation known as Glacial Till of Cambrian Age in South Australia', at the Royal Society of South Australia meeting of 4 April 1905. They suggested that a deposit at Blackwood was in fact not a glacial deposit, as claimed by Howchin, but was created by metamorphic forces. At the Society's meeting the following month, Howchin, supported by eminent geologist and Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson, stridently criticised Basedow and Iliffe (*Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXIX, 335). Basedow and Iliffe evidently were not deterred by the Royal Society's meeting for, toward the end of 1907, a brief resume of their paper was read on their behalf at a Geological Society meeting in England, again refuting Howchin's claims. Both sides had their supporters, but in the end the general consensus was that Howchin had presented a convincing case and he was later 'completely vindicated' (Jonathan Selby, 'Geo-giants of the past: Walter Howchin (1945–1937)', *Terra Nova*, vol. 3, no. 5, 1991, 568–9 (p. 569)).
  - 16 Herbert Basedow, 'The supposed oil-bearing areas of South Australia: Dr Wade's report critically reviewed', TA Leslie, Adelaide, 1915; Herbert Basedow, 'Oil (in) the south east: Comprehensive reply to Mr Ward' [Adelaide, 1917].
  - 17 A paper he published in 1916 was little more than notes 'copied straight from [his] field-book' from the 1905 government expedition to the north-west of the Northern Territory ('Physical geography and geology



- of the Western Rivers' district, Northern Territory of Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVI, 148–217 (p. 6)). Attached to his published journal of a 1916 expedition to the Kimberley was a précis of the geology he had recorded, supplemented with notes by Robert Etheridge jnr ('Narrative of an expedition of exploration in north-western Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVIII, 1918, 105–295). Basedow's other geological writings during this period were opinion pieces, particularly relating to petroleum in south-eastern South Australia, and short published notes and unpublished reports.
- 18 Undated advertisement, probably about 1923, SLSA, PRG 324, Item 3. Surviving reports demonstrate that his geological examinations after 1911 were undertaken in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and his home state.
  - 19 Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, p. ix.
  - 20 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. xii.
  - 21 The closest he came to this was in his 'Anthropological notes' and perhaps his 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island' ('Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51; 'Anthropological notes on the western coastal tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXXI, 1907, 1–62; 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island, North Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIII, 1913: 291–323).
  - 22 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. xiii. Some of the 'intimate' photographs Basedow referred to are, no doubt, of secret rituals.
  - 23 Herbert Basedow, 'Vergleichende Vokabularien der Aluridja- und Arrundta- Dialekte Zentral-Australiens', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 40, 1908, 207–28.
  - 24 Bullroarers are, among central Australian peoples, secret ceremonial objects, which women and children are not permitted to see.
  - 25 Herbert Basedow, 'Aboriginal rock carvings of great antiquity in South Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIV, 1914, 195–210 (pp. 198–203). In the absence of direct dating techniques he suggested the silica film covering the entire rock surface and geological forces that had caused rocks to split through engravings or break away from the bedrock, meant the engravings were of some antiquity (a theory since confirmed).
  - 26 Herbert Basedow, 'Diseases of the Australian Aborigines', *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. XXXV, no. 12, 177–85; vol. XXXV, no. 13, 193–8; vol. XXXV no. 14, 210–13; 1 August, 229–33; 15 August, 247–50 and vol. XXXV, no. 18, 274–8.
  - 27 Herbert Basedow, 'Report upon the First Medical Relief Expedition amongst the Aborigines of South Australia', 1920, South Australian Archives, GRG 23/1 1920 144, pp. 30–1.
  - 28 Basedow probably met Klaatsch at an Adelaide meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, when Klaatsch delivered a paper based on his research and travels through Australia from 1904 to 1906. Klaatsch was determined 'to attack the difficult problem of the origin of the Australian blacks, and of their importance in relation to the whole development of mankind' (Hermann Klaatsch, 'Some notes on scientific travel amongst the black population of tropical Australia in 1904, 1905, 1906', *Report of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, vol. XI, 1908, 577–92, (p. 577)). At that time he inclined to the theories of AW Howitt, who had postulated a now-submerged continent as the most probable origin of the Australian Aborigines, and the Asiatic race; however this opinion was to undergo revision and further development in later years. Klaatsch referred in his paper to work undertaken by Basedow: 'Before my arrival Mr. Herbert Basedow, that gifted young scientist, made a profound study of the customs and weapons of the tribes of Palmerston and of the Daly River' (p. 584).
  - 29 *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1928. See 'Basedow the man', p. 9, for a fuller discussion of Basedow's complex attitudes towards Aboriginal people.
  - 30 Basedow lecture quoted in the *Northern Territory Times*, 2 September 1922.
  - 31 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 58.
  - 32 See 'Basedow the man', p. 10 for a discussion of how recent commentators have accused Basedow's explanation of the close relationship between the two races as contributing to government policies separating part-Aboriginal children from their Aboriginal parents.
  - 33 *Bulletin*, 23 December 1926.
  - 34 Basedow's talent as an artist was evident by his early teens, as two watercolours reproduced in a family history attest (Bernard Basedow, *The Basedow Story: A German South Australian Heritage*, The Author, Adelaide, 1990, pp. 107, 108). These demonstrate an eye for balance and detail characteristic of Basedow's later drawings.
  - 35 Surviving maps from his 1903, 1905, 1916, 1919, 1920b, 1923, 1926 and 1928 expeditions demonstrate his competency in cartography and surveying.
  - 36 One was an examination of the cultural practices of circumcision and subincision ('The strange erotic ritual of Australian Aborigines', in R Burton (ed.), *Venus Oceanica*, New York, 1935, pp. 321–62). The other was his second book, *Knights of the Boomerang*, a popularised account of his travels and investigations into Aboriginal cultures (The Endeavour Press, Sydney, 1935). It has been suggested that *Knights* is 'less careful with both "facts" and interpretation' (RM Berndt & CH Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1981, p. 539). Although loose in its interpretation the book is helpful in developing an understanding of Basedow's travels as it is quite detailed in referring to places and people.
  - 37 Basedow was a member of the Royal Society of South Australia and the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch (now the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia). He was also a member of British and European Societies, including the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, sometimes by invitation. In 1910 he was 'asked by the Geographical Society of

