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PART I

THE PRELUDE

to

EUROPEAN COLONIZATION
That part of tropical Queensland north of Cape Palmerston, approximately 21° S. latitude, and west to the Northern Territory border makes up the geographic region of North Queensland which has an area of approximately 300,000 square miles. In the east, a narrow coastal plain is fringed by often steep coastal ranges which contain the highest country in the region, reaching to over 5,000 feet in the Bellenden Ker Range south of Cairns. To the west of these ranges is the broad extent of the eastern highlands curving inland to enclose the Burdekin and its tributaries. The Great Dividing Range, an often scarcely discernible rise acting as a watershed between east and west flowing rivers, lies in this upland expanse. West of the Divide, the highlands gradually decline to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The two extensive river systems draining these areas are separated by a low western extension of the eastern highlands rising again to some significance in such rugged north-south ridges as the Selwyn Ranges near the present city of Mt. Isa.

North Queensland has in effect two seasons: a summer "wet" season extending mainly from December to March followed by a very much drier period from May to October. However,

1. E.C. Chapman, North Queensland (Melbourne, 1963), p. 1. This brief account of North Queensland is largely derived from this simple text as well as from:
NORTH QUEENSLAND

GULF OF CARPENTARIA

Thursday Is Q
Albatross Bay
Weipa
CAPE YORK PENINSULA

Cooktown
Tully
Rexburg
Charters Towers

gull

Hughenden
Cloncurry

Mt. Isa

GREAT DIVIDING RANGE

GREAT GULF OF CARPENTARIA

MACKAY

MEAN ANNUAL RAINFALL

CROSS SECTION FROM MT. ISA TO MACKAY

\( 21.5^\circ \)

500 miles

200 miles
though this pattern is uniform throughout the region, there are great extremes of rainfall. The narrow eastern coastal plain backed by steep ranges receives torrential rainfall from January to March to bring the annual average of most of this area to over 60 inches while Tully with an average rainfall of 178 inches per year is the wettest town in Australia. However, there is a drier coastal strip between the present towns of Townsville and Bowen averaging only about forty inches per year. To the west of the Great Dividing Range and south of the Gulf of Carpentaria the rainfall diminishes to the semi-arid south-west section of North Queensland. In the west the temperatures are correspondingly much higher than nearer the coast although here the higher humidity can make the summer days very uncomfortable. North Queensland's higher summer rainfall is caused by the southern shift of moist equatorial air. On the east coast, especially, the unpredictable intrusion of cyclonic influences from the Coral Sea can bring flood rain and once or twice a year cross the coast leaving behind a wide swathe of destruction. The extreme variability of rainfall over much of North Queensland from season to season means that drought is an annual possibility even though the average annual rainfall may be quite high. In addition the high temperatures result in a very high evaporation rate so that a given quantity of rainfall is much less effective for plant growth than in more temperate regions. These two factors, extreme seasonal variations and high evaporation, greatly diminish the significance of the average annual rainfall figures. However, the extensive drainage systems created by the high rainfall act to some extent as a compensating factor as the streams tend to retain water in or below their beds long after the wet season.

The natural vegetation cover reflected the variation in rainfall and, to a lesser extent, topography. The
eastern coastal plain, the higher coastal ranges, and the Atherton and Evelyn Tablelands, generally where the rainfall was over sixty inches per year, were covered by dense tropical rainforests. Most of the rest of the region was, and is still, open woodland covered by tall-growing natural grasses. In the interior plains, open grasslands predominate while in the semi-arid south-western region low scrub and spinifex are dominant. The most fertile soil, in areas of useful rainfall, is found on the alluvial plains near the river mouths and on the Atherton Tableland.

To the east, the Great Barrier Reef runs along the whole extent of the North Queensland coastline. Between the Reef and the mainland are numerous islands geologically linked with the mainland such as the western Torres Strait Islands, Hinchinbrook Island, the Palm Islands, and the Cumberland Islands, as well as numerous coral islands and outcrops.

In comparison with most other areas of the continent, North Queensland was 'a land of milk and honey' for the Aborigines. In fact, Professor Davidson, in discussing his ethnic map of Australia, placed 'the tropical northern coasts and hinterlands of Queensland, North Australia and, to a somewhat lesser extent, of the Kimberley district, Western Australia' first in order of importance of 'the regions most favourable to the aboriginal system of economy'. His maps reproduced as 'Figure 1' and 'Figure 2', clearly indicate that North Queensland was the single most densely populated large region in the continent. Davidson's estimates are derived from Professor Radcliffe-Brown's

Fig. 1 (From Radcliffe-Brown, in Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 23.)

Fig. 2. Estimated density of population in aboriginal Australia as of 1788. Reproduced from D.S. Davidson, 'An Ethnic Map of Australia', American Philosophical Society Proceedings, 79 (1938), pp. 654, 655.
which are still regarded as the most reliable available by Professor A.P. Elkin in the latest edition of his classic study, *The Australian Aborigines.* 3 Out of an estimated Aboriginal population for the whole of Australia of between 253,000 and 362,800, Queensland's population is put at between 100,000 and 120,000. Of this, 'the Burdekin-Cape Rivers drainage - Mackay to Cairns', is estimated to have had a population of between 16,500 and 20,000; 'Cape York Peninsula to Gilbert River drainage' 40,000–48,000; 'Western Queensland' 8,000–9,500. As 'Western Queensland' included the Gulf of Carpentaria lowlands and south-western Queensland was very thinly populated, it is probable that north-western Queensland's estimate was between 5,000 and 7,500. Thus, it seems that on the above figures North Queensland contained between 61,500 and 75,500 Aborigines. In fact there may very well have been more, as two of the regions listed as 'Fitzroy tributaries, Dawson, Comet, Mackenzie Rivers Drainage' (10,000–12,000) and 'Central Queensland' (10,500–12,500) may have impinged on the area being studied. Conservatively, then, on these estimates North Queensland's Aboriginal population was between 61,000 and 76,000. 4 Thus on sheer numbers the Aborigines of North Queensland would have posed a greater problem to the invading Europeans than they had previously encountered.

As this study is concerned with the European conquest of the Aborigines of North Queensland and the Aboriginal response to this challenge, it is necessary to understand Aboriginal life generally, especially those economic, social, political, and religious aspects which largely


4. Davidson, op. cit., p. 656.

determined the nature of the Aboriginal response and, in part, the relationship between the races. It is also necessary to consider to what extent the Aborigines of North Queensland were different from those in other parts of Australia and the significance of such differences for this research, especially as Cape York was one of the three major sources of cultural diffusion from outside Australia.

The Aborigines of North Queensland like those throughout the rest of Australia were hunters and gatherers using a simple, if effective, stone age technology. The gathering of small game, shellfish, eggs, insects, and plant food supplied the bulk of the diet, most of this generally being collected by the women while the men occupied themselves with the more exciting but often less reliable pursuits of hunting and fishing, or devoted themselves to religious ritual, art, and feuding. This economic pattern was subject to regional variations from one area to another. Thus, on the coast and along large river systems fishing could become more important than hunting. Within any one region the economic pattern would also vary largely because of seasonal changes but also for other reasons which will be investigated later in this chapter.

To the Aborigines, the land and society were linked totemically with the world of non-human nature from the Dreamtime when the totemic prototypes created and consecrated the present shape of the earth. Important aspects of the topography were living evidence of these world-creative powers. Thus, the land and the life-force associated with it pulsed through the daily activities of the Aborigines and in the cycle of religious ritual which linked the present with the creative impulse of the eternal Dreamtime, and thus guaranteed the future.
Aborigines were 'restricted nomads' and thus particular groups were associated with certain areas of land, although there is much controversy as to the nature of such local groups and local organization. What is accepted is that Aborigines lived in groups of fluctuating size depending on the availability of food and water. Thus, residential groupings varied from the 'hearth group', a man, his wife or wives, children, and possibly one or more dependent relatives, to large gatherings of up to several hundred. At one extreme is Radcliffe-Brown who, if rigidly interpreted, equated the range of a local group (or 'horde') of approximately twenty-five members with the religious estate of a patri-clan. At the other extreme is Hiatt who holds that the basic unit of local organization (the 'community') comprised several patri-clans of up to several hundred members which would meet in such numbers whenever possible but subdivide as conditions dictated. Maddock seems to have cautiously accepted Hiatt's hypothesis and enunciates this new concept of local organization. He uses the term 'clan' for the group that had a religiously sanctioned 'estate' in land and differentiates it from the 'band'.


the group that habitually used a certain 'range' of land.

He concludes: 'The data suggests that ranges included more
than one estate, but that they were defined differently
in different parts of Australia'.\(^7\) The dispute seems to be
best represented in an article by Birdsell and in the
appendix criticisms of his article.\(^8\) Birdsell and Stanner,
among others, put forward a convincing case for a middle
way i.e. a more flexible interpretation of Radcliffe-Brown's
concept of the 'horde' which allowed such small local groups
of about twenty-five members to co-operate with other
local groups for economic, religious, and social purposes
to produce occasional large gatherings of several hundred
which might remain together for several weeks while some
local food supply lasted. If Birdsell's argument is
accepted, these large groups consisted of several local
groups (or 'hordes'). Such a local group generally
consisted of the members of the patri-clan who owned and
inherited an area of land, the 'estate', through totemic
association ranging back to the Dreamtime, minus those
members (generally women) who had left to join spouses in
other bands or for other reasons, plus persons who had
joined the local group through marriage or for other reasons.
The local group was thus the most important social, economic,
and political group and the one with which a man most closely
identified himself. (Hiatt and Maddock would maintain
this distinction for the 'band' or 'community').\(^9\)

Most non-Aborigines think of Aborigines in terms of
their tribal affiliations. Certainly in the nineteenth
century the term tribe was used indiscriminately to refer

8. Birdsell, 'Local Group Composition among the Australian
Aborigines', loc. cit.
to almost any identifiable group of Aborigines. The term is still a troublesome one. Elkin concludes: 'in most cases, a tribe is a territorial and linguistic group with some other characteristics peculiar to itself'. A tribe is thus made up of several local groups. Tindale, in 1940, estimated that there were over 700 such tribal units. Berndt suggests the more conservative figure of 500 with tribal membership ranging from 100 to 1,500, the average being 500 to 600. He has cast doubt on the term's usefulness in some parts of Australia. Indeed, Elkin cautions that, 'in referring to a tribe as a territorial group, we must remember that this aspect is not really important politically or economically. In other words, the tribe seldom, if ever, functions as a whole in warfare or foodgathering'. In this study, Tindale's revised tribal distribution has been used for convenience.

Political and judicial decisions emanated from the local and kinship groups by discussions mainly among the mature and respected men. As kinship was co-extensive with Aboriginal society and indicated patterns of behaviour, obligations, and expectations for every person an Aboriginal

10. A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, p. 59. See pp. 56, 57 for characteristics which may help to define a tribe: (i) inhabit and own a usually definite area of country (ii) use a language or dialect peculiar to themselves (iii) know themselves, or are known by a distinct name (iv) possess customs and laws which often vary in some degree from those of neighbouring tribes (v) have their own rites and beliefs which frequently differ from those of neighbouring tribes.

11. N.B. Tindale, 'Distribution of Australian Aboriginal Tribes: A Field Survey', Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 64 (1). The author has just lately acquired a copy of Tindale's latest map distributed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, originally published with N.B. Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, (Canberra, 1974). I have not been able to obtain a copy of the book.


was likely to meet, a centralized authority was unnecessary. Because these norms of behaviour were well defined there were no separate political, judicial, or religious institutions. Nevertheless, there were effective sanctions which upheld these norms and an obvious transgressor could not expect support even from close kin. Berndt stressed the influence of religion in the functioning of daily life: 'In Aboriginal Australia "law" speaks, for the most part, through religion'.

As there was no rigid distinction between the sacred and the secular, the authority of religious leaders thus carried over into the cycle of life to which the religion was attuned. These men arranged meetings, led revenge expeditions, officiated at inquests, directed ceremonies, restrained men in ritual fighting, and organized the settlement of disputes and the punishment of religious offenders.

Maddock's conclusion highlights not only the strengths of traditional Aboriginal society but also how ill-equipped it was to deal with the European invasion:

The polity of the Aborigines, with ... its freedom from any institution of enforcement, and its consequent stress on self-reliance and mutual aid within a framework of generally recognized norms, was a kind of anarchy, in which it was open to active and enterprising men to obtain some degree of influence with age, but in which none were sovereign.

As Berndt has pointed out, the limitation of authority in social range and scale resulted in a 'political organization [that] was poorly developed throughout the continent [and] was a major reason for the Aborigines' collapse under the impact of Europeans'.

16. Ibid., pp. 204, 205.
17. Maddock, op. cit., p. 44. See also R.M. Berndt, 'Law and Order in Aboriginal Australia', pp. 201, 202.
Despite differences in the economy and technology throughout Australia, Aboriginal culture was remarkably homogeneous. Scholars have differed, however, in emphasizing the significance of such differences. Thus F.D. McCarthy noted that there were no clear cultural areas but a number of areas demarcated by secondary local characteristics. After stressing homogeneity, he concluded:

In dealing with the cultural history of the Aborigines we are concerned with a people whose complex of customs is relatively rich in content, regionally varied, and one which has been considerably enriched by external influences. 19

Meggitt also concluded: 'Nevertheless, underlying local modifications of economy and technology that had emerged in response to such ecological differentiation there was a generalized way of life which we may call Australian Aboriginal culture'. 20

Dr. R. Lawrence investigated the relationship between Aboriginal habitat and economy and concluded that such broad generalizations as the above failed to take account of the specialized adjustments made by particular groups to particular habitats, which did not lead, however, to radical changes in the broad characteristics of the economy. 21 This could be witnessed 'in the frequency and intensity with which particular sectors of the material culture were used by individual groups'. 22

22. Ibid.
regional differences were recognized by the Aborigines themselves. Thus several coastal tribes stretching north from Princess Charlotte Bay on eastern Cape York Peninsula referred to themselves as 'men of the sand-beach' and were, according to Professor D.F. Thomson, 'a very distinct type of Australian Aborigine' who lived a more or less sedentary existence for months at a time in both dry and wet seasons exploiting their sea resources, mainly dugong. 23 Yet just to the south, the Bakanambia apparently found their mangrove fringed coast unattractive for settlement and mainly exploited their land resources. 24 The Wikmankan on the estuary of the Archer River on the western side of Cape York Peninsula provided another regional variation, living a mainly sedentary life by exploiting the sea during the wet season but adopting a mobile hunting and gathering existence during the dry season. 25 Possibly the most interesting regional variation occurred in the rainforest regions near Cairns. Indeed, the debate as to the racial affinities of the pygmy inhabitants of the rainforest has highlighted this example. Professor N.B. Tindale and Professor J.B. Birdsell have suggested that the pygmy inhabitants of this region were the descendants of negritos seeking refuge from later Australoid invaders. Because of their alleged likeness to the extinct Tasmanian Aborigines, Tindale and Birdsell termed them 'Tasmanoid' and concluded, 'Their essential cultural relationships are recognized as being rather with the people of Tasmania and of Southern

24. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 221, refers to the tribe as the Lama Lama. Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, names it the Bakanambia.
25. ibid.
Australia than with the folk of the northern tribes who surround them'.

Even from the above examples, the existence of marked regional variations among North Queensland's Aborigines can be accepted. However, the examples so far given have been derived from Cape York Peninsula, which makes up considerably less than half of the area being studied, because most scholarly research has concentrated on this area. However, there is one early, classic study of a very different region, Walter E. Roth's Ethnographical Studies Among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines (that is, around Cloncurry). While lacking the conceptualization available to later researchers, it presents an account of largely inland plain-dwellers of an arid or semi-arid region, supporting the conclusion that within North Queensland there was significant secondary regional variation within the basic context of an Aboriginal culture.

Lawrence concluded that habitat 'provided a range of possible food sources within which the economic system operated. The range varied from area to area, and with the seasons in any one area'. However, he pointed out

26. N.H. Tindale and J.B. Birksell, 'Results of the Harvard-Adelaide Universities Anthropological Expedition, 1938-1939: Tasmanoid Tribes in North Queensland', South Australian Museum Records, 7, (1941), p. 8. The hypothesis that these rainforest tribes are descendants of negritos has been under increasing attack. e.g. See N.W.C. Macintosh, 'The Barrineans of Northern Queensland' in 'Talgai Cranium - Recent Progress', A.I.A.S. Document No. 701933.

27. W.E. Roth, Ethnographical Studies Among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines (Brisbane, 1897), passim, but especially chapters V and VI. The Queensland Museum places this area in its huge Gregory transitional region. See E.B.V. Crosby and J.C. Hodge, The Aborigines of Queensland (Queensland Museum Booklet No. 3, revised edition 1968), pp. 10, 11.

28. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 228.
that other factors could be of equal or greater importance. Thus in all but the harshest environment preference would lead to some potential foods being utilized and others ignored or only partly utilized. Technological factors could also be important as Aborigines in one area might not be able to exploit a resource because they lacked equipment that other Aborigines possessed, such as netting, fishhooks, canoes, fish poisons, etc.29

Even more important than regional differences which arose out of environmental influences, were those which reflected the percolation into Cape York, and thence more diffusely into North Queensland and other areas of central and eastern Australia, of cultural influences originating in Papua. Here Lawrence agreed with McCarthy that 'the major differences in Aboriginal culture appear to have been due mainly to culture contact with more advanced technologies and the subsequent diffusion of these traits through part of Australia'.30

McCarthy analysed the previous literature on barter or trade in Aboriginal Australia and in an important series of articles was able to show the most important intra- and extra-Australian trunk trade routes.31 He showed that trade routes radiated from Saibai Island and Mawutta eastwards and westwards along the southern coast of New Guinea and north and north-west across the centre of New Guinea to the north coast. These linked through the Torres Strait Islands with trade routes going south along

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29. ibid., pp. 223, 228-230.
the east and west coasts of Cape York Peninsula and from Princess Charlotte Bay with the rest of the east coast to as far south as mid-New South Wales, with the southern coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and with central Australia. These major trunk trade routes coupled with subsidiary trade from group to group were important factors in cultural diffusion.

