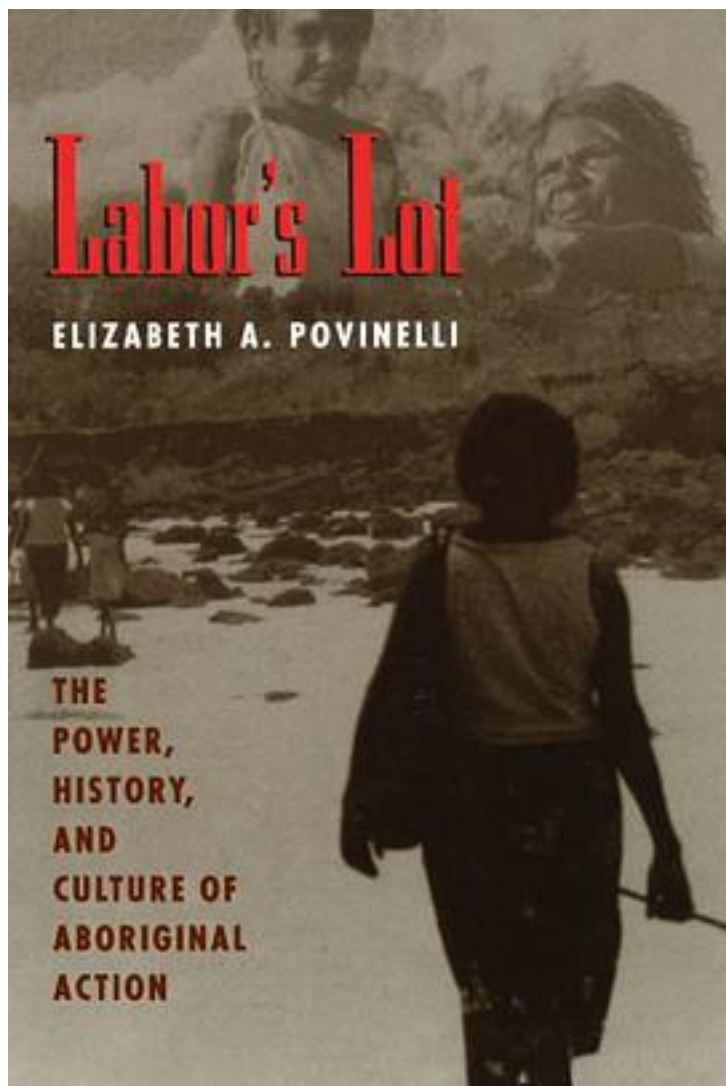


Labor's Lot



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How does an Aboriginal community see itself, its work and its place on the land? Elizabeth Povinelli went to the Belyuen community of northern Australia to show how it draws identity from deep connections between labour, language and the landscape. Her findings challenge Western notions of "productive labour" and long-standing ideas about the role of culture in subsistence economies. In "Labor's Lot", Povinelli shows how everyday activities shape Aboriginal identity and provide cultural meaning. She focuses on the Belyuen women's interactions with the countryside and on Belyuen conflicts with the Australian government over control of local land. Her analysis raises serious questions about the validity of Western theories about labour and culture and their impact on Aboriginal society. Povinelli's focus on women's activities provides an important counterpoint to recent works centering on male roles in hunter-gatherer societies. Her "cultural economy" approach overcomes the dichotomy between the two standard approaches to these studies. "Labor's Lot" should engage anyone interested in indigenous peoples or in the relationship between culture and economy in contemporary social practice.

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