

## »Who are the Aborigines?«

### The Western Image of Indigenous Australians

This question has always been answered by the Aborigines themselves; today their voice can hardly be ignored. Nonetheless, with the NTER, Aboriginal autonomy and self-determination was compromised, the indigenous people were again disenfranchised and declared passive subalterns. The thereby created image of the Aborigines as ›nomads‹ and ›wards‹ continues to perpetuate older concepts which emerged in the course of European presence on the continent.

From ›extinctionism‹ in the settler society via ›protectionism‹ in the colonial society and ›assimilationism‹ in the Australian Commonwealth to the era of ›reconciliation‹, the European notion of Aborigines underwent decisive changes. As »Australian negroes«, they were located at the bottom of the ›scale of humanity‹ and declared a ›dying race‹. As »poor natives« the purportedly were dependent on European help and ›civilizational‹ provisions. As »Black Caucasians«, they became the precursors of the Europeans and were supposed to be ›elevated‹ into the ›white‹ society. Finally, as »Australian Aborigines«, they organized themselves politically and gained international approval. But simultaneously, former discriminating pictures are only seemingly displaced. They still determine the various answers to the question ›who are the Aborigines‹ and can be drawn upon at any time in order to legitimate government intervention and politics.