In another article, McCarthy listed: firstly, a large number of ancient traits common to Australia and New Guinea and extending into Melanesia, Polynesia, and Indonesia; secondly, over sixty traits which have a continuous distribution between Australia and New Guinea such as 'hunting appliances, weapons, domestic appliances, ornaments, pastimes and playthings, ceremonial and magical objects, methods of disposing of the dead'; thirdly, half a dozen traits characteristic of the Torres Strait Islands only; fourthly, a small group, present in Australia and New Guinea but not in the Torres Strait Islands; and fifthly,

32. ibid., pp. 190, 191. Barter was mainly of a local kind in which one item was traded for another because of a local lack or believed superiority of the desired item. Thus the Prince of Wales Islanders obtained spears and spear-throwers from Aborigines at Cape York. However, trading items over extensive distances also occurred. Torres Strait Islanders probably introduced the balel shell phallocrypt to the Aborigines at Princess Charlotte Bay while baler shell spear-throwers from Princess Charlotte Bay were traded to the Murray Islands and thence to the Daudai district, Papua. A shafted shell hoe of the type used in the Daudai district was found among Aborigines of the Endeavour River. A male shell phallocrypt of the type used in the Fly River-Daudai district was found at Lake Cobham, western New South Wales. See pp. 180, 182.

a small group present in the New Hebrides and New Caledonia and eastern Australia which McCarthy believed were ancient survivals. 34

The research in North Queensland of Thomson, McConnell, Sharp, Haddon, Lawrence, Simmons, and Moore support the hypothesis of Papuan influence in Cape York Peninsula at a variety of levels. Thus Thomson wrote of the tribes, referred to as the 'sandbeachmen', stretching north from Princess Charlotte Bay:

The Kawadji 'sandbeachmen' show strong evidence of Papuan influence. This is apparent in their physical characteristics, particularly in the bronze colour of the skin and the curly, often frizzy, hair, which is in strong contrast with the straight, or curly hair of the typical Australian aboriginal. Their culture also shows evidence of this infiltration from the north and in another paper I have endeavoured to trace this Papuan element by studying its influence on certain social institutions. 35

34. ibid.
Probably the most important economic elements of cultural diffusion in North Queensland were the outrigger dug-out canoe, the harpoon used in hunting dugong, turtle, and large fish, fish hooks and some types of netting. 36 Cook reported seeing a dugout canoe, probably the most distinctive technological innovation of Papuan origin, as far south as the Cumberland Islands, near the present town of Proserpine. 37 Huxley reported outrigger canoes at Palm Island and Banfield noted that they were in use twenty miles north of Dunk Island. 39 Lawrence pointed out that on the east coast, the outrigger did not replace the bark canoe south of the Endeavour River, as it did to the north, and Brayshaw, who is at present investigating the material culture of the Herbert-Burdekin region, suggests that the sighting at the Cumberland Islands was of a rare intrusion of little or no economic significance. 40 It would seem that the dug-out canoe was used at least as far south as the Palm Islands. The technological superiority of the outrigger in the open sea and estuaries allowed the tribes on the east coast north of Princess Charlotte Bay to make dugong the staple of their diet. 41 On the west coast the outrigger canoe had spread south to about 14°S but had not replaced the bark canoe. 42

Papuan influence extended beyond the economic sphere. Yet, the controversy that arose between Ursula McConnel and

36. Lawrence, Aboriginal Habitat and Economy, pp. 167-170.
40. Lawrence, Aboriginal Habitat and Economy, p. 170; H. Brayshaw, personal comment, 19 October 1974.
41. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 169; Thomson, 'The Dugong Hunters of Cape York', pp. 238, 239.
Thomson over the extent of Papuan religious and ritual influence clearly emphasized that the society of the people discussed was still predominantly and unmistakably Aboriginal. Thomson and McConnel investigated the hero cults of Cape York Peninsula. Both agreed in noting such obvious Papuan influences in religious ceremonies as the ritual use of the drum, masks, enveloping grass costumes, grass screens, a secret enclosure, and styles of dancing. Moreover, at least in some areas, the dug-out canoe and the bow and arrow were incorporated in the cult. 43 Thomson, however, concluded that tribes of coastal Cape York Peninsula 'appear to have been influenced by the same extensive migration of culture that Haddon has traced southwards from New Guinea into Torres Straits, bringing with it the Hero Cult and masked dancers' and that this cult had penetrated at least 250 miles south of Cape York 44 while McConnel argued: '... a totemic culture formerly extended across the Cape York-Torres Straits Islands-Papua region, and this was similar to that found on Cape York Peninsula today, which I found typically Australian in all its features, except certain dancing fashions'. 45 The controversy has by no means been settled. Recently, Moore stressed that the intercourse between the Torres Strait Islands and Cape York Peninsula was not one-sided and

suggested that 'culture traits common to both peoples may well have been handed back and forth, gaining and becoming more complex in the process' 46.

Despite the differing interpretations it can be seen that the Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula had received significant Papuan influence through contact with the Torres Straits Islanders. Yet all of the researchers agree that such influence did not change basically Aboriginal society. The possibility of the controversy between McConnel and Thomson attest to this as did the slow dawning upon Thomson that the ceremonies he was witnessing were of Papuan origin. 47 The Aborigines accepted only those exotic elements which enriched their existing way of life. Thus, if the hero cult was of Papuan origin, it has been Aboriginalised to such an extent that a sophisticated researcher like McConnel could assert that it was typically Aboriginal. Thomson's confusing conclusion points to the limited nature of Papuan influence:

It is clear that totemism and initiation of an Australian type existed, and both these cults have survived to the present day, although over-shadowed in importance by the more virile Hero Cult. Of considerable interest is the fact that although repeated invasions of this more advanced Papuan culture have evidently occurred, probably over a very long period, it has not been able completely to overwhelm the original culture, a large part of which still remains, probably with only comparatively minor modifications. 48

Other commentators are less equivocal than this.

Thus, at Cape York itself where there was extensive contact with the Kaurareg of Prince of Wales and Horn

46. Moore, The Tribes of Cape York, p. 87. See also pp. 123, 124 for his listing of the culture traits and artefact types which McCarthy suggested diffused from New Guinea and the Torres Straits to Cape York Peninsula and from Cape York Peninsula to the Torres Straits.


48. ibid., p. 514.
islands who seem to have been a mixture, racially and culturally, of Australian and Papuan origin, the Kaurareg regularly visited the mainland, having traditional hostile or friendly relations with the neighbouring Aboriginal tribes. Moore noted:

The coastline about Cape York and its neighbouring islands appears to have been common ground for some considerable time before European contact, but at the time of our first reports friendly contact and intermarriage seem to have taken place principally between the Djagaraga groups, such as the Gudang, and the Kaura'reg of Prince of Wales Island, only 15 miles away across Endeavour Strait. The relations between the Anggamudi of the west coast and the Kaura'reg at this time were of a bitterly hostile nature and raids both ways were frequent. 49

Yet Moore concluded that 'Although the Djagaraga groups, in particular, had been much affected by the time Jukes, Stokes, Macgillivray, and the Jardines first contacted them, nevertheless it is clear from the information assembled in this study that their way of life was still typical of Australian Aboriginal coastal peoples and that the Papuan cultural traits and artefacts they had adopted were superficial only'. 50 He further asserted that the social organization of the three Aboriginal tribes at Cape York was 'undeniably Australian'. 51 A reading of the anthropological literature of Cape York Peninsula

50. ibid., p. 128.
51. ibid. See p. 18 for map of tribes at Cape York.
strongly supports Moore's conclusions. 52

Probably, this was nowhere more clearly illustrated than at Cape York where the Aborigines showed no interest in adopting agriculture although they came in contact with a people who, in part, were subsistence farmers. Recently it was stressed that the unique situation 'whereby Australian hunter-gatherers safeguarded their subsistence frontiers unbroken' for thousands of years needed explanation. 53 It is not within the scope of this research to attempt to solve this problem but because of the nineteenth century European belief which ethnocentrically esteemed agriculture above hunting and gathering 54 some investigation of the situation will be necessary.

Golson rejected the hypothesis that a New Guinea type of agriculture was impossible in Cape York Peninsula, pointing to species common in this area and used for food


53. J. Golson, 'Land Connections, Sea Barriers and the Relationship of Australian and New Guinea Prehistory', in Walker (ed.), Bridge and Barrier, p. 587. Golson referred to the question asked by J.P. White at the symposium whose papers were published in the above publication.

54. See chapters 10 and 12.
by the Aborigines which were domesticated in Malaysia or Oceania. He pointed out, however, that the confrontation between Australian hunter-gatherers and Papuan horticulturists was not clearcut. At the very narrow point of contact across Torres Strait horticulture was only one of the strategies for subsistence and, according to Moore, was possibly only practised intermittently by the Prince of Wales Islanders when other food resources failed or were thought to be failing.

The question researchers are now asking is why hunter-gatherers should adopt horticulture, especially if no environmental stress or pressure of overpopulation existed. In the less fertile western Torres Strait Islands, horticulture might often have been less rewarding than the hunter-gathering economy. It is now being suggested that in the Port Moresby area of New Guinea, as the savanna grassland extended to replace forest which was cleared for horticulture or for hunting purposes, by burning, hunter-gathering may have expanded at the expense of horticulture as man created an environment which attracted game and thus made hunting more attractive than subsistence farming. It is clear that an awareness of horticultural techniques was not sufficient to cause hunter-gatherers to adopt horticulture, when, indeed, it offered less material rewards for the labour expended and would demand surrendering one life style which might have been found satisfying and which was sanctioned by custom and

56. ibid., p. 390.
57. Moore, 'Cape York Aborigines and Islanders of Western Torres Strait', pp. 341, 342.
59. ibid., pp. 388, 390.
As well, the complications involved in exchanging a semi-nomadic existence for a settled village life were such as not to be undertaken easily. The relevance of such considerations to the Aborigines at Cape York is only too obvious especially when it is realized that they were backed by the dominant culture of Aboriginal Australia. It seems clear that the horticulturist frontier had extended only tenuously into the western islands of Torres Strait and had really made no impact on mainland Australia at the time of European contact.

All the evidence and most experts agree that in all important respects Aborigines in North Queensland form part of an Australia-wide culture, and that exotic aspects imported from Papua had been grafted on to the existing culture without changing it fundamentally. Aborigines in North Queensland had had closer and more continuous contact with peoples of different cultures than Aborigines further south, but this had apparently made them no more receptive to European influences and their culture no less vulnerable to attack.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW SOUTH WALES' HERITAGE 1788-1861

A Conflict of Interests

When the British Government founded its convict settlement in New South Wales, the only information available about the Aborigines came from Cook's expedition and suggested that they were few and timid. From the first it was considered a colony of settlement and not a colony of conquest. Little consideration was given to the problem of relations with the indigenous people and no detailed policy was thought necessary as the British Government apparently had not envisaged much contact. The Aborigines were accepted in a perfunctory and unthinking way as British citizens although this status was not confirmed till 1837. The British, however, neither accepted the responsibility of governing them nor recognized them as having rights of self-government. The permanency and spread of European settlement inevitably meant that the interests of the white subjects of the crown would conflict with those of the black.

The nature of the conflict can be seen in the British government's attitude towards Aboriginal land rights. In North America, the rights of Amerindian tribes to their land had been established and wars and treaties accepted as the means by which Europeans gained possession of such land. These rights were later recognized for hunting and

1. Chapter 3, p. 77.
gathering communities as well as those where some agricultural usage existed. As Rowley has pointed out, this 'somewhat blurs the argument that the Aboriginal failed to secure similar consideration because he was a nomad without agriculture'. The sparse and scattered Aboriginal population meant that the British Government was not forced to consider problems posed by the Aborigines. They did not live in permanent villages; they did not offer extensive organized resistance to the invaders; and they were not capable of protracted warfare which would make the British reassess their first assumption that the annexed lands were crown lands, 'waste and unoccupied'.

In addition, because the Aborigines were not important in the convict colony as trading partners or as a labour supply, the British Government were not confronted with a society that they considered had to be preserved for Imperial interests. Such was the case in the Pacific and in Africa. Finally, the classification of the Aborigines as nomads resulted in the failure to realize that they were strongly identified with particular local areas, partly because of assumptions already developed about nomads, partly because of a failure to study their languages and customs.

5. ibid., p. 13. The different attitudes towards the land rights of Amerindians seem to have been derived from four main factors not present in Australia: (a) the first Amerindians encountered were agriculturalists (b) the legal precedents recognizing Amerindian land rights had been firmly established before tribes were encountered which were not agricultural (c) the hunting and food gathering tribes were important sources of trade, particularly furs (d) all Amerindian tribes were accustomed to warfare to defend their land rights and were willing and able to do so in a manner recognizable as such by the invaders.


adequately, but largely because of the invaders' preoccupation with their own establishment and expansion. Land rights based on prior occupation were thus ignored and in 1836 a New South Wales Court confirmed that the Aborigines did not have such rights because of their small numbers and lack of political organization. The court decreed Aborigines were not members of 'free and independent tribes'.

This legal dispossession meant that the squatters could demand the protection of British law and claim 'self-defence' for actions taken against the Aborigines whereas, if the Aborigines tried to defend their ancestral lands against invasion, they became criminals.

Theoretically, the Governors were the ultimate defenders of indigenous peoples and were called upon to ensure:

(a) that the Aborigines became civilized and Christian
(b) that their physical well-being was protected and fostered and
(c) that the Aborigines enjoyed the benefits of their British citizenship.

These aims, stated as early as 1670, were the substance of Phillip's instructions, were repeated automatically to subsequent governors, and were reasserted by the 1836–37 Committee of the House of Commons inquiry into the treatment of native races. 9

While contact with the Aborigines and use of Aboriginal land were limited, the British administrators could exercise some supervision and restraint over racial contact but with the rapid territorial expansion associated with the squatting movement this became less possible. It was ironical that

8 ibid., pp. 15, 16. Rowley refers to Rex v. Jack Congo Harrell (1836), 1 Legge (N.S.W.) 72
9 Hasluck op. cit., pp. 12, 13, 45-52. See Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index, Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be Printed, 28 June 1837 (Irish University Press, Shannon, 1963), p. 4.
the most thorough-going attempt to enforce impartially law
and order on the frontier, that of Gipps, occurred at a time
of greatest territorial expansion and conflicted with what
Bridges calls colonial reality i.e. the dominance of Europeans.\textsuperscript{10}
Such conflict was always inherent in the imperialist situation
and the attempt to inhibit the interests of the European
invader merely made explicit the nature of the conquest.

Even in the settlement's infancy, the Aborigines resented
the Europeans utilizing such natural resources as the fish
of Port Jackson; but Phillip managed to establish friendly
relations between the races after initial clashes said to
have been provoked by convicts.\textsuperscript{11} However, even by the end
of Phillip's administration the spread of farming had
resulted in the outbreak of Aboriginal guerilla action.

Like all subsequent Governors of New South Wales up to 1855,
Phillip had to sanction the use of violence to protect the
interests of the Europeans when he ordered the Aborigines
fired upon to drive them off.\textsuperscript{12} Later he organized an
unsuccessful punitive expedition.\textsuperscript{13}

Hostilities between the two races increased during
the administration of Grose and Paterson even though some
Aborigines were now working for the settlers. Despite the
good intentions towards the Aborigines of Governors Hunter,
King, Bligh, and Macquarie, they supported the settlers where
necessary to break Aboriginal resistance. Hunter allowed the
settlers wide powers of retaliation while King and Macquarie
vigorously used military force to crush the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{14}

11. ibid., pp. X, 46. Throughout his thesis Bridges has
given a very detailed account of the course of Aboriginal-
European relations and in his long "Synopsis" given a
very adequate summary.
12. ibid., pp. 57, 58.
14. ibid., pp. X-XII; Reese, op. cit., p. 118.
With the rapid expansion of settlement across the inland plains the conflict on the frontier intensified until in 1824 Governor Brisbane declared martial law in troubled areas. He also ignored the private massacres of Aborigines by settlers because such actions contributed to their pacification and created a white Mounted Police to combat both Aborigines and bushrangers. This force reached its greatest strength in 1839 when it had nine officers, one sergeant-major, and one hundred and fifty-six N.C.O.'s and men. It declined in importance and was dissolved in 1850. The impossibility of treating the Aborigines as British citizens had seemingly been accepted when the Secretary of State, Lord Bathurst, informed Governor Darling that aggressive Aborigines could be repelled as if they were aliens. Darling also urged the settlers to combine to defend themselves. Indeed, to the end of Darling's administration, the Governors, in spite of any humane intentions, had taken arbitrary action to protect the Europeans' interests, had called upon the settlers to assist the administration to pacify Aborigines, and had ordered the settlers to repel those who approached their land and dwellings.

While the British administration showed itself increasingly willing to support the European settlers against the Aborigines, it became increasingly half-hearted in protecting the Aborigines against the Europeans. The British Government had refused to support the convictions of free settlers for offences against the Aborigines. In 1799, Hunter had tried to see justice done to five free

15. Bridges, op. cit., p. XIII.
16. ibid.
17. ibid., p. 313.
18. ibid., p. 325.
19. ibid., p. 339.
settlers who had murdered two Aboriginal boys but the new Governor, King, had been instructed to pardon them. Although warned against further cruelty to the Aborigines, the settlers were aware of this important precedent.\(^{21}\) The ethnocentrism of the Administration was illustrated most clearly in Macquarie's famous proclamation,\(^ {22}\) by which Aborigines were forbidden to appear within one mile of any town, village, or occupied farm. They were ordered not to loiter unattended near a farm in groups of more than six; if they did so, they could be treated as enemies. They were forbidden to gather near the principal towns and settlements to fight (i.e. to settle grievances) or to administer justice according to their own law. These directions to the Aborigines in effect spelled out the freedom of the settlers to take arbitrary action against the Aborigines and were so interpreted.\(^ {23}\)

With the increasing rate of pastoral expansion, reported and unreported conflict increased. The difficulty of the Government's policing pastoral areas and of the settlers' protecting their stock and crops encouraged the ready use of pre-captive violence against the Aborigines who greatly outnumbered the settlers on the frontier. Bridges agrees with the widely held view that the widespread use of unsupervised convict and ex-convict labour greatly exacerbated the situation.\(^ {24}\) The harassed settlers and police by now placed little value on Aboriginal life.\(^ {25}\) Darling attempted to restrain Europeans by putting some on trial for crimes committed against Aborigines.\(^ {26}\) Yet when a Lieutenant Low

\(^{21}\) ibid., p. 117.
\(^{22}\) Historical Records of Australia, I, IX, p. 141 ff.
\(^{23}\) Bridges, op. cit., pp. 206-209.
\(^{24}\) ibid., pp. 302, 435.
\(^{25}\) ibid., p. 349.
\(^{26}\) ibid., p. 353.
was tried for executing an Aboriginal prisoner, his acquittal was 'a forgone conclusion'.

New South Wales experience to Darling's governorship, had indicated that the exploitation of the land could only take place if the interests of the Aborigines were ignored when they clashed with the interests of the Europeans. The attempts during the 1830's and 1840's to implement an impartial policy of law and order on the frontier conflicted so strongly with the evolved practice and entrenched European interests, that after 1850 the earlier policy was re-established and accepted.

