

## **The York Agricultural Society: *Ecocide* in the Avon River Valley**

Alexander Bräuer

*Ecocide* combines the transformation of socio-ecological systems with the concept of genocide and became popular in the wake of the various environmental movements starting in the 1970s. In the context of Australian settler colonies, *ecocide* provides a useful approach in order to understand the encounter between white settlers and Aboriginal people. Agricultural societies played a key role in the ecological transformation of Western Australia during the colonial era. They represent focal points of colonial societies when white settlers tried to adapt European forms of agriculture to the complex environment. Thereby, Agricultural societies were involved in a variety of subjects such as experiments with imported and endemic plants and animals, the transfer, distribution and publication of agricultural knowledge, explorations, quality control for agricultural products, labor management, as well as political lobbyism.

This paper will explore how the York Agricultural Society in early colonial Western Australia tried to manage and organize the environment in the Avon River Valley to their own advantage and to what extent an *ecocide* was promoted. Based on mixed farming operations with a strong emphasis on the pastoral industry, the York Agricultural Society was established in 1840 in order to coordinate and support white settler's farming to the east of the Darling Range. With the help of the records by the Society, newspaper articles, government reports as well as private documents, the presentation will focus on two prominent campaigns by the Society: the fight against "Native Dogs" and the push to prevent fire-stick farming by Aboriginal people.

### **Bio**

**Alexander Bräuer** holds a Magister degree in Anglo-American, Medieval/Modern History and Geography from the University of Cologne. As a research assistant he supported the DFG project "Settler Imperialism in North America and Australia" at the University of Trier. For his Ph.D. project he was awarded a Scholarship from the Graduate School "Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship" at the University of Rostock, where he is currently also working as a research assistant for a DFG project on the postcolonial constructions of American antiquity. His doctoral thesis focuses on the encounter between Aboriginal people and settlers in the pastoral districts of colonial Western Australia.