Hamburg to accept an honorary corresponding fellowship' (unknown newspaper, 3 May 1910). In 1932, after he had lectured in Europe, the Vienna Anthropological Society made him an honorary member, 'in recognition of distinguished services rendered in the fields of anthropology and exploration' (*News*, 3 May 1932).

- 38 Ian Harmstorff, 'Basedow, Herbert (1881–1933)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070204b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070204b.htm).

## Basedow the photographer

- 1 Other negatives remained with Basedow's brothers and sisters and were acquired by the South Australian Museum after the last of his siblings, Hedwig, died in 1963. Another 28 were acquired by University of Sydney anthropologist NWG Macintosh and, after his death, were donated to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra by his widow.
- 2 As some form of identification existed for at least one image per roll, the order in which the rolls were exposed could be determined. Reference to Basedow's diary for the 1926 expedition, yet to be done, should enable most, if not all, of the remaining images to be documented.
- 3 Brenda L Croft, 'Laying ghosts to rest', in Judy Annear (ed.), *Portraits of Oceania*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000, p. 9.
- 4 Letter, Basedow to David, 13 February 1925, University of Sydney Archives, P11/32/5.
- 5 Herbert Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XV, 1915, 57–242 (p. 240).
- 6 Herbert Basedow, 'Narrative of an expedition of exploration in north-western Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. XVIII, 1918, 105–295 (p. 106).
- 7 An entry in the diary of 18-year-old Richard Grenfell Thomas, one of two assistants on the first medical relief expedition in 1919, reveals that he and Basedow were watching horses being branded on Innamincka station when Basedow took 'several snaps with the Reflex' (Richard Grenfell Thomas, Diary entry for 8 September 1919, private collection). This may have been the same camera referred to by Basedow's assistant Frank Feast in an interview about the third medical relief expedition of 1920. Feast mentioned that Basedow had a 'Press Graflex for close-ups of Aborigines' (Interview with Frank Feast, sound recording, 27 February 1986, Tape 8, Side B, National Museum of Australia). This camera took glass plate negatives identical to ones used on expeditions during the period 1919 to 1924. Basedow also used it to take family photographs. When Basedow went to London on a business trip at the end of 1931, he took a camera that used the same size of glass plate negative, but it was not the same camera as it had a different method for holding the negative in place, as indicated by marks left on the negatives themselves.
- 8 In the period 1905 to 1911 Basedow seems to have only used large half-plate glass negatives, which generally provided fine-quality images.