Governors Bourke and Gipps were, in part, appointed because they were imbued by the ideals of the British Humanitarian Movement of the first half of the nineteenth century. This movement had resulted in a 'small but powerful group of non-conformist and Anglican philanthropists known to historians as the "Clapham Sect". They were the moving force behind the Anti-Slavery Association, the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Aborigines Protection Society, formed in 1836 after the success of the British anti-slavery movement. The passionate concern of the humanitarians for indigenous people, their talent and organizing ability, and the general lack of public interest in colonial affairs, enabled them to exert great influence upon British colonial policy, especially from the mid 1830's to 1850. Their interest had

29. Reece, op. cit., p. 129. This influence was referred to by colonial contemporaries, generally with contempt, as "Exeter Hall", the meeting place of the group.
quickened when the serious clashes in Cape Colony and Van Diemen's Land became known. In 1831, the publication of correspondence concerning 'the military operations lately carried on against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van-Diemen's Land' encouraged them to demand more information about the plight of indigenous peoples under British rule. 30 By July 1835, Fowell Buxton succeeded in having a Select Committee of the House of Commons set up which tabled its reports in 1837. 31

For the welfare of the Australian Aborigines, the report recommended assistance for missionaries, reservation of hunting land, protectors, education of the young, and special laws until Aborigines could live by British law. It also recommended that Aborigines breaking British laws should be treated as leniently as possible. 32 In its determination to protect and 'civilize' the Aborigines, the Committee did not really consider the problems of the squatters or the basic conflict of interests inherent in the colonial situation. This enabled the squatters to label the Committee as unrealistic and sanctimonious and as yet another example of Downing Street domination.

As a result of this Committee's labours, the Aborigines' status as British subjects was clearly affirmed; they could not be regarded as aliens against whom a war could be fought, although Lord Glenelg, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, allowed that there might be exceptional circumstances. 33

The plan for the Aboriginal Protectorate in Victoria emanated

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30. ibid., p. 130.
31. ibid., p. 131. See 1837 Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines, passim.
32. Reece, op. cit., pp. 135, 136. See also 1837 Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines, pp. 82-84; Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, p. 20.
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from this Committee and in its failure seemed to demonstrate
the impracticality of the humanitarianism both in England and
in the colonies. 34

During the administrations of Bourke and Gipps, the
Aboriginal problem fused with the land problem and each
exacerbated the other. In his desire to keep squatters
within the decreed limits of settlement, Bourke refused to
grant them protection if they went beyond these limits; yet
he was prepared to punish the same pastoralists for crimes
committed against the Aborigines. 35 Such a policy on an
inadequately policed frontier merely encouraged the
Europeans to take the law into their own hands. Even when
the Government licensed the squatters beyond the limits,
protection was denied to the whites but promised to the
blacks. 36

By the time Gipps arrived in February 1838, the inability
of the administration to prevent the bloodshed on the fast
expanding frontier was apparent. Yet Gipps was determined
to enforce the rule of law impartially on black and white
British subjects. 37 He considered the control of the racial
problem as one aspect of the larger problem: control of the
squatting movement. 38 Yet, despite previous attempts to
enforce the law upon Europeans charged with offences against
Aborigines, it was widely believed that squatters and their
servants had little cause to fear prosecution if they killed
troublesome or dangerous Aborigines. 39 Such killing was

34. P. Corris, Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria
(Canberra, 1968), passim; Bridges, op. cit., p. XVIII; Reece, op. cit., p. 141; H.R.A., XIX, pp. 252-255.
35. Bridges, op. cit., pp. 413-415, XVI; R.H. Crawford, 
Australia (London, 1963), pp. 82-84.
37. Ibid., p. 592.
39. Ibid., p. 147. Reece states squatters had been led to
believe 'that it was not a punishable crime to kill
Aborigines, especially in the defence of life and
property'. The attempt to destroy the evidence after
the Myall Creek massacre suggests his conclusion goes
too far. See Bridges, op. cit., p. 615. The justification
for killing Aborigines, 'in defence of life and property',
had probably been commonly accepted and further enquiries
not made.
certainly common.

In June 1838, twenty-eight Aborigines — men, women, and children — were murdered by one free settler and eleven assigned convicts at Myall Creek on the New England Tableland. This massacre was unique only because of what followed. A concerned European present informed the nearest magistrate who believed the law should be administered impartially. The 1837 Select Committee had indicated Colonial Office policy and the Gipps administration was determined to grasp the opportunity to implement it. All were arrested and put on trial for the murder of one of the Aborigines, except for the free settler who had escaped with the assistance of sympathizers.

The arrest divided the colony into a pro-squatter majority and a pro-humanitarian minority. The squatters considered the trial an attack upon their right to use their weapons freely in punitive and pre-emptive action. This they claimed was the only means of achieving European occupation, especially as they were denied adequate protection. When the defendants were acquitted, they were re-arrested and put on trial again for the murder of another of the Aborigines. Seven were found guilty and subsequently executed on 18 December 1838. Bridges pointed out that this was 'the only legally proven massacre of Aborigines in the period of British responsibility by forces not legally authorised'. He went on to state that it deserves notoriety only because of the multiplicity of victims and slayers and the furore it aroused. Qualitatively it offered nothing of importance that was new. Whites had been repeatedly told from 1788 onwards that murder was murder; that the crime knew no distinction of race or creed. White men had hung

42. ibid., p. 608; Reece, op. cit., pp. 147, 148, 150.
in pursuance of this and every governor had tried to enforce the law to some degree. 44

This seems to overstate the similarity. Very few men had been hanged before and their hanging had not seemed a challenge to the greatest economic interest in the colony. Further, the hangings in 1838 highlighted to most settlers the irreconcilable conflict between British economic policy and British 'native policy' as espoused by the humanitarians in control of the Colonial Office: if the British Government wanted the Yorkshire woollen mills supplied they should be no more sensitive about the destruction of Aborigines than about the destruction of dingoes. The hangings were seen as the ultimate folly of Exeter Hall dictation.

The results of the trials that aimed at a clear display of the impartiality of British law were contrary to the Gipps administration's expectations. Initially the frontiersmen felt insecure and Aboriginal resistance was believed to have increased as the Aborigines came to understand the significance of the trials. 45 In the long term, however, Gipps had merely taught the settlers to be more circumspect; they destroyed the bodies more carefully and resorted more to poisoning. 46 Such were the passions aroused by the executions that up to 1856, when responsible government was granted to New South Wales, no white man was convicted of murdering an Aboriginal. Witnesses were intimidated and juries would not convict. 47 Finally, in part, the attempt to have Aboriginal evidence accepted in the courts was defeated by playing upon the Myall Creek experience.

Without the support of the majority of colonists on the frontier or even the majority of his own officials,

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44. ibid., p. 617.
45. Reece, op. cit., p. 164; Bridges, op. cit., p. 618.
47. Bridges, op. cit., p. 621.
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44. ibid., p. 617.
45. Reece, op. cit., p. 164; Bridges, op. cit., p. 618.
46. Reece, op. cit., pp. 166-170; Bridges, op. cit., p. 618.
47. Bridges, op. cit., p. 621.
Gipps' efforts to restrain frontier violence were futile. He provided the Commissioners for Crown Lands with a Border Police to enforce his unpopular land legislation and to protect the Aborigines, but most of the men appointed were sympathetic with the squatter's problems. The force soon began to fulfill the wishes of the dominant group and was used against the Aborigines until it was disbanded on 30 June 1846. The Commissioner for Crown Lands was expected to explain the law to the Aborigines and to get them to obey it, to ensure ticket-of-leave men did not cause friction, to conduct a census of Aborigines, to report all Aboriginal deaths, to prevent all sexual relations between Aborigines and Europeans which were known to be a source of conflict, and to rigidly enforce the Act which prohibited the sale of intoxicants to Aborigines. As well stockmen were to be strongly discouraged from carrying firearms unless these were absolutely essential.

As Rowley points out, 'policy could not prevail where such a lack of consensus existed', and the government's attempt to control race relations broke down. The 1840's saw the worst racial violence in the colony's history. Eventually in 1842 Gipps decided to resurrect the idea of the Native Police which had been tried unsuccessfully in the Port Phillip District in 1837. It was hoped to 'civilize' young Aboriginal men by subjecting them to military discipline and then to use them to preserve peace between the races. Like the other law enforcement agencies,

46. 2 Vict. no. 27; Rowley, op. cit., p. 39; Bridges, op. cit., p. 624.
50. ibid., p. 627; 2 Vict. no. 18, section 49.
52. ibid., p. 632; Rowley, op. cit., pp. 39, 40.
the Native Police were used to carry out the wishes of the white majority but their ability to follow other Aborigines through the scrub made them much more effective. Ironically Gipps' attempt to solve the problem of racial conflict resulted in the Native Police as the government's major response, an expedient New South Wales bequeathed to Queensland.

Reece correctly describes the period from 1837 to 1844 as a shortlived burst of 'colonizer's conscience'. After this the situation returned to normal when racial conflict was solved by force with the government assisting the squatting interest. In the Australian Land Sales Act, the Colonial Office had allowed for the reserve of land for the benefit of Aborigines and the use of up to 15% of land revenue for their protection and civilization. Reserves were set aside but none put to use. As well, Earl Grey had pointed out in 1848 that leasehold gave exclusive rights only 'to pasturage and such land as it was requisite to farm'. The imperial government clearly intended the Aborigines to have free access. By this time, however, Aborigines in the pacified areas were very quickly declining in population and it was believed that they were doomed to extinction before the end of the century. On the frontier, by 1848, the possibility of allowing Aborigines access to their tribal lands was considered mere Exeter Hall folly. In fact, in 1850, Governor Fitzroy directed that the Native Police force be increased as much as practically possible. This was accepted by Earl Grey on the ground of law and order and the supposed civilizing effects of the Native Police.

60. Ibid., p. 762.
By the time the frontier had moved into what is now southern Queensland most squatters had come to believe that force was indispensable in taking up a run; in particular that the Aborigines had to be 'kept out' — driven off all parts of the run necessary to the squatter and prevented from returning. In 'keeping the blacks out', they were greatly assisted by the Native Police which had developed the policy of 'dispersal' of groups of Aborigines whenever they were encountered. Initially it was intended that large and thus potentially dangerous groups were to be broken up. However, as the size of the group to be dispersed was not and could not be defined precisely, any group larger than a family unit was vulnerable to attack at the discretion of the officer. In time, 'dispersing' became an official euphemism for attacking and thus, in an area of frontier conflict, one unfortunate Aborigine might be 'dispersed' by a Native Police patrol.

The extension of pastoral settlement into what is now southern Queensland was initially an unbroken part of the spread of grazing in New South Wales. Repeatedly the efficacy of the Native Police in allowing rapid pastoral expansion was evidenced in this region. Indeed, the newly established Queensland administration did, in effect, specifically review the lessons of New South Wales experience with regard to its frontier policy and the state of the Aborigines. A Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly was appointed in the first six months 'to enquire into the efficiency, management and general working of the Police and Native Police Force throughout the Colony'. This was followed by a much more exhaustive enquiry the next year into 'the

61. ibid., pp. 710, 717.
Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally'. This was a nakedly pro-squatter Select Committee which sought and found justification for what was by now conventional colonial wisdom. 64

The 1861 Select Committee reported that the Native Police had reduced considerably 'the destruction of property and loss of life on either side'. 65 Some excesses of the force were admitted but these were blamed on the inefficiency, indiscretion, and intemperance of some of the officers. Consequently the Select Committee recommended the continued use of the force with no real change in the nature of its work and only such changes in its organization as would improve its efficiency. 66 The Select Committee reported with dogmatic certainty on the Aborigines the new administration was responsible for:

Credible witnesses show that they are addicted to cannibalism; that they have no idea of a future state; and are sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism. Missions have been established amongst them with but partial success; and the same may be said of the schools established in the different colonies. 67

New South Wales experience had suggested to the colonists that the Aborigines were a race of subhumans beyond help or redemption.

Although frontier conflict in southern and central Queensland has not as yet been adequately described, what research has been done points to extensive Aboriginal

64. See 'Report from the Select Committee on the Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally Together with Proceedings of the Committee and Minutes of Evidence', 1861 Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, pp. 393 ff. As the pages are not numbered consecutively throughout the whole book, I shall refer to the page number of the 'Native Police Report' or the 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P.
66. ibid.
67. ibid., p. 4.
resistance which the Native Police was largely instrumental in breaking. 68 Indeed, it was this experience which led to the automatic acceptance of the force and some of its personnel as Queensland's only instrument of frontier policy. Any suggestion there might have been as to the possibility of a new approach was shattered by two massacres, one immediately before and the other shortly after the act of separation.

In 1857, eleven Europeans, believed (mistakenly it now seems) to be sympathetic to the Aborigines, were killed at Frazer's Hornet Bank station on the Dawson River. 69 On 17 October 1861, the worst massacre of Europeans in Australia's history occurred on Wills' station, Cullin-la-Ringo, when nineteen Europeans were killed. The Wills family treated the Aborigines with such confident kindness that the men did not carry firearms while working and there was no obvious immediate motive for the attack. 70 These two events, one just prior to separation and one just after, left indelible scars on Queensland's race relations. For many years after, Europeans well disposed towards the Aborigines or critical of the settlers' treatment of Aborigines had these two


massacres flung at them to prove the innate murderous treachery of Aborigines. Most colonists were confirmed in their belief that frontier Aborigines could only understand coercion. The massacres also seemed to prove the soundness of Queensland government policy: the use of the Native Police and tolerance of settlers' actions against the Aborigines. As one squatter put it: '... if the magistrates are obliged to overlook the doings of the Native Police they must also overlook any imprudent acts committed by the settlers too'. 71 The government tacitly agreed when it continued to use the Native Police but neglected to appoint a protector or establish reservations until 1875, even though these practices were tried in Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, and the Queensland government was aware of them. 72

The failure of all efforts prior to Queensland's separation in 1859 to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines or to 'civilize' them along European approved lines was a complementary lesson Queenslanders had learnt, as the 1861 Select Committee report indicated. From Phillip's experiment with Bennelong, 73 to Macquarie's more systematic and determined efforts to educate the Aborigines and to make them amenable to British law, 74 to the 'Grand Imperial Experiment', the Port Phillip Protectorate: 75 all had failed. All attempts by missionaries had produced negligible results. Settlers did not understand the reasons but they did see the failure. And

71. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 72. See also pp. 15 and 23 to indicate similar expectations.
72. A. Grenfell Price, White Settlers and Native Peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-speaking Whites and Aboriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Melbourne, 1950), pp. 110-114; 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., pp. 10, 41, 42, 84. A. C. Gregory, the explorer, was able to describe the West Australian experiments.
74. ibid., pp. xi-xiii, 209, 246.
75. ibid., ch. 13; P. Corris, Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria (Canberra, 1968), passim; Reece, op. cit., p. 141.
then regardless of what measures were tried, they believed the Aborigines were dying out. They were a 'doomed race'.

The rapid spread of settlement discouraged the colonial governments from spending the time, resources, or finances to strive thoroughly for a better solution of the resulting frontier conflict. The protection of the lives and property of the British settlers was the most urgent problem, and the settler complained loudly if he wasn't satisfied. The less urgent problem of the welfare of the Aborigines was overshadowed by the many other pressing problems of development. Thus the concern for security on the frontier was evidenced in the select committee inquiries of 1860 and 1861 and in the first estimate when £13,616 (6s) was voted for the Native Police Force out of a total budget of £220,368.

The Native Police

Because of its importance throughout the whole period of this research, some discussion of the organization and procedures of the Native Police Force will be necessary. Each detachment of the Native Mounted Police Force consisted of a senior European officer, called, at first, lieutenant but after 1864 sub-inspector, sometimes a subordinate European officer, with the rank of acting sub-inspector, a camp sergeant, and a body of Aboriginal troopers generally of four to six but sometimes as many as eight or ten. The

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76. Reece, op. cit., p. 146. See also 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. Q.P., pp. 16, 11, 13, 42, 44.
77. E. Edin, My Wife and I in Queensland: An Eight Years' Experience in the Above Colony with Some Account of Polynesian Labour (London; 1872), pp. 113, 114. See also 'Six Years in the North' in P.D.T., 2 January 1869.
79. A study of the 'Police Commissioner's Reports' (whenever the distribution is shown) in the Votes and Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament reveal these sizes as the most common although, of course, with desertions etc. there is quite a deal of variation. For a fuller account see N.A. Loos, Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District 1861-1874 (M.A. qualifying thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, July 1976).
Native Police, 1860's: Lt. G. Murray, another officer, a camp sergeant and troopers.

Murray, the taller officer, became a Police Magistrate and, in 1889, conducted an inquiry into the food distribution scheme being developed on the Atherton Tableland.

Kennedy, The Black Police, Frontispiece.
non-commissioned officer drilled the troopers when they were in camp, supervised the distribution of stores, and generally remained in charge of the station while part, or all, of the rest of the detachment patrolled under the command of the senior officer. 30 The 'Instruction of the Commandant to Officers and Camp Sergeants' pointed out that it was the duty of each detachment to patrol stations, providing the squatters with protection when called upon, and at all times 'to disperse any large assemblage of blacks', because 'such meetings ... invariably led to depredations or murders'. Officers were instructed to see that all 'outrages' were severely punished to teach the Aborigines that 'retributive justice' would speedily follow the 'commission of crime'. 31 Officers were told to be careful in receiving reports to identify the aggressors correctly. Such a patrol could stay out a month, travelling twenty-five to thirty miles in a day, visiting the stations, and 'giving any troublesome blacks an occasional lesson'. 32

The Native Police, thus, had three duties. They were to prevent Aboriginal depredations by breaking up assemblages of Aborigines and by intimidating them into quiescence with constant patrolling; they were to act as a punitive force to protect the settlers; they were to capture or recapture suspected Aboriginal 'criminals'. The extent of territory that they had to patrol and the constant calls on their services meant that they would become associated with violent, rather than non-violent, repression of the Aborigines. In practice, their protection was limited to Europeans.

30. 'Instruction of Commandant to Officers and Camp Sergeants of Native Police' in 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., pp. 151, 152.
31. ibid., p. 152.
32. W.R.O. Hill, Forty-Five Years' Experience in North Queensland 1861-1905 (Brisbane, 1907), p. 24. Hill had been a Lieutenant in the Native Police. See also 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., pp. 120, 135.
The advantages of the Native Police over the Aborigines being dispossessed are obvious: superior mobility, European weapons, European organizational ability, and such powerful allies as the squatters and their employees. It is no wonder that a comparatively small force, 120 troopers in 1860,\(^{33}\) was able to move into areas of conflict and break the resistance of the Aborigines.

