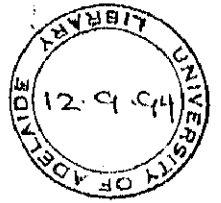


**WELSH MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA: LANGUAGE  
MAINTENANCE AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION**



**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of Welsh cultural experiences in Australia in the context of home, school, and the wider community. It is characterised as historico-sociological, in that an analysis of the maintenance and transmission of the Welsh language and other Welsh cultural values by a group of post-war migrants, is presented against a historical background of nineteenth and early twentieth century patterns of Welsh settlement.

The thesis begins with a review of the heterogeneous cultural background of British migrants to Australia and argues for the particular cultural distinction of the Welsh, based on their success, relative to the Scots and the Irish, in the maintenance of their ethnic tongue. The greater part of the opening chapter is devoted to an outline of the theoretical framework in which the major, sociological component of the study is grounded. The theory has as its cornerstone a model of culture and cultural interaction in a plural society developed within humanistic sociological guidelines formulated by the sociologist and philosopher, Florian Znaniecki. Culture, according to this view, consists of systems of shared values, insight into the meaning of which is gained through analysis of how individuals themselves view their cultural experiences. Some values however — here called *core values* — are so definitive of a group's cultural identity that they are fundamental to its continued existence as a distinct cultural entity. This study is in large part an investigation of the claim that the Welsh language has been, and still is, the primary core value of Welsh culture.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 comprise the historical component. The aim here was two fold: (i) to describe the origins and character of the cultural forms which the Welsh brought to Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century; and (ii) to trace their evolution as transplanted values in an Australian environment. It is

shown that the survival of the Welsh language and the culture it supported was closely linked to the continued vitality of the Calvinistic chapel traditions which Welsh migrants brought to the mining towns of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales in the 1850s and 1860s. It was to be short-lived. With the rapid Anglicisation of the young and the growing secular outlook of Australian society as a whole, the fledgling Welsh communities quickly collapsed. Although some Welsh ethnic institutions were to survive in some of the capital cities, and to find new life temporarily in the coal mining district of Blackstone, Queensland, in the 1880s, and the Hunter Valley coal fields of NSW as late as the 1930s, the cultural foundations established in the 19th century were not to survive in any significant form into the period of post-war migration.

The historical section concludes with a brief outline of the immediate cultural and political background to this recent migration. The arrivals of the later 1950s and 60s came from a Wales where increased awareness of the rapidly declining numbers of Welsh-speakers — and with it the emasculation of traditional cultural forms — had given rise to a vigorous revival of cultural, and to some extent, political nationalism. This revival, though it has stalled in recent years, is still in progress. At the same time, they arrived in an Australia that was on the threshold of abandoning the assimilationist policies of the immediate post-war years in favour of the multicultural stance now endorsed by both political parties.

Chapter 5 introduces the sociological component of the study by describing the demographic characteristics of the informants and the methods of research. The main aim of the chapters which follow is to analyse the processes and extent of the maintenance and transmission of the Welsh language and culture in Australia by a group of first and second-generation post-war migrants. In view of the centrality of the Welsh language to Welsh culture, two chapters are devoted to the respondents' linguistic system of values: Chapter 6 presents a linguistic profile of the two generations based on measures of their language proficiency and attitude levels; Chapter 7 then focuses on the circumstances and problems of transmission

at the level of individuals within the family. It is shown, for instance, that for Welsh-speaking children, entry to school in Australia coincides with an essentially irreversible termination of the bilingual stage of their linguistic development. This discussion of the respondents' linguistic values concludes with a typology of Welsh language evaluation and activation, the aim being to investigate the extent to which Welsh language maintenance is related to its recognition as a core value of Welsh culture.

Chapter 8 examines the organisational and social context of maintenance: Welsh ethnic institutions, the Welsh chapels and informal friendship networks. All are shown to be ineffective as agencies for Welsh language maintenance and cultural transmission. In the light, and within the limits, of these results Chapter 9 seeks to define what constitutes a Welsh cultural identity in Australia. It is concluded that, given their weakening hold on the Welsh language, and their substantial cultural overlap with the Anglo-Australian majority, the participants in this study, though they cling to the residues of their culture, are swiftly disappearing into the mainstream. This is even more true of the children of these post-war migrants who, in most respects, are by now indistinguishable from their age-group in the general population.

The final chapter presents a summary of the findings and considers, within the limits of the evidence obtained, some of the implications of the study for the future cultural presence of the Welsh in Australia. The major conclusion is that, although the Welsh language retains its position for speakers and non-speakers as a core value of Welsh culture and an important marker of Welsh identity, it is a rapidly declining force in Welsh cultural life. It is suggested that, based on such predictive criteria for language and cultural maintenance as group size, marriage patterns, immigration trends and the availability of educational and structural support, the survival of the Welsh language and an 'authentic' Welsh culture beyond the first generation subjects of this study is unlikely. Clearly this has some bearing on the survival prospects of other small language groups in Australia.