These were the largest of the negative types employed by Basedow.

Basedow was still using this type of camera until at least 1916 and possibly as late as 1924 when he was completing his major book, *The Australian Aboriginal*, published the following year.

- 9 Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition' (p. 77).
- 10 Donald Mackay, 'The Mackay Exploring Expedition, Central Australia', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 73, 1929, 258–64 (p. 264).
- 11 Herbert Basedow, 'Notes on the natives of Bathurst Island, North Australia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. XLIII, 1913, 291–323.
- 12 Basedow, 'Journal of the Government North-West Expedition' (p. 113).
- 13 See Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, FW Preece and Sons, Adelaide, 1925, pp. 76–77, Plate XIII/1.
- 14 Herbert Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, Endeavour Press, Sydney, 1935, p. 165.
- 15 *ibid.* Perhaps Basedow was unaware that it was also common practice for the ceremonial design to be obliterated at the conclusion of festivities.
- 16 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, Plate XXXII.
- 17 Basedow was not alone in this intent. His better known contemporaries Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen, for example, also went to lengths to ensure European materials did not appear in their photographs. See Nicolas Peterson, 'Visual knowledge: Spencer and Gillen's use of photography in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 1, 2006, 12–22 (p. 17).
- 18 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 58.
- 19 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, p. 22. It was not particularly uncommon for Aboriginal people to be asked to undress, partially or completely, to be photographed. The evidence for Basedow's actions in this respect comes largely from the photographs themselves, where clothing can be seen on the ground near the subject, or where trousers or blouses have clearly been lowered or partially lowered. Basedow was motivated in some instances by his anthropological and medical interests: Basedow took three photographs of a man in the Kimberley in 1916. He is not wearing a shirt and his trousers are partly lowered, just to the top region of his buttocks. It is fairly clear that the reason for the photographs is to record all of the man's cicatrices, which Basedow also documented in a notebook.
- 20 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, p. 23.
- 21 Basedow, *Knights of the Boomerang*, pp. 184–90.
- 22 Murray Garde & Apolline Kohen-Raimondo, 'Putting Herbert Basedow back in focus: the 1928 expedition to Arnhem Land', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 1, 2004, 26–36 (p. 35).
- 23 Peterson, 'Visual knowledge', p. 18.
- 24 Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, pp. ix–x.
- 25 *Adelaide Chronicle*, 30 January 1904.
- 26 This was not the only time Basedow's photographs were treated in this way; in *The Australian Aboriginal*, photographs showing a naked woman and man also had pubic covers added (Plates XVI/1 and 2). Other photographs in the book had shadows further darkened to hide detail in the genital region. For reasons unknown, similar photographs

were left unmodified. There is an even more extreme example of image manipulation in which Basedow must have been complicit. In his 'Anthropological notes' of the 1903 expedition, one photograph shows three men holding spears in tandem with spear-throwers, while another man is sitting in the foreground (Basedow, 'Anthropological notes made on the South Australian Government North-West Prospecting Expedition, 1903', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. XXVIII, 1904, 12–51, Plate VIII/1). In the original photograph the expedition's male Aboriginal assistant, Arrerika, can also be seen, fully clothed. This would not have sat well with Basedow's intention of depicting traditional culture and, furthermore, Arrerika was not from the same cultural group as the other people shown.

- 27 The only other album of Basedow's known to exist depicts subjects of medical interest, and comprises photographs taken by Basedow and others.
- 28 See Paul S Taylor, Howard M Levin & Katherine Northrup (eds), *Dorothea Lange: Farm Security Administration Photographs, 1935–1939*, 2 vols, The Text-Fiche Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1980.