In practice, the Native Police were very often undiscriminating in utilizing their superior power. Thus, the term most commonly used for breaking up Aboriginal groups, 'dispersing', was understood to mean 'firing at them'.\(^{34}\) Similarly, in punitive expeditions, the complaint of the pastoralist was generally accepted without checking, and collective punishment practised on the rationale that depredations were 'tribally' planned,\(^{35}\) but really in the hope that the punishment of any Aborigines in the locality would intimidate all.\(^{36}\)

On patrol the officers had virtually unchecked power which was no doubt often used irresponsibly. However the difficulty of proof accounts for the small number of proven examples of abuse of power. It was not until 1876 that the Oaths Act Amendment Act allowed Aboriginal evidence to be accepted in a court of law; there were very rarely white witnesses and, even more rarely were these unsympathetic to the officers.\(^{37}\) When flagrant examples became known, the authorities contented themselves with dismissing the officer concerned. Thus for an 'excess of zeal' at Morinish

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34. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1881 V. & P., p. 17: Lt. Wheeler's definition of 'disperse'.
35. ibid., pp. 29, 39.
36. ibid., pp. 16-18, 39, 100-101.
37. 40 Vic. no. 10.
Diggings which resulted in a well publicised massacre Sub-
Inspector Aubin was dismissed. So too were Sub-Inspector
Nicholl's troopers who were involved in a massacre at
Irvinebank. Nicholl's was dismissed for negligence as it
was clear that either his troopers could indulge in unsuperv-
ised action against the local Aborigines who, in this case,
were known to be peaceful, or he himself was involved.15
Perhaps, the case of Lieutenant Frederick Wheeler best enca-
psulates the problems inherent in officering the force.
Lieutenant Wheeler had informed the 1861 Select Committee:
'I act on my own discretion, and on my own responsibility'.
In 1876 it became clear what this could mean when Wheeler
was charged with the murder of a ten-year old Aboriginal
boy. Manifestly guilty, he was allowed bail and, predictably, fled the country.
Brutality in the force became habitual and accepted
both by the officers and the majority of the population.
As already noted, 'dispersing' was equated with shooting
at the Aborigines. Moreover, the officer could arbitrarily
bestow any punishment, even the death penalty, upon his troopers.

38. 1867 V. & P., pp. 983 ff. It is clear that Aubin's
immediate superior thought the grounds for dismissal
inadequate.
40. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 30.
41. Cowin, op. cit., p. 49. See especially Cooktown Courier,
18 October 1876: 'Of course we all know that it is
ridiculous to expect a white man to be hanged for the
murder of a black in Queensland. Wheeler's friends
applied that he be let out on bail; application was
granted, and when the trial came on the accused was,
as everyone expected he would be, not to be found.
See also Q.S.A. COL/A220,3821 of 1881 for Sub-inspector
Carroll's dismissal from the force after he had directed
the illegal execution of one of his troopers.
candour how he had considered whether execution or
flogging was a fitting punishment for a trooper who had
murdered a four-year old Aborigine. See 'A Magisterial
Enquiry into the Disappearance of Trooper Sam, a
Deserter', Q.S.A. COL/A202,2615 of 1874. See also
Inspector Armstrong to Police Commissioner, 29 June
1876, Q.S.A. COL/A220,3821 of 1881.
and normally ordered the summary execution of prisoners rather than attempting the formidable task of proving that they, and not other Aborigines in the vicinity, were guilty. As well, the officers allowed troopers to collect women as camp followers from dispersed groups, a practice which could only further antagonize them. Thus, on the frontier, not only did the Native Police assume the roles of police, counsel, judge, jury, and executioner; they often further parodied the legal process by inciting the Aboriginal group they had just pacified.

There can be no doubt that the Native Police did inspire the Aborigines with great dread as James Davis, after living fifteen years with the Aborigines in southern Queensland, could avouch. It seems that the initial impact was often to provoke the Aborigines to a more vigorous resistance which was then broken. In 1861, Commandant Morisset expressed the colony's abiding philosophy which indicated that the Native Police was the only solution to the violent conflict which was believed to be the inevitable result of frontier contact: 'blacks ... only understand brute force ... the more lenient you are the worse they become'. Indeed it was seriously argued that the settlers would kill more Aborigines than the Native Police if that force were abolished. This was an obvious pro-squatter counter to the humanitarian which was difficult to rebut because of the impossibility of assembling the necessary statistics. Moreover, the argument may have been perfectly

94. ibid., p. 15, 39, 61, 62, 33, 143. See also Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 126-123 for 'marriage' after massacre.
95. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 55.
96. ibid., pp. 18, 28, 29, 64, 65, 81, 156.
97. ibid., p. 156. See also Squatter Lowe's opinion, p. 3, and Squatter Collins', pp. 64, 65.
98. ibid., p. 10, Lowe, a squatter since 1846. This view was stressed in the report 'Native Police Report', 1861 V. & P., p. 10.
correct given the nature of pastoral expansion.

One of North Queensland's pioneer squatters probably gave the most balanced view of the force:

It was often charged that the native police behaved with great brutality and this may have been correct, but it is difficult to see how a small and scattered European population could have continued to occupy the country without some such protection. 99

In this statement the inverted logic of European thinking is evident. The squatters owned the land: the Aborigines were the aggressors: the government had to take all necessary action, even if this involved the use of an irresponsible para-military force and resulted in brutality. Criticism of the Native Police Force came predominantly from the city as the 1861 Select Committee noted with but slight exaggeration:

In classifying the evidence, it is remarkable, that the opinions of the persons examined, as to the relative advantages or efficiency of a White or Native Police Force appear to be governed by the distance they may have been residing from the towns where the concentration of population affords sufficient mutual protection. 100

Such expressions of urban unpopularity was not to weigh very heavily with those in power until the mid 1880's.

Indeed the efficacy of the Native Police in meeting the needs of most frontier pastoralists is perhaps best attested by its durability, for despite such criticism it was still the main instrument of Queensland's frontier policy.


100. 'Proceedings of the Committees', 1861 V. & P., p. 12. This clause was omitted from the final report. See also Minutes of Evidence, p. 40 where Surveyor General A.C. Gregory agreed. The enquiry was instituted because of three charges made against the Native Police of outrages committed in the performance of their duties. These were supported by influential Brisbane newspapers. See Minutes of Evidence, 1861 V. & P., pp. 63, 142.
until 1897, functioning much as it did in 1861 as the then
Police Commissioner, W.E. Parry-Geddes, reluctantly confessed. 101
To this time it was the only governmental agency formally charged with responsibility for Aboriginal affairs on the frontier. Thus, this study will reveal Queensland's native policy in practice. 102

102. Most of the Native Police correspondence has been lost or destroyed. Determined efforts to locate these records at the Queensland State Archives and the Police Commissioner's office have been unsuccessful despite the approval and co-operation of the present Police Commissioner, Mr. Whitrod. However, published parliamentary papers and debates, surviving correspondence found mainly in the Colonial Secretary's files in the Queensland State Archives, and the columns of newspapers established in small towns close to the frontier have revealed much of this force's activities in North Queensland.
CHAPTER 3
TENTATIVE CONTACTS 1606-1859

The first European attempt to colonize North Queensland began in 1859 before Queensland had separated from New South Wales when George Elphinstone Dalrymple led a Sydney-based expedition to map out runs on the Burdekin. Prior to this, however, the Aborigines of North Queensland had contacts extending over two hundred and fifty years with a variety of European intruders. There were seventeenth century Dutch navigators with a superstitious horror of savagery investigating the possibility of exploiting the land and its people. There were Royal Naval expeditions, dating from Cook in 1770, whose captains were products of the Enlightenment, scientific explorers, who had with them natural scientists as essential members of the expedition. Commencing with Leichhardt in 1845, there were explorers moving through Aboriginal lands with greatly varying terrain. Finally, there were early commercial maritime contacts dating back to at least the 1840's seeking quick profits from trade in Aboriginal North Queensland. The extent and variety of these contacts are sufficient to demand the attention of this study.

However, the main theme of this research is the European conquest and control of the Aborigines of North Queensland and the Aboriginal response to this situation. The limitations placed upon this response by the subsequent invasion are thus of the utmost importance. It would be totally misleading, however, to measure Aboriginal responsiveness to European intrusion with only a post-conquest perspective. Thus, in this period it is possible to examine Aboriginal reaction to an alien presence when the Aborigines had much more freedom to respond to both threatening and unthreatening situations. Moreover, it is possible to observe the relationship between Aboriginal reactions and the intentions and attitudes of the intruders and to notice the inter-

1. See ch. 4.
relationship of European attitudes and intentions. Finally, in this period of tentative contacts not only did the Europeans learn about the Aborigines; they also began to realize the potentialities of the land and it was this knowledge which changed the nature of Aboriginal-European contacts.

All the contacts described in this chapter to 1859 have in common one characteristic which sets them apart from those dealt with elsewhere in the thesis; however much they may resemble them in other respects: in no case were the Europeans involved in the contact intending to dispossess Aborigines or to take permanent possession of any part of their territory. Indeed, they all set out from bases very remote from North Queensland. Their attitudes were not conditioned by the need to treat the Aborigines as a people to be conquered, and left room for a variety of Aboriginal responses rarely available in later years. For these contacts I employ the term tentative contact and for those in which the Europeans intended permanent dispossession of the Aborigines or were conditioned by the concept of such dispossession I employ the term initial contact. Although the contacts studied range from momentary to more than two months, their transitory nature does not make them unimportant. In many ways, the limited contact provides the historian with a situation approximating as closely as possible to the controlled experiment and the researcher is able to observe the responses of Aborigines to a variety of external stimuli which are comparatively well documented.  

2. Whether or not Aboriginal society changed basically in North Queensland from the 17th to the 19th centuries before European colonization is a possible variable. Anthropological and archaeological research is at the moment inconclusive but suggests that a nineteenth century Aboriginal, even at Cape York, would have found himself at home in the seventeenth century Aboriginal society of that area. (See chapter 1).
It is often possible to suggest factors producing conflict or the probability of conflict, always remembering, however, that all the relevant data cannot be known. No matter how much human behaviour is conditioned by one's culture, there is still possible a great variety of human response in a contact situation when chance meetings, poor communications, and ignorance of the other race's culture are considered. One must not expect to explain the nature of all first contacts nor expect to explain any completely. In almost every instance, actual knowledge is derived exclusively from a European account which may omit highly significant details inadvertently through failure to appreciate their importance to the Aborigines. Alternatively, significant details may be omitted deliberately to conceal personal culpability. Anthropological knowledge may make it possible to suggest explanations for particular incidents, but, however plausible these may be, they can only be conjectural. Finally, allowance must also be made, as in human affairs generally, for actions wholly impulsive and irrational.

A further aim is to assess the amount and influence of tentative European contact in North Queensland before Dalrymple spearheaded the invasion with his settlement scheme and exploration of 1859 for, from this time on, most contacts were conditioned by the concept of permanent European settlement, i.e. initial contacts. This involves an examination of the observed changes resulting from European intrusion, especially in such areas as Rockingham Bay, Cape York, and the Endeavour River, where tentative contacts were prolonged and repeated.

Professor Elkin suggests three stages of Aboriginal reaction: 'tentative approach', 'incipient clash or clashes', and 'intelligent parasitism'. He further claimed that Aborigines did not exhibit 'curiosity' and 'acquisitiveness' and that 'intelligent parasitism' resulted from the 'necessity
for adaptation'. As a result of his study of Aboriginal-European relations in the Alice Springs District, Dr. Hartwig has significantly modified Elkin's perspective and suggests the following stages of aboriginal reaction to European invasion: 'fear and avoidance', followed by 'tentative approaches', 'resistance', and finally 'intelligent exploitation'. Unlike Elkin, he maintained that 'curiosity and acquisitiveness' were important motives for those who made 'tentative approaches'. He further elaborated on the process of contact by pointing out that 'resistance' could become 'intelligent resistance' if pacification was delayed, but that neither 'resistance' nor 'intelligent resistance' need result if Europeans implemented a careful policy of 'conciliation' and made no rapid inroads into indigenous supplies of food and water. Some aspects of this debate may be examined in this chapter and the relevance of these findings to North Queensland in the thesis as a whole. his use of the terms 'resistance' and 'intelligent resistance' in distinguishing momentary or brief resistance from protracted resistance is, perhaps, misleading as intelligence need not be absent from the former and many other factors may be involved as he, himself, has demonstrated. Nevertheless,


my debt to Hartwig's conceptualization will become obvious in this chapter. Finally, the uniformity of contact strongly suggested in the broad generalizations of Elkin, which have been modified by Hartwig, will be analysed in this and subsequent chapters dealing with frontier contact.

The Dutch 1606-1756.

The Dutch were the first Europeans to leave records of their contacts with the Aborigines of North Queensland which could prove useful to the ethno-historian. Between 1606 and 1756, there were four known Dutch voyages in which a total of eight ships sailed along the North Queensland coast and made contact with the Aborigines. These encounters were frequent and often resulted in violent conflict. They helped to give the Aborigines a reputation for aggressiveness and bloodthirsty treachery which contrasts markedly with the first British contacts in North Queensland.

The Dutch East India Company was interested primarily in achieving large profits as quickly as possible and with pre-empting other European powers. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they were challenging Portuguese domination of the East Indies and their discovery of the north coast of Australia was part of this aggressive

5. Some assessment of its usefulness will be made in the conclusion.
6. Claims have been made for European voyages to northern Australia during the sixteenth century and similar claims for Asian voyages reach back to the 6th century B.C. It is not within the scope of this study to examine these voyages as the available evidence is scanty and inconclusive. See A. Sharp, The Discovery of Australia (London, 1963), ch. 1; C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia: From the Earliest Times to the Age of Macquarie (Melbourne, 1963), ch. 2; L. Flinders, A Voyage to Terra Australis ... in Two Volumes, With an Atlas (London, 1814, Australian Facsimile Edition No. 37, Adelaide, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 228-233. In addition, the Macassan trepangers penetrated as far as the Wellesley Islands occasionally. Macassan contacts are still being investigated but seem to have been significant only on the coastal areas of the Northern Territory and the Kimberley region. See C.C. Macknight, 'Macassans and Aborigines', Oceania, xlii, (1972), p. 234 and throughout.
competitiveness. In their attitude towards indigenous people, the Dutch were conditioned to a large extent by previous European experience and expected resistance which could result in 'treacherous murder'. They shared the European-wide belief in the superiority of Europeans over other races and believed it 'the unquestionable right of European Christians to exploit all lesser breeds beyond the pale of Christendom'. Like other Europeans, most Dutch believed that the lives of non-Europeans were of little worth. The employees of the East India Company on the merchant-adventurer frontier in Asia were despised as 'the dregs of Dutch society' and 'louts from the depths of Germany', with the result that many respectable middle and upper-class Dutchmen would not enlist in the Company's service. Yet the Dutch 'had all the confidence of men of achievement' and in their dealings with their opponents had proved themselves fierce and ruthless. It would have been surprising if relations between the Dutch and the Aborigines had been amicable.

Very little is known about the first Dutch expedition which, in 1606, resulted in the discovery of Australia. William Jansz, in command of the Duyfken, was sent to explore New Guinea. After sailing along part of the south coast of this island, Jansz sailed south along the west

10. ibid., pp. 231-233.
11. ibid., pp. 315, 316.
13. ibid., p. 22.
coast of Cape York Peninsula to Cape Keer Weer, 13°0'S latitude, before returning north. When Jansz sent men on shore to initiate trade, 'there were nine of them killed by the Heathens, which are man-eaters; so they were constrained to return finding no good to be done there'. One unfortunate encounter with the Aborigines occurred at the Batavia River on the northward journey where one Dutchman was speared fatally. It is not clear where the other lives were lost, and it is possible that some fatalities occurred in New Guinea. At this time, no distinction was made between the New Guineans and the Australian Aborigines. None of the Dutch navigators was aware of the existence of Torres Strait. This was not generally known until Cook sailed through it in 1770.

In January 1623, the Fero and the Arnhem under the command of Jan Carstensen explored the south coast of New Guinea and the west coast of Cape York Peninsula to 17°0'S latitude. The instructions under which these ships sailed clearly indicate a major source of the conflict on this and possibly the previous voyage. The prime importance of discovering whether profitable trade existed made nonsense of the instruction not to molest the indigenes. For not only were the Dutch instructed to find what valuable commodities the Aborigines possessed and what were their needs, they were also told to kidnap 'full-grown persons, or better still, ... boys and girls, to the end that the latter may be brought up here and be turned into useful purpose in the said quarters when occasion shall serve'.


15. ibid., pp. 17-19. Also see 'Appendix A: Instructions to Tasman, 1644', in which the trip is summarised.

The determination with which the Dutch attempted to capture Aborigines to act as informants and liaisons ensured vigorous Aboriginal resistance.

When the Dutch made contact, after several unsuccessful attempts, on 18 April at approximately 16°S., the Aborigines approached them with no sign of fear, only to have one of their number seized and carried off to the pinnace. Over two hundred Aborigines were waiting to attack the Dutch the next day when they attempted another landing. The Dutch fired two shots at them killing one and setting the rest to flight. 17

On 24 April at 17°31'S. latitude, the Council decided to turn north again landing 'at divers places' to collect water and Aborigines. Carstensz was disappointed at the zeal of his men and offered a reward of ten pieces of eight for every Aboriginal captured. 18 More than a dozen landings were made and Aborigines seen four times without contact being made; conflict occurred on three occasions at approximately 14°S. latitude, 16°S., and at 11°48'S. On the second occasion, a determined effort to kidnap an Aboriginal resulted in the shooting of one of the party who tried to rescue him. In his journal, Carstensz lamented:

that in all places where we landed, we have treated the blacks or savages with especial kindness ... but in spite of our fair semblance the blacks received us as enemies everywhere, so that in most places our landings were attended with great peril ... 19

Carstensz gave the first known detailed description of the Aborigines. He concluded that they were cannibals but 'less cunning, bold and evil-natured than the blacks at the western extremity of Nova Guinea; their weapons ... are less deadly, than those we have seen used by other blacks'.

17. ibid., pp. 36–37.
18. ibid., p. 37. The Council was the decision-making body made up of officers and officials of the company.
19. ibid., pp. 40, 41.
They were 'the most wretched and poorest creatures' he had ever seen. Yet in his report on his contact with the Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula he stressed the great peril of landing upon the coast and the need for well-drilled and experienced soldiers to accompany the landing parties. He claimed to detect greater hostility and sophistication in their dealings with Europeans in the Aborigines of the far north of Cape York Peninsula, between 13° and 11°S., insti tute, attributing this to clashes with the men of the *Duyfken*. They seemed aware of the danger of muskets and a piece of metal was found in a wounded man's net which seemed to corroborate Carstensz' conclusion. It is also probable that knowledge of the visitors was communicated along the coast. The lessons of the expeditions led by Jansz and Carstensz seemed obvious: first contacts could be dangerous; subsequent contacts were almost certain to be.

Carstensz' description of the land fully endorsed Jansz' belief that there was 'no good to be done there'. The Aborigines were unacquainted with gold, silver, other metals, and spices and were interested only in iron and beads. Moreover, Carstensz reported the land the most dry and barren on earth and other Dutch contacts reinforced that view.

The period 1636 to 1645 was a time of widespread and more enlightened exploration for, though the profit motive was still uppermost, the Dutch had realized the necessity of

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20. ibid., pp. 36, 37, 39.
21. ibid., p. 41.
22. ibid., p. 43.
23. ibid., p. 42.
24. See F.J. Eyreley, *Narrative of the Overland Expedition from Rockhampton to Cape York, North Queensland.* Compiled from the Journals of the Brothers, and edited by Frederick J. Eyreley (Engineer of Roads, Northern Division of Queensland) (Brisbane, 1867), pp. 78, 79. The Aborigines had the Jaraine expedition under observation for several hundred miles.
26. ibid., p. 38.
restraint. Their officials were instructed in their treat-
ment of natives to show 'great kindness, wary caution and
skilful judgement', to ignore slight misdemeanours, and
especially not to take indigenes against their will. 28

Tasman was the next known voyager to North Queensland.
In 1644, in command of the Limmen, Zeemeeuwe, and Bracq,
he sailed past Torres Strait, failing to detect that passage,
down the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, round the head
of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and westwards along the coast
of Western Australia. There are no reliable details of
this voyage extant except the map and a letter from an
official in Batavia who reported on the whole voyage:
Thus they secured nothing advantageous, but only poor
naked beach-runners, without riches, or any note-
worthy fruits, very poor, and at many places bad
natured men ...'. 29

One clash is reported at second-hand but it is not clear
whether it occurred on the west coast of Cape York
Peninsula or at Roebuck Bay, Western Australia, as no longitude
is given. 30 The unsociable nature of the Aborigines was
further consolidated by Tasman's 1644 voyage and became
'a maxim of Dutch policy'. 31

In 1644, the Dutch admitted their comparative ignorance
of the people with which the South-lands were peoples but
confidently presumed them to be 'rude, wild fierce barbarians'
and drew on their experience with the New Guineans and the
experiences of Europeans with other 'barbarians' to augment

27. Sharp, Discovery of Australia, p. 64; Heeres, op. cit.,
'Introduction', p. XVI.
29. Sharp, Discovery of Australia, pp. 86, 87.
30. Sharp, The Voyages of Tasman, p. 332. Nicholas Witsen
in 1705 wrote: 'Southern latitudes in seventeen degrees
and twelve minutes on the South-land at Hollandia Nova,
Tasman saw not very bad and barbarous, naked black
men... 'who' intended to attack the Hollanders'.
31. D.J. Mulvaney, 'The Australian Aborigines, 1600-1928:
Opinion and Fieldwork', Historical Studies - Australia
and New Zealand, Selected Articles, First Series
(compiled) J.J. Eastwood and F.B. Smith (Melbourne,
this limited knowledge of the Aborigines. Further penetration of the Southlands seemed dangerous and unprofitable when compared with the exploitation of the Indies, so Dutch interest in exploring in this area waned but did not cease.

It was over a hundred years before the next known Europeans set foot on North Queensland. Although a Dutch expedition setting out in 1705 was still instructed not to use violence against indigines and to bring informants only if they came willingly, the expedition to North Queensland in 1756 reverted to the tactics of Carstensz, taking every opportunity to kidnap Aborigines. On 8 February 1756, the Rijder, commanded by Lt. Jeanne Etienne Gonzal, and the Buijs, commanded by First Mate L. Ludovijk Van Asschens, set out from Batavia but were parted by a storm at Banda.

The Buijs sighted Cape York Peninsula at 12°53'S. near Pera Head and sailed north close to the land until 10°56'S. was reached. Here a boat with eight men was sent out to take soundings towards land and was never seen again. Possibly it was wrecked in the shoals, or the crew fell into the hands of hostile Aborigines. Asschens sailed for Timor Laut without setting foot on land.

Although interesting, the voyage of the Rijder adds little to our understanding of the relations between the Dutch and the Aborigines. The ship sighted the Australian mainland on 24 May at 12°18'S. after having spent over a

32. ibid., p. 4.
33. Heeres, op. cit., p. 87. Heeres did not discover the journals of this voyage but it almost certainly did not touch on North Queensland.
month among the western Torres Strait Islands, sailed south to 10°16'S. and then west to the East Indies on 16 June while the winds were still favourable.

At 12°26'S. latitude, the Dutch were easily able to establish amicable relations that lasted for several days during which the Aborigines conducted them to their wells for water and performed a corroboree for the strangers, the first known to have been witnessed by Europeans.

When the Dutch tried to kidnap two Aborigines, after plying the group with sugared arrack, violent conflict resulted.

The callous determination of the Dutch to take Aboriginal prisoners, the criticism of Asschens by the chief cartographer at Batavia for making no landings, and the reports made by Gonzal, that the Aborigines had some knowledge of gold and that the 'country ... would probably prove very fertile', indicate some revival of interest in possible exploitation of New Holland. Although Gonzal's report was quite encouraging when taken in conjunction with the apparent ease with which he mastered the Aborigines, the next known European to set foot on North Queensland was not Dutch but British.

In the contact situation, the initiative was not always taken by the Dutch. With the *Rijder* in 1756 at 13°10'S. and the *Pera* in 1623 at 16°S. latitude, the curiosity or the acquisitiveness of the Aborigines with regard to the Europeans' belongings caused the Dutch to react aggressively. In both cases, however, the Dutch attempted or would have attempted to capture Aborigines. On occasions the Aborigines

37. Heeres, op. cit., p. 94.
40. ibid., pp. 36, 97. See Jack, op. cit., pp. 80, 81 for correction of latitude given in Heeres, op. cit., p. 97.
made promising overtures to the Dutch after apparently having them under observation. The attitude of the Dutch, however, made it impossible to develop amicable relations.

Such was the abrasive arrogance of the Dutch and their lack of understanding, sensitivity, or concern for the 'savages' they encountered in North Queensland, that, after one hundred and fifty years of intermittent contact, their brief extant records reveal much more of themselves than of the Aborigines they were so eager to contact. Their belief that the Aborigines were aggressive, bloodthirsty, and treacherous seems more aptly to describe themselves than their victims.

The British 1770-1859.

When the Endeavour moored in the Endeavour River on 18 June 1770, a new chapter of contact was opened with the Aborigines of North Queensland. Cook commanded a scientific expedition initiated by the Royal Society whose President instructed him,

To exercise the utmost patience and forbearance with respect to the Natives ... to restrain the wanton use of firearms. To have it still in view that shedding the blood of those people is a crime of the highest nature:— They are human creatures, the work of the same omnipotent Author, equally under his care with the most polished European; perhaps being less offensive, more entitled to his favour.

In his seven weeks' stay at the Endeavour River, Cook certainly exercised such restraint. Cook's instructions were not drawn up with Australia in mind. In fact, it was his own decision towards the end of

41. Heeres, op. cit., pp. 35, 36. See also p. 94.
43. ibid., p. 514, 'Hints offered to the consideration of Captain Cooke ...'.
an already long and fruitful voyage that brought him to the east coast of Australia. By the time he reached this continent, he had had a long experience of contact with a variety of indigenous people in Pacific territories and had found that it was possible to comply fully with these instructions, even at Botany Bay where the Aborigines had at first proved threatening. Indeed, Cook's instructions required him to make, in effect, detailed 'anthropological' observations of the indigenous peoples encountered.

The most common reaction of the Aborigines to the intrusion of the English sailors on the coast was 'fear and aversion', this probably being more frequent than recorded in the journals as there were no doubt many times when the Aborigines observed the Englishmen without being observed. Beaglehole suggested that the Aborigines of the district were informed of the Endeavour's arrival by the fires Banks had noted. After anchoring, no Aborigines were seen until 5 July, that is for almost three weeks, and these fled. On 1 July, Cook had given the crew leave to go into the bush 'knowing that there was no danger from the natives' although their camp fires had been previously discovered; while on 7 July when Aborigines fled from an exploring party, the frustrated Banks complained of their 'unaccountable timidity'. Eventually, on 3 July, two Aborigines allowed themselves to be observed on the beach opposite the ship and, on 16 July, four Aborigines in an outrigger canoe very cautiously made a tentative approach to the intruders. The Aborigines were given such presents as cloth, nails, and paper but showed no satisfaction at all until a small fish was accidentally thrown to them when

46. Ibid., p. 38.
'they expressed the greatest joy imaginable'.\textsuperscript{49} Communications were easily if cautiously established and more presents were given to the Aborigines. On the following day, two known Aborigines returned with two others and presented the Europeans with a fish, presumably in return for the fish given to them.\textsuperscript{50} By 18 July, Banks noted that the Aborigines 'seem\textsuperscript{sic} to have lost all fear of us and became quite familiar ... our very good freends \textsuperscript{sic}'.\textsuperscript{51}

As happened with later contact, familiarity often produced an 'unwitting affront'. Aborigines who had been allowed on board the ship noticed that the Europeans had seen to them a huge catch of turtles on the deck. On the following day, ten or eleven Aborigines visited the ship determined to have their rightful share of the eight or nine turtles. When their request for one was refused and their attempts to take it several times prevented, they became incensed and suddenly went ashore and set fire to the grass to the windward of the Europeans' belongings. Cook followed the Aborigines unarmed to make them desist but without success. Baskets were fetched and Cook hit an Aboriginal ringleader with small shot and fired a ball past the fleeing Aborigines to warn them off. Most of the Aborigines returned, but not the injured man, and amicable relations were restored partly on the initiative of an Aboriginal elder. The cause of the conflict is not difficult to discern. The Europeans had not given any indication of sharing the catch as Aborigines who had made such a catch in their territory would have. Competition for economic resources was an allied aspect of the affront which was

\textsuperscript{50} ibid., pp. 91, 92. This may have been interpreted in the light of visitor-host reciprocity or as an indication of some kind of kinship obligation. See Elkin, \textit{The Australian Aborigines} (Sydney, 1974), pp. 77 and F.S. Collier, 'The Endeavour and Aboriginal Australian Contacts', \textit{Queensland Naturalist}, 20 (1-3), 1971, p. 33.
recognized by the Europeans who offered the Aborigines bread.\textsuperscript{52}

There were no other incidents after this except that when a lost seaman, unarmed except for a knife, came upon a party of Aborigines, he was merely directed back to the ship.\textsuperscript{53} On the following day, 23 July, the Europeans discovered most of the clothes which had been given to the Aborigines discarded 'as lumber not worth carriage'. Banks remarked that 'they seemed to set no value upon anything we had except our turtle, which of all things we were least able to spare them'.\textsuperscript{54}

Cook's stay at the Endeavour River provides an almost classic example of initial Aboriginal reaction to a relatively large-scale European intrusion when the Aborigines were left with freedom of action and the intrusion was very limited. 'Fear and avoidance' allowed the Aborigines to observe and develop an 'initial curiosity' which was followed by cautious, deliberate 'tentative approaches' until contact was established. This allowed for the possibility of either 'amicable relations' or 'conflict'. An 'unwitting affront', produced 'conflict' which threatened to destroy the amicable relations. This was prevented by mutual goodwill, or at least a desire to continue the amicable relations, which resulted in a reconciliation initiated in this case with confidence by leaders from both races.

The 'initial curiosity' about the presence of the Europeans persisted until the Aborigines became 'our friends' but the 'initial curiosity' in the artifacts of European civilization soon waned,\textsuperscript{55} as apparently the Aborigines could not conceive any use for the kind given them. Both Banks and Cook were surprised at the refusal of the

\textsuperscript{52} Beaglehole, \textit{Banks' Journal}, Vol. II, pp. 95-97;
\textsuperscript{54} ibid., pp. 98, 99.
\textsuperscript{55} Beaglehole, \textit{Cook's Endeavour Journal}, p. 361;
Aborigines to barter their artifacts for the Europeans', although they accepted what was given to them. Aboriginal life was obviously of more abiding interest to them than the strangers and their possessions or their economic needs more compelling. The description both Banks and Cook gave of the Aborigines contrasted markedly with Dampier's which they had consulted and which was the best known to Europeans before 1770. Both directly contradicted Dampier in their journals, Banks even suggesting that the two voyages had encountered different races.Cook gave an objective, detailed accurate description of the Aborigines concluding that they were 'a timorous and inoffensive race, no ways inclinable to cruelty'. Both he and Banks emphasized the sparse population and concluded that the interior was uninhabited, two concepts that influenced the decision to found a settlement in New South Wales. As well as indicating a lack of opposition to European settlement, Cook pointed out the possibilities for agriculture and cattle raising while agreeing with the Dutch as to the lack of scope for trade.

Cook followed his detailed, detached observations with a rare passage of rather conventional philosophizing:

From what I have said of the Natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition:

57. ibid., p. 92.
58. ibid., p. 112.
The earth and sea of their own accord furnish them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff etc. ... 62

Thus in his voyage of discovery and in his writing, he contributed to the concept of the 'noble savage' and illustrated his own debt to the enlightenment. The fear and superstition associated with 'savagery' in the 17th century had been replaced by an aloof tolerance and a scientific interest capable of shading off into romanticism. 63

To a large extent Cook's 'patience and forbearance' was shared by the five other Royal Navy surveying expeditions in this region: Matthew Flinders in the Investigator in 1802, Phillip Parker King's surveys between 1818 and 1822, J.C. Wickham and John Lort Stokes in the Beagle between 1838 and 1842, F.P. Blackwood with naturalist J. Beete Jukes in the Fly between 1842 and 1846, and Owen Stanley with naturalists John Macgillivray and Thomas Ruxley in the Rattlesnake between 1846 and 1850. Indeed, Cook's enormous prestige, the familiarity with his published writings, and his unquestionable success in dealing with indigenous peoples did much to establish the tradition in the Royal Navy exemplified in the other five expeditions. 64

As Flinders sailed outside of the Great Barrier Reef, he made only two contacts with the Aborigines of North Queensland, one near the Batavia River and the second, and more important, at the Wellesley Islands. 65 He agreed with Cook and rejected the findings of the Dutch:

I found them to be timid; and so desirous to avoid intercourse with strangers, that it was by surprise

62. ibid., p. 399. In the second and third lines, Cook is referring to Dampier's famous description of the Aborigines he encountered.
63. See Muirvaney, op. cit., p. 8.
64. Beaglehole, Cook's Endeavour Journal, 'Introduction', pp. CXXII, CXXI, CXXII.
alone that our sole interview, that at Horse-shoe Island, was brought about; and certainly there was nothing ferocious in their conduct. 66

There was evidence of prior alien intrusion at Bentinck Island, probably from the East Indies, and Flinders concluded there had been a shipwreck and a subsequent massacre. 67

By 1819, when P.P. King began his surveys in North Queensland waters, the task of the historian in interpreting contact with the Aborigines is complicated by the possibility of their prior contact with the crews of other vessels, known and unknown. Thus at Rockingham Bay, aborigines rowed out to greet the intruders without hesitation or alarm and asked for food. 68 King concluded from his experience that they seemed 'much more ingenious, and to understand what is useful better than the generality of their countrymen'. In a footnote, he remarked that a Lt. Jeffreys of the armed transport, Kangaroo, had established amicable relations 'with these natives' in 1815 and it seems likely that their confidence stemmed from this. 69 They expressed astonishment at everything they saw, accepted clothes, fish hooks and lines gladly, and gave in return baskets and turtle harpoons. 70 They even invited the Europeans to their camp. 71

After this brief visit to Rockingham Bay, King next contacted the Aborigines at the Endeavour River where he stayed for just over two weeks. Two days after his arrival two Aborigines were encountered and contact tentatively established. On the following day, twelve Aborigines made contact

66. ibid., p. 146.
67. ibid., p. 147. See also Hacknight, 'Maccassans and Aborigines', p. 284.
69. ibid., p. 203.
70. ibid., p. 201.
with the Europeans and a friendly two-hour interview ensued in which the Aborigines repeatedly asked for hatchets, watched everything most attentively, and were willing to part with a wooden shield.  

It is difficult to explain the different response of the Aborigines to that given Cook. It is not known whether contact with Cook fifty years previously or an unknown more recent contact helped generate a more lively interest.

On the next visit to the ship, twelve aborigines, including some strangers, were at first friendly but became angry when an old man objected to a sailor's attempts to comb the hair of his young son. A reconciliation was effected but conflict soon developed over the Aborigines' curiosity and acquisitiveness. They became incensed when their desires were frustrated, two spears were thrown, and a musket fired over their heads to drive them off. No Aborigines were seen for two days when it seems two of them tried unsuccessfully to lead the Europeans into an ambush.

In 1826, King returned to North Queensland waters, had a brief friendly encounter at the Endeavour River but probably unwittingly antagonised the Aborigines who once again aggressively set fire to the grass. No other contact was made in the few days King remained there despite conciliatory expeditions being sent out to thoroughly cover all the country within five or six miles of the base camp.

Near Cape Flinders, King had an unfriendly encounter with Aborigines which indicated the complicated nature of

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72. ibid., pp. 212, 214.
73. ibid., pp. 215-217. The Aborigines were so curious and acquisitive that King would not let them on board the ship in case refusing them desired articles antagonised them. They demanded the clothes the sailors were washing.
74. ibid., p. 219.
75. ibid., pp. 367-370.
76. ibid., p. 373.
the developing contact. In 1818, a vessel, the Frederick, had been wrecked near Cape Flinders. 77 King decided to salvage any usable spars and planks. By this time, he was accompanied through the dangerous waters by the vessels, Dick and San Antonio, and some of the crew of these merchant vessels landed with Royal Navy personnel. 78 Three unarmed sailors from the Dick wandered off on their own and were menaced by Aborigines who threw several spears at them. Luckily, King arrived on the scene with a gun and intimidated the Aborigines while the four Europeans were retreating towards the wreck where King's mate joined them. The Aborigines continued to press around the party and King ineffectually fired small shot to drive them off. A spear was then thrown fortunately sticking into a hat full of shells one of the men was carrying in front of him. Finding the Europeans were not intimidated, the ten Aborigines made apparently friendly gestures and a less menacing situation developed as the Aborigines established close contact with the retreating Europeans while still trying to stop them. When this withdrawal brought them to a boat's crew, the increased European numbers (although the boat's crew was also unarmed) overawed the Aborigines who drew apart from the Europeans. 79

This encounter illustrated important characteristics of many of the contacts between Royal Navy sailors and Aborigines in North Queensland. Although aware of the potential danger involved, the Englishmen confronted the Aborigines with apparent confidence. When King returned to the ship, he instructed his men not to fire except in self defence. 80 This contrasts markedly with the irresponsibility of the crew of the merchant vessels who,

77. Ibid., p. 250.
79. Ibid., pp. 18-23.
80. Ibid., p. 23.
on another occasion, apparently tried to capture three Aborigines, one of whom menaced the Europeans with a spear. After several muskets were fired and an Aboriginal wounded, they fled. Two days later some of theDick's crew fired upon Aborigines still in the vicinity of the wreck causing King to express concern on two accounts: firstly, because they might be led to avenge themselves on other mariners and, secondly, because they would not respect European weapons.81

It is possible that the initial Aboriginal aggressiveness was caused by the Europeans' robbing the Aborigines of the spoils of the wreck or finding themselves in a relatively confined space with potentially dangerous aliens, or by a combination of these factors.82 It is also significant that their potential aggressiveness varied inversely with the size of European group encountered.

Stokes, in describing the voyages of the Beagle in North Queensland waters between 1839 and 1841, gave disappointingly meagre accounts of contact despite extensive periods spent at Cape Upstart, Cleveland Bay, Halifax Bay, and especially on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria,83 although Aborigines seem to have avoided contact where possible. From the Wellesley Islands, in 1841, Stokes explored the south-eastern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria by small boat and travelled overland for a day. He discovered and named the Flinders and the Albert Rivers, rowing up these about thirty and fifty miles respectively. He was the first

81. ibid., p. 24.
to interest southern pastoralists in the Gulf Country when
he named and described, with a seaman's eyes, the Plains of
Promise which he had encountered in a good season. 84 This
area was to beckon enticingly for another twenty years.
Stokes was probably correct when he wrote that his every
movement was watched on much of this expedition. 85

The naturalist, Beete Jukes, in narrating the surveying
voyage of the Fly described in great detail the Aborigines
he met and the encounters with them. Captain Blackwood
and Jukes learned and used the putative aboriginal ceremonies
expressive of friendship with a great deal of success
although it is not always clear whether the Aborigines
understood the specific overtures or whether they merely
responded to the obviously pacific intentions. 86

In 1843, the Fly spent all April and two weeks of May
at Cape Upstart during which time Jukes and Blackwood
visited Cape Cleveland where they easily established friendly
relations with a group of Aborigines and exchanged gifts.
Jukes thought them the most friendly and communicative they
had seen to this time. 87 On 10 May, Blackwood and Jukes led
a party to explore the mouth of the Burdekin River, then
called the Wickham after its discoverer. Here, too, friendly
confident relations were established with the Aborigines
who mingled indiscriminately with the Europeans, one Aboriginal
even offering Jukes his wife if the Englishman would go away
with him. 88 As in previous Royal Navy encounters with

85. ibid., p. 297.
86. J. Beete Jukes, Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of the
H.M.S. Fly Commanded by Capt'n. F.P. Blackwood, R.N., In
Torres Strait, New Guinea, and Other Islands of the Eastern
Archipelago, During the Years 1842-1846: Together with
an Excursion into the Interior of the Eastern Part of
Java (2 vols., London, 1847), Vol. I, pp. 27, 57. These
included advancing unarmed holding a green bough, beckoning,
shouting, dancing 'corroborey fashion', talking, laughing,
singing, and giving presents.
87. ibid., pp. 57-63.
88. ibid., p. 70.
James Morrill. Lived with Aborigines 1846-1863.
The Story of James Morrill, p. 1.

Jukes Meeting Burdekin Aborigines, 1843.
Jukes, Surveying Voyage of H.M.S. Fly.
Aborigines, the officers were eager to show the effectiveness of European firepower hoping this would obviate the need to use it. On 18 May, an exploring party made a second visit to the Wickham River rowing seven miles upstream.

Eight or ten Aborigines, unarmed except for one club, approached the boat confidently and friendly relations were established which persisted even after the confusion caused by the arrival of another group of Aborigines from the north of the river. One of the Aborigines had a damask table-cloth indicating previous contact, probably with the Beagle although there is no mention of this in Stokes' journal. Some of the Aborigines met on the second visit were old friends from the first visit who communicated to the newcomers the power of the Englishmen's guns.

The much-contacted Aborigines of Rockingham Bay were very friendly and familiar at first, visiting the ship every day receiving the presents made to them so that the boats' crews at length neglected to carry arms. On one occasion, however, about fifty Aborigines had peited large rocks at a party of Europeans, and, on the Fly's last night at Rockingham Bay, the Aborigines suddenly attacked a fishing party even though they had been given a share of the Englishmen's large catch. By chance, a sailor had a fowling piece and after one of the Aborigines was shot, the attack ceased. It seems that the Rockingham Bay Aborigines were finding the prolonged European presence irksome. Indeed, in all such instances of contact over an extended period and involving quite large numbers, it is always possible that some member of the crew may have affronted the Aborigines unknown to, or unreported by, the

89. ibid., p. 71.
90. ibid., pp. 77-78.
91. ibid., p. 81.
92. ibid., p. 82.
93. ibid., pp. 92, 93.
At Cape Melville, the Aborigines had at first determinedly avoided close contact with the Europeans but Blackwood was just as determined and succeeded seemingly in making them excellent friends. As the Europeans retired to their boat, however, the Aborigines hurled spears at them. There were a variety of possible affronts. Jukes had frightened them greatly by lighting and smoking a cigar; the Englishmen had discharged their guns before stowing them in the boat; and there had been previous European contact which may have antagonised them. One spear incorporated a nail in its head. 94

At Cape Direction, on 25 June 1843, after apparently amicable relations had been established, an Aboriginal, fatally speared one of the sailors as they were moving back to the boat. The Aborigines had previously wanted several of the European possessions in the boat and on being refused, they left to fetch their spears. Jukes thought they were going to take what they wanted by force when the returning members of the shore party were attacked by an Aboriginal frustrated in his desire for plunder. 95 This may have been so although there had been previous European contact which may have antagonised the Aborigines. 96 This was the only fatality the Royal Navy suffered in this period in its many and often prolonged contacts with Aborigines in North Queensland.

Jukes' reaction to this killing of a white man by a black is quite remarkable yet typical of European reactions in these and similar circumstances. Jukes was an educated man, magnanimous and compassionate, a man who had already risked his life to facilitate friendly relations with the Aborigines.

94. ibid., pp. 100, 101. The Aborigines had seemingly shown mariners previously where water could be found.
95. ibid., pp. 105-114.
96. ibid., p. 105.
Yet with clarity and frankness he wrote:

A burning feeling of mixed rage and grief, and a kind of animal craving for revenge, seemed to take possession of the heart ... I have always joined in reproaching the causeless injuries sometimes inflicted by civilized, or quasi-civilized men, upon the wild tribes of savage life; and many atrocities have doubtless been committed in mere wantonness, and from brutality or indifference. I have always looked, too, with a favourable eye on what are called savages, and held a kind of preconceived sentimental affection for them, that I believe is not uncommon. I had been inclined to suppose that they were rarely the aggressors, and were always more sinners against than sinning. One such practical example as this, however, wrought a great change in my feelings on these points; and though far, I hope, from abetting cruelty I could make great allowances for any one who, under such circumstances as I have detailed, took a larger revenge than the strict justice of the case demanded. I felt that the life of one of my own shipmates, whatever his rank might be, was far dearer to me than that of a wilderness of savages, and that to preserve his life or avenge his death I could willingly shoot a dozen of these black fellows; and I could read the same feelings in the eyes of those around me. Nor was this feeling very transient; for many days or weeks after, it would have been felt as a relief by all those who saw Bayley’s fall, to have come into collision with any party of black fellows they could have been justified in firing on. 97

This atavistic emotion will be repeatedly encountered in the study of race relations in North Queensland throughout the whole nineteenth century.

During August and September 1844 and February and June 1845, the Fly visited Cape York Island and Evans Bay at the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula. Though the Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Cape York must have observed European ships passing by before, this is their first recorded contact with Europeans. On the visit to Evans Bay in 1844, Jukes records contact with Torres Strait Islanders while in 1845 he contacted Aborigines. It is clear that both peoples used this part of the mainland intermittently and, as Moore remarks, in subsequent reports it is difficult to tell which

97. Ibid., pp. 111, 113, 114.
race is referred to. His conclusion that by this time contact with the Torres Strait Islanders had disturbed the traditional tribal organization of the Cape York Aborigines and that enough intermarriage had occurred to cause early observers to remark on their Papuan physical characteristics has already been noted. Jukes who had peaceful contacts with the Torres Strait Islanders and with the Aborigines developed a greater empathy with the Islanders and even among these he considered those from Murray and Barnley superior to those from islands closer to the Australian mainland. It is obvious that his sympathies were aroused by cultural aspects that resembled (if superficially) European culture. In this, he was again typical of European reactions to peoples with such different life styles. Thus the life of the agriculturalists of Murray and Barnley at one extreme was associated with an intellectual and moral superiority denied to the 'houseless', 'homeless', gardenless Aborigines at the other whose lives were spent 'in indolence' or 'in the search for food'. The former met the Europeans on terms approaching equality 'bartering with us, teaching us their words, and learning some of ours, laughing, joking, and engaging in sports' while 'these Australians sat listlessly looking on' obeying orders 'with great docility, but with complete want of interest and curiosity'. The European felt he could eat with the 'perfectly clean' Barnley Islanders but not with the Australians who would eat a half-plucked, almost raw kite, 'entrails and all'. Jukes compared what he termed the Malayo-Polynesian, Papuan, and Australian races and concluded 'the Australian

101. ibid., p. 297.
intellect is of the lowest order'. It was deficient in reflecting, inventing, and reasoning faculties whereas 'the perceptive faculties ... were often very acute, being sharpened by constant practice'. The food-gathering Australian was seen through European eyes to have that virtue normally reserved for troublesome animals - 'great cunning'.

With the voyage of the *Battlesnake*, the great Royal Navy surveys, which were to make both the Inner and Outer Routes along the coast of Queensland comparatively safe, were complete. The journals of the *Beagle*, the *Fly*, and the *Battlesnake* reveal the increased traffic in North Queensland waters following King's surveys of 1819 and 1820. From Lizard Island on the Inner Route, a day after leaving the Endeavour River, Jukes wrote, 'How little could I have foreseen that ... this reef-environed coast, dangerous though it be, should be in the daily track of vessels'. The vessels using the route inside the Barrier Reef had to anchor every evening, providing greater opportunities for contacts with the Aborigines or at least for being observed while ships took on water or wood.

Another factor more potentially disruptive of traditional Aboriginal life was the increasing presence of small trading vessels along the coast. June 1846 is the earliest date discovered in this study for a vessel trading in Torres Strait but there were no doubt earlier ones. On Eagle Island, near Lizard Island, the *Battlesnake* in 1848

103. *H. G. Macgillivray, Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. *Battlesnake*, commanded by the late Captain Owen Stanley ..., during the years 1848-1850, including discoveries and surveys in New Guinea, the Louisiade archipelago, etc. To which is added the account of Mr. E. H. Kennedy's expedition for the exploration of the Cape York peninsula (2 vols. London, 1852; Australiana Facsimile Editions No. 118, Adelaide, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 2-7. See Appendix A for a discussion of the Inner and Outer Routes.
discovered the remains of a hut of European construction, fragments of a whale boat and other evidence of European occupancy. Later in 1848 on one of the Piper Islands near Cape Weymouth, they observed the remains of a small establishment for curing trepang for the China market. It had been set up by the crew of a small vessel from Sydney, one of several which made voyages along the coast and in Torres Strait collecting trepang and bartering for tortoiseshell with the natives. Macgillivray mentioned "the little trade in tortoiseshell which might be pushed with safety in the Strait (as has frequently been done before by small vessels from Sydney and even from Hong Kong) if there was a settlement at Cape York." 

On 20 June 1848, a twenty-five ton cutter the Will o' the Wisp managed to track down the Battlesnake seeking assistance for several of the crew who had been injured in a clash with the Aborigines. Her tale of disastrous contacts will serve to illustrate what could, and no doubt often did, happen when these small traders went searching for profit.

The Will o' the Wisp was sent out by a Sydney merchant searching for sandal-wood for the China trade on the north east coast of Australia. The ship had landed at the Percy Isles, Repulse Bay, Cape Upstart, and the Palm Islands. At this last place, it was claimed, a friendly intercourse with the Aborigines had developed until unexpectedly in the dark they had attacked the Europeans in their boat wounding the master of the vessel and one of the crew. The mate drove the Aborigines off the vessel with a sword and a swivel gun was fired at the fleeing survivors in the water. At Good Island in Rockingham Bay there was another affray in which several Aborigines were shot. The first attack was blamed

107. Ibid., p. 117.
108 ibid., p. 319.
on the capicity of the Aborigines but Macgillivray noted:

Some parts of this account appeared so extraordinary,
and others so improbable, that Captain Stanley felt it
his duty to report it to the Colonial Government, along
with the depositions of the men. 109

Macgillivray obviously agreed with Stanley in suspecting that
these men had provoked the Aborigines. The later history
of North queensland will indicate that similar irresponsible
costal traders and fishermen had a disastrous impact on the
Aborigines in this area and it seems that this type of contact
began at least as early as the 1840's.

The Battlesnake's journal alone indicated a number of
clashes had occurred. At Cape Upstart the Aborigines had
been 'chastised' severely some years before for attacking
a fishing party from an unnamed ship which 'will, probably,
render them cautious of coming in contact with white men'.
110

At Rockingham Bay there had been the two previously mentioned
clashes although the Aborigines still approached the Battlesnake
in cences with the utmost confidence. 111 Just to the north,
however, at Dunk Island after four days of friendly contact
two officers of the Bramble (one of the two vessels assisting
the Battlesnake in the survey) fired irresponsibly with shot
on some Aborigines trying to prevent them from approaching
too close to the camp. 112 At Cape Melville, where the Bramble
had been for ten days waiting to rendezvous with Kennedy and
was no doubt observed, a watering party was attacked by
Aborigines but repulsed with apparent loss of Aboriginal life. 113

109. ibid., pp. 97-100.
110. ibid., p. 79.
111. ibid., p. 81.
112. ibid., pp. 88, 87. The contacts were then terminated
to prevent further friction.
113. ibid., p. 112. Macgillivray wrote that sentries and a
guard of marines 'prevented the loss of life on our
part'. There is not enough detail to suggest the cause
of the clash but possibly, after the Bramble hovered
nearby for ten days, fear and awe gave way to a desire
to resist when a comparatively small party seemed to
encroach with possible hostile intentions.
The *Battlesnake* visited Cape York in 1843 and again in 1849, staying the second time for over two months, much of this being spent on shore.\(^{114}\) Macgillivray has left excellent descriptions of the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders, his conclusions generally agreeing with those of Jukes. Aborigines approached the Europeans when they first landed, one of them being an acquaintance from a previous visit. A day or two previously they had communicated with the *Asp* in a confident friendly manner.\(^{115}\) Macgillivray concluded that a constant friendly intercourse existed between the Torres Strait Islanders and the Aborigines in the vicinity of Cape York yet he thought the physical characteristics of the Aborigines were exactly the same as elsewhere on the mainland.\(^{116}\) Both peoples at Evans Bay repeatedly visited the ship in their canoes and nothing occurred to give the indigenes or the intruders cause for complaint.\(^{117}\)

On the second visit in 1849 after an absence of five months, the Aborigines were attracted to the ship 'as vaitures by a carcass', assisting in the work on shore, giving fish and turtle meat to the Europeans and accompanying them on their walks on shore. Each European had a regular helper plus hangers-on, the latter doing as little work as possible for as much food and expecting payment for every service rendered. It was obvious that at Evans Bay the Aborigines had successfully adapted to the visits of friendly aliens who encroached little upon their land or resources. In fact, they seemed to have been accepted into a gift-exchange system where Aboriginal labour was exchanged for such European articles as pipes, tobacco, (they had already learned to smoke from the Torres Strait Islanders) biscuits, steel axes, and knives.

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115. ibid., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 121. Macgillivray had been in the *Bramha* when it assisted the *Fly* on the previous surveying expedition.
116. ibid., pp. 124, 125.
117. ibid., p. 127.
As well, at least some of the Europeans had been drawn into the kinship system at Cape York and the gift exchange was probably seen in terms of kinship responsibilities. Thus, Macgillivray reported each European's regular helper was known by the kinship term 'younger brother' which he claimed merely signified friend or associate. Yet he later revealed that the 'Cape York people even went so far as to recognize in several of our officers and others in the ship, the ghost of departed friends to whom they might have borne some fancied resemblance, and, in consequence, under the new names of Temu, Tarke, etc. they were claimed as relations, and entitled to all the privileges of such'  . The exception that proved the Europeans had been successfully accommodated occurred when the Europeans recompensed male warriors by giving a woman biscuits to distribute. The Aboriginal men would not deign to ask a woman for them and were incensed when they were not given any. After this affront to Aboriginal custom, the Europeans had to leave hurriedly in case spears were thrown at them, Macgillivray's Aboriginal 'younger brother', Filda, insisting on the Europeans leaving as 'he considered himself bound to atone to my safety'  .

In their contacts with the Aborigines of North Queensland, the Royal Navy had an admirable record. The tradition of tolerance and restraint towards indigenes was at first expressed to Cook in Christian and humanitarian terms. It was stated to later commanders as not only the most just but also the most efficacious service routine. Throughout it was combined with an absence of immediate economic interest and a scientific if condescending enthusiasm to learn about the country and people visited  . The officers' confidence in themselves, their strict discipline, and their realization that the Aborigines in a contact situation did not deserve the reputation Dampier and the Dutch had given contributed to their ability to exercise restraint even in a menacing

There were other maritime European visitors to North Queensland, such as the survivors of shipwrecks and runaway convicts. How many survived to land on the mainland or on the offshore islands is conjecture as the only ones known to-day are those who managed to return to the outposts of European settlement or those whose stories became known from informants.

The *Bounty* mutiny produced two separate if fleeting contacts with North Queensland. In May 1789, Bligh navigated the launch of the *Bounty* through the Barrier Reef in 12°51'S. latitude and landed on the mainland without making contact. On his voyage north to Torres Strait, he was invited ashore by Aboriginals on two separate occasions but would not risk landing. In 1791, Captain Edwards in the *Pandora*, returning from apprehending some of the mutineers, was wrecked in 11°24'S. latitude. In his voyage in the ship's boats north to Torres Strait he was approached by two canoes with three Aboriginals in each but he avoided contact. 120

On 28 March 1791, another remarkable voyage into North Queensland waters began when a party of convicts led by one, Will Bryant, and including his wife and two children (eleven in all) slipped out of Port Jackson in a small fishing boat. They made their way up the east coast along the inner passage of the Barrier Reef, passed through Torres Strait, and eventually reached Timor where they were recaptured. 121

120. Jack, *Northwest Australia*, Vol. I, pp. 99, 100; 104-105. Bligh's caution was natural: he had been attacked and lost a man at the beginning of his voyage; he was without firearms; and his men were all weak.

They believed that the Aborigines 'increased in numbers and daring' as they progressed northwards and were attacked when they attempted to land in the Whitsunday Passage and again as they were pushing off from Cape Flattery. Their estimate of Aboriginal population density was probably exaggerated because of the numbers they met crossing to and from the numerous islands within the Barrier Reef, a fact which no doubt increased their fear.

The two survivors of shipwrecks who had most contact with the indigenous people of North Queensland were James Morrill and Barbara Thompson who lived with them for long periods. James Morrill was an Essex seaman who was shipwrecked on the Great Barrier Reef in 1846. After forty-two days adrift on a raft, seven survivors were washed ashore at Cape Cleveland. Three died after landing. The remaining four were befriended by the aborigines who regarded them as deceased relatives returned as whites to their previous state of existence, a factor which often seems to have determined whether whites were received kindly or regarded as possibly dangerous aliens. The Europeans moved south to the Port Denison district, hoping for rescue, and lived there about two years. After the other three died from natural causes, Morrill moved back to his friend Elliott's farm and, at last, approached two shepherds at Inerman Station. Morrill was requested so often to tell his story that, while in Brisbane, he dictated his reminiscences to journalist E.E. Johns and these were published in 1863.

122. Beke and Jeffrey, A First Fleet Family, p. 220.
123. ibid., pp. 224, 225.
124. ibid., p. 227.
The four survivors were at Cape Cleveland for thirteen days before they were seen by three Aborigines who assembled a party of twenty or thirty from the Cape Cleveland and Mt. Elliott local groups and approached the castaways on the fourteenth day but were as afraid of the Europeans as the Europeans were of them. After receiving friendly gestures from the intruders and feeling them all over to verify their human nature, the Aborigines expressed pity for the Europeans' associated condition. However, their new hosts showed enough interest in the Europeans' meager possessions to appropriate them unobserved while the initial interview was in progress. About ten of the old men spent the night with the Europeans apparently to satisfy themselves that the castaways were not malevolent beings. The next morning, after 'a great commotion among the blacks as to what should be done with us', the boy and Morrill were claimed as relatives of the Mt. Elliott local group while the Captain and his wife were claimed by the Cape Cleveland Aborigines.

The four Europeans were shown to other Aborigines and were eventually produced to a group of fifty to sixty who had first witnessed a corroboree illustrating the arrival of the aliens. Apparently the Aborigines could accept the wonderful tale with equanimity for it was probably no more astonishing than the miraculous stories associated with their religion; however, when the aliens were suddenly produced, the Aborigines 'scampered off in all directions' and had to be reassured. The minute examination of their persons was then repeated. The fetching of relatives and friends, the explanatory corroborees, and the exhibition of the Europeans went on for six or eight evenings until 'the most distant known to them had seen us'. At an initiation ceremony about ten months later, involving Aborigines from at least as far south as Port Denison and as far north as Cape Cleveland (if Morrill's testimony is correct) they were shown forth again. It was at this time that the reunited Europeans took the opportunity to slip off with local groups of the Juru and
possibly Gia tribes returning to the south towards the present township of Bowen.

By this time, Morrill claimed, they were well known to all the tribes. The Cape Cleveland and Mt. Elliott local groups had fed and cared for the Europeans while they were still weak and while they were learning how to provide for themselves. Before they moved south, the Europeans had begun to understand the language and learnt to hunt, fish, and gather food and had apparently been accepted by the Aborigines between Port Denison and Cleveland Bay as Morrill and the other Europeans were able to move freely between these two places. 126 Cilento and Lack claim Morrill was fully initiated and, while this is probably true, in his reminiscences he did not reveal a deep understanding of Aboriginal religious life and its philosophy. 127

Thus some Aborigines between Cape Cleveland and Port Denison had Europeans living with them for extensive periods before contact and others were aware of their intrusion; yet there is very little evidence that this contact had any effect on their tribal life. Morrill apparently explained or further explained such aspects of European culture as sailing ships, clothes, guns, and iron. There is also the possibility that these Aborigines had begun to appreciate the qualities of iron and European clothing either from contact with ships or from having the castaways among them or both. However the picture just before contact with European pastoral expansion in 1861 is of Aborigines living traditional lives unaffected by European ideas or technology. 128

Apparently on this stretch of coast between Cape Cleveland and Port Denison, the contacts with ships had been too fleeting.

126. Ibid., pp. 11-15. I have retained the details Morrill gives as to numbers etc. even though these are suspect after such a long time.
128. The Story of James Morrill, pp. 16, 17.
to make the Aborigines turn outwards towards the intruders from the sea (as had occurred at Rockingham Bay and Cape York) and castaways brought nothing tangible to interest them. The Europeans were absorbed into the Aboriginal culture.

As Barbara Thompson lived with the Torres Strait Islanders of Prince of Wales Island, she is of only peripheral interest to this study although her experiences reveal the increasing European intrusion. In 1844 she was on the cutter America which was wrecked on a reef on the eastern Prince of Wales Island. Her husband and the other members of the crew were drowned but Barbara Thompson was claimed by an Islander, Rainui, as the spirit of his deceased daughter, Gi(a)on, and acknowledged by all as a member of the Kaurareg tribe. She became the wife of Boroto and was well treated by the men but not at first by the women who were apparently jealous of her privileged position. Although she saw twenty to thirty vessels pass through Torres Strait each summer, she was not rescued until the second visit of the Rattlesnake to Cape York. Although illiterate she was able to give Macgillivray valuable information about the Kaurareg and the Aborigines at Cape York as some members of the latter could speak Kaurareg. She was visited almost every day by members of her tribe especially her aggrieved husband, Boroto, who threatened to kill her when he realized she was not going to return to him.

Barbara Thompson also informed Macgillivray of a white man, Wind, probably an escaped convict, who had been accepted by the Islanders at Badu (Mulgrave Island) and who in time, by ruthlessly eliminating rivals, had become chief of the tribe and scourge of the other islands. He had apparently ordered the Badulegas to kill all white men landing on the island and in June 1846 four men from a Sydney vessel trading for cacho-de-mer and tortoise shell were killed. The inhabitants of neighbouring Banks Island were just as hostile
to Europeans and a few years previous had killed three
castaways. Wini seems to have utilised a tradition of intense
opposition to aliens arriving from the sea. 129

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In contrast to the importance and widespread nature of
contacts from the sea, the overland intrusions in this period
must have been just a transitory wonder to the Aborigines
though, of course, of great significance to the Europeans.

The rapid expansion of settlement caused by the squatting
movement of the 1830's and 1840's raised the hope that a
great northern river system would be discovered to provide
a new area for pastoral exploration. As early as 1843,
the New South Wales Legislative Council supported a motion
seeking the establishment of an overland route from New South
Wales to Port Essington because of its trading potential
with Asia and the possibility of opening up valuable new
grazing lands. Eventually, in 1844-45, Ludwig Leichhardt
made this journey and in doing so dramatically brought the
attention of the rest of Australia to the potential of North
Queensland, and especially to the vast area watered by the
Burdekin and its tributaries. 130

129. Macgillivray, Narrative of the H.M.S. Battlesnake,
Vol. I, pp. 301-309. See also Moore, 'Cape York
Aborigines and Islanders of Western Torres Strait',
in Walker (ed.), Bridge and Barrier, passim, for
references to Barbara Thompson and Wini derived from
Macgillivray and the unpublished journals of S... Brierly,
artist on the Battlesnake, which Moore has recently
gained access to.

130. G.C. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North
Queensland to 1880 (Brisbane, 1963), pp. 16, 11;
L. Leichhardt, Journal of an Overland Expedition from
Moreton Bay to Fort Essington, A Distance of Upward of
8,000 miles, during the Years 1844-1845 (London, 1847,
Australasian Facsimile Edition No. 10, Adelaide, 1984);
'Introduction', p. XI. The Legislative Council had
recommended £1,000 for equipment of an expedition to
be led by Mitchell but there was delay in communicating
with the Secretary of State.
In the main, the expedition encountered good weather. They were on the Barakina and its tributaries from February to May, presumably just after the wet season. Leichhardt described the district as 'one of the finest we have seen. It was very open, with some plains, slightly undulating, or rising into ridges, beautifully grassed, and with sound ground'. He was even more enthusiastic about the Upper Barakina: 'the most picturesque landscape we had yet met with ... all the elements of a fine pasturing land were here united ... Finer stations for the squatter cannot exist'. Leichhardt's enthusiasm was to arouse the interest of southern Australia, some being convinced that the north would prove more valuable than the south. Leichhardt's relationship with the Aborigines of North Queensland are generally thought of in relation to the death of Gilbert. This, however, is misleading as it was one of the very few occasions where conflict occurred, and, most often, the aborigines avoided the party.

A variety of reasons can be postulated for this. Firstly, the party was large and, to the aborigines, no doubt awe-inspiring. Ten men, seventeen horses, and sixteen cattle set out from Jimbour and Leichhardt intended that the movements would be 'in light marching order'. The party progressed mainly through open country with abundant water, always mounted and constantly firing at the plentiful game. Leichhardt's potential opposition was generally soon left behind. As Leichhardt moved along the Upper Barakina on 3 April 1865, he had averaged almost ten miles a day for twenty-three days.

133. ibid., pp. 241-243.
As well, until they were attacked, Leichhardt's party had been fit and masters of the various contact situations. By the time they had reached the Valley of Lagoons on 4 May 1845, they had been moving along north-south flowing rivers with only relatively minor intervals since December 1844 and had found the journey so easy that Leichhardt commented, '... we all got stronger and improved in health'. After they left the Burdekin river system they soon came upon the Lynd and were thus able to connect up with the Gulf rivers. On 5 July, Leichhardt wrote,

We had now discovered a line of communication by land between the eastern coast of Australia, and the Gulf of Carpentaria: we had travelled along never failing, and, for the greater part, running waters: and over an excellent country, available, almost in its whole extent, for pastoral purposes. 138

The attack on the party in late June was apparently provoked by the Aboriginal members of the expedition, its success guaranteed by Leichhardt's neglecting to take elementary precautions against a surprise attack. The negligence resulted from Leichhardt's over-confidence in his ability to deal with Aborigines and from the expedition's experiences. By 1 May, Leichhardt had admitted he had allowed the night watch to lapse:

'... no one actually thought of watching: ... I did not check this because there was nothing apparently to apprehend from the natives, who always evinced terror in meeting with us; and all our communications with them have been accidental and never sought by them. 139

Gilbert himself had expressed the same idea much earlier:

'that there is nothing to fear from them while we are continually moving seems evident'. 140

138. ibid., p. 318.
139. ibid., p. 233.
140. Chisholm, Strange New World, p. 136. Chisholm uses the diaries of Gilbert and the convict Phillip which had only been discovered in 1938.
In the Valley of Lagoons, a party of Aborigines had been so curious to approach the camp, then manned by only four men, that there was a danger of conflict which dissipated when the other members of the expedition returned. When two members of the party returned to this camp to recover the balls left behind, several Aborigines threw spears at them emboldened, as was usual in a tentative contact situation, because a small number of Europeans were confronted by a much larger number of Aborigines. This show of aggression made Leichhardt only a little more cautious.

Excellent relations developed with a group of Aborigines (some of whom were acquaintances from the above contact) when the expedition remained stationary for four days. Their interest and astonishment remained unabated during this time until their traditional interests reasserted themselves and they departed for the coast, approximately one hundred miles to the east, to obtain shells to make ornaments. Captain H.P. King suggested to Leichhardt that this friendly group were from Rockingham Bay or in communication with the Aborigines there. This was possible as knowledge of European contact had probably been communicated to inland groups of Aborigines from such places as Rockingham Bay, Cape Upstart, and Cape York.

Almost immediately prior to the attack on the party, there was another indication that their confidence in the timidity of the Aborigines was foolish when some Aborigines had tried to drive off a bullock. Leichhardt commented: "... the natives of this part were not so amicably disposed towards us as those we had hitherto met". Yet, he chose

143. Chisholm, op. cit., pp. 177, 178.
144. ibid., p. 178; Leichhardt, Journal, p. 257.
146. ibid., p. 306.
a site for a camp that was surrounded by a narrow belt of
tea-trees providing potential attackers with ample cover,
allowed the members of his party to pitch their tents where
they chose (Phillip's tent was, as usual, far from the others,
Gilbert's and Murphy's were among the trees), and finally had
put the caps for the guns away where only he could find them. 147
The Aborigines had carefully posted themselves to wipe out
all members of the expedition and would have done so if
their attack had been better co-ordinated. As it was,
Gilbert was killed instantly and Roper and Calvert severely
injured. 148 The Europeans had apparently believed that
Aborigines would not attack at night 149 but, after this,
Leichhardt took the necessary precautions against a repetition.

Evidence as to provocation came out later but some members
of the party at the time thought, correctly, that the
expedition's two Aborigines had caused trouble by interfering
with Aboriginal women. 150 They had as well shot an old
 Aboriginal who had tried to defend the women. Leichhardt
in his journal had claimed it was unprovoked although,
according to Phillip, he had been informed of the confession
of one of the culprits. 151

Just to the north of the river he named the Gilbert,
Leichhardt noticed that one Aboriginal weapon utilised a
piece of iron and near the river later named the Leichhardt
he found a piece of pack canvas wrapped around some Aboriginal
utensils. 152 These may have resulted from direct or indirect

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147. ibid., pp. 307, 308.
148. ibid., p. 308.
151. Chisholm, op. cit., p. 207, 208. In his diary, Phillip
revealed that the Aborigines had quarrelled on 23 August
when the story had come out. See also Macgillivray,
Macgillivray had heard a similar story.
contact with Macassan fishermen or unknown Europeans or perhaps have been discarded or lost from the Beagle which had been in these areas.

It was ten years before Europeans were in or near the areas traversed by Leichhardt. A.C. & F.T. Gregory's North Australian Expedition of 1855-6 set out from the Victoria River on the north-west coast of Australia and made its way across the base of the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Gilbert and down the Bardekin, through central Queensland to Brisbane. The scheme which had originated with the Council of the Royal Geographic Society received the financial backing of the British parliament and aimed '... to lay open ... more of the interior of the great interior of the Australian continent than the many energetic but partial attempts hitherto made have succeeded in developing.' These most efficient and indefatigable explorers were to push inland from the coast returning to rendezvous with an attending ship. Much of the time in North Queensland Gregory followed, or was close to, Leichhardt's path but at a later and normally drier period of the year. He was much more experienced than Leichhardt, universally respected for his knowledge of Australian conditions, and certainly less easily impressed. Although he found much of the Gulf Country unattractive he noted, on 10 September 1856, that there was a great extent of fine grassland around the Flinders and, on 30 October, after traversing the Upper Bardekin, he commented with rare enthusiasm:

considering the number of miles we have travelled along the banks of the Bardekin, few impediments have been encountered, while the extent of country suited for squatting purposes is very considerable – water forming a never-failing stream throughout the whole distance. 155

154. Ibid., p. 175.
Gregory mentioned very few meetings with Aborigines in North Queensland where they seem to have avoided him whenever possible. However, near the Gulf between the Albert and the Leichhardt Rivers, on 8 September, Aborigines were noted keeping the party under observation. Next day nine Aborigines came up in a threatening fashion, but Gregory's conciliatory efforts appeared to appease them. On the fifth an Aboriginal party entered the camp in a friendly manner, only to attack suddenly with spears. Acquainted, as he later wrote, 'with the treacherous character of the Australian', Gregory was prepared and broke up the attack with small shot directed at the leader and a neatly-timed horseback charge as soon as the Aborigines 'shipped' their spears.\footnote{156} This was the only conflict he had in North Queensland. Yet in his evidence to the 1861 Select Committee inquiry into the Native Police Gregory stressed the necessity of that force because the terrain and abundance of food and water in Queensland would continue to allow the Aborigines to resist determinedly.\footnote{157}

Gregory's journal suggested that the Aborigines in various places had experienced increased direct or indirect contact with either Macassans or Europeans. On the Gulf of Carpentaria at 16° 42' 50" latitude and 136° 23' longitude, he noted that Aboriginal water vessels had been made by iron tools as well as stone, while four days later he found fishing spears which had also been partly made by iron tools.\footnote{158} In latitude 21° 22' 48", he noted that the marks of iron tomahawks were frequent where the Aborigines had

\footnote{156. ibid., pp. 173, 174. This conflict occurred on the Leichhardt River at latitude 16° 11' 30". 'Shipped' was commonly used in the nineteenth century to indicate that the Aboriginal had placed the spear in the woomera and drawn his arm back to throw. It was commonly accompanied by a shake or rattle which apparently indicated to the Aborigines that the spear was securely engaged. I am not sure of its derivation.}

\footnote{157. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 40.}

\footnote{158. Gregory, Journals, pp. 166, 167.}
been cutting out bees' nests or possums. Yet it was not until he reached latitude 26° 37' that he saw tracks of horses and cattle. It seems clear that these axes were traded either from groups on the coast who had made contact with European vessels or from the more remote frontier.

If Leichhardt and Gregory were largely responsible for giving North Queensland its reputation for pastoral possibilities, Edmund Kennedy was partly responsible for giving its Aborigines an evil reputation. Kennedy's journey from Rockingham Bay to Cape York was but part of a grand plan stimulated by the discoveries, in 1846 and 1847, of Mitchell and Kennedy in inland New South Wales and southern Queensland. From Cape York, Kennedy was to travel south on the western side of Cape York Peninsula back to the settled districts to try to discover the mouth of the Mitchell, and the source of the Flinders, and to proceed south-east to the Barcoo and Belyando taking the inland plains for any river that might flow from southern Queensland towards the Gulf of Carpentaria. There was still the hope that, in this way, easy overland access would be found from the settled districts to the Gulf of Carpentaria and thence on to Fort Essington, thus providing a trade link to Asia as well as opening up new pastoral opportunities. As Kennedy's expedition experienced more systematic and sustained hostility than any previous one, and because conclusions about North Queensland Aborigines were largely derived from popular knowledge of its fate, it will be dealt with at some length.

109. Ibid., p. 190.
160. E. Beale, Kennedy of Cape York (Adelaide, 1970), pp. 142, 143, and end papers. The maps pp. 106, 107, and end papers clearly show the grand design and the previous explorations Kennedy was to link up with.
161. Ibid., pp. 52, 53. As Kennedy thought the Barcoo was such a river in 1846 but Kennedy proved this to be a false hope in 1847. See pp. 106, 107.
With the inland plains in mind, the expedition had been equipped with three carts which proved an encumbrance in the rugged mountains and dense scrub around Rockingham Bay where they disembarked on 20 May 1848 and from which they set out on 4 June. Yet it was not until 14 July that Kennedy abandoned the carts with other heavy equipment. 162 The party of thirteen men, twenty-eight horses and one hundred sheep would probably have intimidated most groups of Aborigines initially but in many places its progress was so slow that this fear would fade and its presence arouse hostility. As well, its sheer size would guarantee serious disturbance to native game, trampling and destruction of food plants, and possibly fouling of water holes. Carroll’s journal does not provide enough detail to more than suggest the reasons for the great diversity of response from the Aborigines.

During Kennedy’s prolonged stay at Rockingham Bay while he tried to discover a route inland, the Aborigines were friendly, very curious, and eager to take openly or covertly

162. W. Carrol, Narrative of an Expedition Undertaken Under the Direction of the Late Mr. Assistant Surveyor A.B. Kennedy, for the Exploration of the Country Lying between Rockingham Bay and Cape York, To Which Are Added

1. The Statement of the Aboriginal Native Jackey Jackey, Who Accompanied Mr. Kennedy

2. The Statement of Dr. Vallock and Captain Dobson, Who Rescued the Survivors of the Expedition: and

3. The Statement of Captain Simpson, of the ‘Freak’, Who Rescued in Search of Mr. Kennedy’s Parties, etc.

any articles they could get their hands on. Kennedy showed
firmness but great forbearance. 163 Their progress in a
south-westerly direction from Rockingham Bay to escape from
the coast was so slow that after six weeks they were less
than twenty miles inland and still slightly south of their
first camp. 164 By this time they had had their first real
clash with the aborigines. On 4 July, Kennedy and three
others had roamed some distance from the camp when a group
of Aborigines followed threatening them until finally a
spear was thrown, whereupon Kennedy ordered his men to fire,
killing at least one and seriously wounding three others.
From the journal it is difficult to tell whether Kennedy
was justified or whether the difficulties and frustrations
of the journey had caused him to be less restrained than
he otherwise might have been. There is no evidence of small
shot or a warning shot being used, both normal practices
since Cook's time, nor whether circumstances permitted these.
One can only speculate as to how important such a disastrous
beginning was to the remainder of the expedition - from the
evidence probably very little, as a group they met a week
later was friendly and their next clash did not occur for
over two months when one night three spears were thrown
without effect into the camp on the Walsh River. 165 On the
Mitchell River five days later, six to eight Aborigines
threatened the party and, after the failure of friendly
overtures, the Europeans fired at them causing them to flee. 166
The next day a party of twelve to fourteen fired the grass
to frighten the Europeans and eventually threw three spears
at them until shots were fired and the Aborigines fled. 168

164. Beale, Kennedy of Cape York, p. 179. See map pp. 170,
171.
165. Carron, op. cit., p. 23. I have retained Carron's
dates when that book is referred to even though Beale,
Kennedy Workbook, pp. 2, 3, has pointed out that these
are often a day or so out.
166. ibid., p. 47; Beale, Kennedy of Cape York, p. 195.
Two and a half weeks later the whole expedition was lucky to escape total destruction when unseen Aborigines fired the grass to windward of the party who reached a previously burnt spot only minutes before the flames. A week later at Princess Charlotte Bay a large party of Aborigines visited them ordering them to leave and hurling spears at them even after they decided to do so. The Europeans charged their assailants, firing at them to break up the attack. This series of clashes was interspersed with incidents where the Aborigines avoided contact or were friendly. Indeed, the hostile Aborigines seemed primarily intent on hurrying the party out of their localities or diverting it from particular areas.

By early October, the strength of all was fast declining, so that, when Kennedy missed his rendezvous with the Bramble at Princess Charlotte Bay, he decided to push on with a small party, leaving eight men under Carron at Weymouth Bay.

On November 13, Kennedy's advance party set out but after twelve days he had to leave another three men at Shelburne Bay when one man accidentally shot himself and another became ill. This left Kennedy and Jackey Jackey to push on to Port Albany to rendezvous with the relief ship. At the Escape River Aborigines who had seemed at first friendly followed them relentlessly for two days, eventually killing Kennedy and wounding Jackey Jackey slightly. The Aborigines, like those at Weymouth Bay, were extremely cautious. The surroundings were most suitable for ambush, the two men were too weak to adequately protect

170. ibid., p. 66.
171. ibid., pp. 28, 51, 41, 55, 61.
172. ibid., p. 58.
173. ibid., p. 65.
themselves, the rain affected their guns, and the Aborigines were superior in number and realized the comparative helplessness of Kennedy and Jackey Jackey. This attack did not indicate the exceptional boldness the Aborigines of Cape York were attributed with.

At Weymouth Bay, the Aborigines at first seemed friendly to the whole party, but after a week, when greatly outnumbering those left behind, they attacked and were repulsed by gun-fire. After this they apparently decided to wait until the Europeans were completely helpless and it seems were only willing to risk an attack on the two enfeebled survivors when they realized a rescue party was moving in from the beach. There is no evidence as to the fate of the three men at Shelburne Bay but it was presumed on circumstantial evidence that they had died or were killed.

At Weymouth Bay and Escape River, the desire to possess familiar European material wealth was one obvious and strong motive. At Princess Charlotte Bay, Kennedy had found in a basket some pieces of glass bottle carefully wrapped in bark. As well, at Weymouth Bay and Escape River, the Aborigines had at first seemed friendly and had no doubt been able to observe some of the tempting European possessions; looting certainly diverted their attention from the actual attack. Another possible motive for the attack on Kennedy was revenge for the shooting of an Aboriginal woman and a child near Liberty Island some years previous. This reason was given to Macgillivray by an Aboriginal woman belonging to the tribe that murdered Kennedy. It is certainly possible that earlier European contacts from the sea exacerbated relations with the Aborigines and almost certain that they had familiarized the Aborigines at Rockingham Bay and Escape River, and possibly

175. ibid., pp. 211-219.
176. ibid., p. 230; Carron, op. cit., pp. 66-78.
Seymouth Bay, with the material wealth Europeans would normally possess, some of which Aborigines had found useful. The Europeans also spent considerable time in these three places.

There were many aspects of the Kennedy expedition which made it more liable to have conflict with the Aborigines than Leichhardt's or Gregory's. Kennedy's large expedition moved extremely slowly for long periods so that the intrusion which first may have been intimidating soon became provocative. The camps which were set up for long periods aroused the interest and intense acquisitiveness of the Aborigines and possibly the hostility of these or neighbouring groups.

The expedition was also moving through an area where occasional contacts with Europeans could have stimulated such motives. Finally, the terrain and vegetation provided opportunities for attacks to be made with comparative safety. Although, at times, the Aborigines menaced the whole invading party, exhibiting great boldness and aggressiveness, it is unknown for how long the expedition had been under observation and what information concerning it had been communicated from Aboriginal groups further south. It is known that Aborigines in Cape York Peninsula could be informed about and prepared for such an expedition as Kennedy's (the Jardine's of 1864) over a distance of several hundred miles, a fact which suggests that the serious clashes which punctuated the course of this expedition could have sometimes been connected and, on the Walsh and Mitchell, probably were. The Aborigines succeeded in killing, for certain, only Kennedy and in looting only when the Europeans were enfeebled. The Aborigines generally attacked only when they had vastly superior tactical or numerical strength.

In addition to the lengthy reported official expeditions, there were probably some private expeditions into North Queensland before 1859. Some details of three survive in second-hand reports. Christopher Allingham was reported to

have followed Leichhardt's route to the Bardekin with two young Aborigines in 1851 and marked out two runs; William Kilman was reported to have travelled north from Rockhampton along the coast to Cleveland Bay in 1854; while W.H. Gaden was alleged to have made two trips to the Bardekin in December 1856 and September 1857. There may have been others of which no report has been found. Nothing is known of any contacts with Aborigines on these expeditions.

Although outside the period 1866-1869, with which this chapter is primarily concerned because of its aim of focusing on the concept of tentative contacts, there are several other early expeditions which will briefly be studied, for although they were in effect the outriders of the pastoral expansion into North Queensland which was then in progress, they also pushed out among Aborigines who had little if any prior contact with or knowledge of the European invaders. In their dealings with the Aborigines they were examples of the most restrained and most ruthless of the frontiersmen who were to follow.

In 1861, expeditions led by Frederick Walker and William Landsborough from Queensland and John McKinlay from South Australia were sent out to search for the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition. In their relations with the Aborigines of North Queensland and their opinion of them, Landsborough and Walker differed greatly. Walker had introduced the Native Police to southern Queensland in 1848 and broken the resistance of the Aborigines wherever he met them. His normal ruthlessness in dealing with menacing or possibly menacing

180. Ibid. In late 1864, a stockman reported the initials 'U.L.' marked on a tree in the Proserpine district and believed they were ten to fifteen years old.
Aborigines is admirably illustrated in his journal of the 1861–62 expedition, as is his affection for, and sense of responsibility to, Aborigines who had accepted European domination. When Walker's party, consisting of three Europeans and five Aboriginal troopers, were ordered by a large number of hostile Aborigines to leave a water hole to the north-east of where Hughenden now stands, Walker ordered a mounted party to charge about thirty armed Aborigines 'when twelve men were killed and few if any escaped unwounded before they could throw a spear'.

The expeditions searching for Burke and Wills were separately to rendezvous with Captain Norman in the 'Victoria' on the Gulf of Carpentaria near the present site of Burketown. A large number of Aborigines near the rendezvous approached menacingly in three separate groups in a half-moon formation, a tactic Walker had seen before which he believed was peculiar to Aborigines using a woomera. He ordered one detachment of his force 'to charge their left wing ... and their centre and left wing suffered a heavy loss' presumably meaning that more than twelve Aborigines were killed. In three other clashes, three Aborigines were known to be killed with a possibility of one or two others. On another occasion Walker and one of his troopers (four of whom had been with him for thirteen or fourteen years) were lucky to escape with their lives when cut off from the main party.

Once a large number of Aborigines chased a small party of the explorers who, Walker claimed, could have 'played with the enemy on these large plains' but they refrained because they knew 'how reluctant [Walker] was that any unnecessary slaughter of these people should take place'.

182. ibid., pp. 4, 56.
183. ibid., pp. 82, 92, 94.
184. ibid., p. 67.
This comes as a surprising comment from the ex-commandant of the Native Police force and the leader of one of the bloodiest explorations in Australia's history unless it is seen to illustrate what pragmatic frontiersmen understood as necessary slaughter.

When McKinlay, in May 1861, travelled through areas where Walker had had some of his clashes with the Gulf Country Aborigines he found it almost impossible to approach them and commented:

Natives burning in all directions, but do not approach us; I almost fancy they have been reproved for some of their misdeeds to some one or other of the parties here lately, from their shyness. 185

Landsborough, on this expedition at least, and apparently as a rule,186 took great pains to avoid conflict with the Aborigines, even if this meant changing his plans or moving on to avoid unnecessarily giving offence as he did on the Herbert River near the Northern Territory border.187 He avoided contact with Aborigines as much as possible, encountered very few, but sometimes sought and obtained advice as to the nature of the country.188 Yet if he considered it unavoidable, he would fire at the Aborigines as he did on the Barcoo.189 Walker and Landsborough even came to conflicting conclusions about the Aboriginal population density near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Walker wrote that he had never seen a country so thickly populated190 while

186. G. Phillips, 'Ernest Henry', Historical Society of Queensland, II, (1923), p. 108. When Ernest Henry was surrounded by menacing Aborigines, he did not use his revolver 'out of deference to Landsborough who always deprecated the use of firearms, except in extremity'.
187. W. Landsborough, Journal of Landsborough's Expedition from Carpentaria in Search of Burke and Wills with a Map Showing His Route (Melbourne, 1862), pp. 41-44, 92.
188. Ibid., pp. 83, 85.
189. Ibid., p. 102.
Landsborough concluded that 'he could not imagine that they were numerous'.\textsuperscript{191} This is explained only in part by his following Walker into some areas. It is tempting to suggest that one factor contributing to the differing estimates was the expectation of conflict and the assessment of the potential 'enemy', a conclusion which Walker's military terminology and tactics tend to support.

In 1864, another remarkable expedition led by Frank and Alec Jardine found the western side of Cape York Peninsula equally as uninviting as Kennedy had found the eastern side and met the most determined and prolonged Aboriginal resistance of possibly any exploring party in Australia.\textsuperscript{192} The Jardines' expedition, which was government assisted, had set out to overland cattle from Rockhampton to Somerset near the tip of Cape York. The Queensland and British governments in 1863, had established it as a harbour of refuge for the crews of the numerous vessels wrecked in Torres Strait and, hopefully, as a provisioning port for passing ships.

It was hoped that this port would become the 'Singapore of the north' and a base for the civilizing and Christianizing of the Torres Strait Islanders.\textsuperscript{193} John Jardine, father of Frank and Alec, was the first Police Magistrate at Somerset. The settlement did not develop because it was poorly sited for passing ships and its hinterland failed to attract pastoralists or indeed anyone else. Then the pearling industry

\textsuperscript{191.} Landsborough, \textit{1861-2 Journal}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{192.} Byerley (ed.), \textit{The Jardines' Journals}, passim.
\textsuperscript{193.} 'Extracts from correspondence Re Proposed Station Near Cape York' 1863 V. & P., Session 2, pp. 679-684. In a despatch from Governor Boven to Sec. of State, 6 September 1861, eight reasons were given for establishing Somerset: 1. A harbour of refuge. 2. Provisioning passing ships. 3. A coal depot for steamships. 4. To inhibit the Torres Strait Islanders from committing outrages thus fostering the growth of commerce in the area. 5. A base for geographical research, missionary enterprise, and British colonization to the north and south. 6. Defence. 7. To preserve and extend British political dominance from northern Australia to India and China. 8. To be the Singapore of the north.
developed after 1863, the government establishment was moved to the more accessible Thursday Island.

There were ten (including four Aborigines) in Jardine's expedition which was droving 250 cattle and had as well 41 horses and one mule. That such a large, slowly moving party should provoke the Aborigines is not surprising; but their determined, persistent, and often reckless attacks are. The first show of real hostility occurred at the Staaten River just over a month after they left Carpentaria Downs on the Finnsleigh River, which was the outer limit of expansion when they set out in October 1864. 194 It seems clear that they had been under observation previously but from this point on until they were about one hundred miles from Cape York they were dogged by persistently hostile Aborigines and attacked eleven times. On four occasions the Aborigines stood firm or returned to the attack after being fired on. A minimum of 54 Aborigines, with a credible maximum of 72, were killed and others wounded. None of the expedition was killed or wounded although several experienced uncomfortably near misses. 195

195. Ibid., p. 19; on 14 November 1864, Aborigines menaced the party for three miles but there was no outbreak of violence; p. 22; on 20 November 1864, no deaths recorded, possibly some; pp. 22, 23; on 22 November 1864, three Aborigines were killed; on 23 November, possibly some deaths; p. 23; 27 November, two separate attacks on the divided party in which P. Jardine killed one and the rest of the party killed 'some' and wounded 'some' seriously; p. 24; on 16 December, eight or nine Aborigines were killed; pp. 35, 36; 13 December, termed the Battle of the Mitchell by Eyrley, about 30 Aborigines killed for certain but 'many more must have been wounded and probably drowned, for fifty nine rounds were counted as discharged'. I have taken a minimum of six and a maximum of ten killed for 'many more'; p. 37; on 21 December, Aborigines who were stalking the party were chased for two miles for sport but not fired upon; pp. 39, 41; on 23 December, 'some' Aborigines were killed when they stood firm, apparently unable to comprehend the destructiveness of the firearms; p. 43; on 14 January two Aborigines were killed. For the minimum figure I have considered only the entries where it was definitely stated that Aborigines were killed and interpreted 'some'
While the size of the slowly moving expedition was provocative and no doubt destroyed or disturbed economic resources of the Aborigines and possibly infringed on aspects of their social and religious life, the frequency of the attacks and their recklessness suggest a complete lack of understanding of the firepower of the intruders. A similar observation could be made of the clashes Walker had with the Aborigines near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Another factor common to both of these expeditions was the lack of restraint in dealing with apparent or potential Aboriginal opposition. In this, they well represented the ethos of the colony employing them.

Conclusion.

Tentative European contacts with the Aborigines of North Queensland had thus extended over two hundred and fifty years before colonization began. There were many known contacts and certainly others unknown to this investigation but for even the known ones the data is incomplete, especially with respect to the Aborigines. However, some obvious conclusions can be suggested. Indeed, a major one emerging from this study is that, contrary to a very widespread belief, conflict was not an inevitable consequence of contact between Aborigines and Europeans. This belief rests on the premise that the only meaningful contact between Europeans and Aborigines was that which preceded conquest and dispossession. The historian must learn from the anthropologist and archaeologist that in such contact situations as have been examined in this

105. as two. In the 'Battle of the Mitchell', above, (cont.) hostile Aborigines were decoyed back to the main party of explorers. They had thrown all their spears and were tracked with their backs to the fast flowing Alice River, a large anabranch of the Mitchell. The ten explorers then fired the fifty-nine shots into the weaponless Aborigines.
chapter significant acculturation could result. 196

It is clear that in this tentative contact situation, once amicable relations were established, it was possible for the Aborigines to accommodate to European intrusion. Castaways could be absorbed into Aboriginal life, changing it barely if at all, presumably because such unfortunates had nothing to offer but a stock of inapplicable concepts and useless information. The castaways fitted into its kinship structure as 'ghosts' of Aborigines and became Aborigines. Such ghosts were not expected to remember all aspects of their previous existence. 197 Sharp reported that the Jirjeront in the 1980's still accepted whites into their conceptual framework by giving them the totem of death. 198

At Evans Bay, Cape York, at least some Europeans of the Fly in 1845 and the Battlesnake in 1848-9, and probably more than were aware of it, were similarly accepted into the kinship structure as deceased relatives. 199 Here, however, the Europeans had material wealth that the Aborigines soon found attractive and it seems that a mechanism meaningful to Aborigines was established to allow the Aborigines to utilise this new found source of supply. At Rockingham Bay, the Aborigines had also turned outwards to the sea to accept what their white visitors had to offer and probably communicated that interest to Aborigines on the upper Burdekin.

197. Macgillivray, The Narrative of the 'Battlesnake', Vol. II, p. 29. 'Frequently when the children were teasing Gi'om they would be gravely reproved by some elderly person telling them to leave her, as "poor thing! she is nothing, only a ghost!"'
199. Macgillivray, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 121. As noted previously, Macgillivray had been in the Baramble when it assisted the Fly on the previous expedition.
There were indications that cautious, conciliatory contacts at the Baroobin River, Cape Cleveland, and the Endeavour River could have produced amicable relations. However, in all cases where contact had been established, conflict could occur. It seems clear that the Europeans were often aware that their presence and their actions were affronts to the Aborigines. It is also clear that some attacks occurred when the Europeans were utterly unconscious of having given any justification. And further, while most attacks may have been, to the Aborigines, just retribution for gross offences of which the Europeans were unconscious, some attacks may have been unprovoked by standards acceptable to an impartial observer of either race and be explicable only in terms of human perversity or implacable hostility to any sort of alien intrusion.

Hartwig's model of the stages of Aboriginal reaction to European intrusion is clearly relevant to North Queensland despite the fact that the tentative contacts were much more extensive and more complex than those in the Alice Springs District. Indeed, the model can be modified to accommodate such complexities.

Firstly fear and avoidance was the most common reaction of Aborigines to European intrusion and must have been more characteristic than appears from the written records because the Europeans were no doubt often unaware of being observed. It seems clear that the easily observed passage of a sailing ship, small boat, or exploring party could provoke interest and a variety of Aboriginal responses which could result in a tentative contact and the possibility of amicable relations, or initial hostility to drive away an apparently menacing intrusion. Although tentative contacts were always risky, it is surprising how rarely conflict occurred and how easily amicable relations could be established when the intruders were conciliatory, cautious, confident, and made no sudden demands on the Aborigines' economic resources. There was always the possibility of reversing the initial response of
the Aborigines. Thus hostility could be planted with cautious
determination and amicable relations destroyed through an
'unwitting affront'. It is also clear that hostility was
more likely to be expressed (a) towards a small group of up
to three or four Europeans than a larger one (b) when the
Aborigines greatly outnumbered the Europeans (c) when the
terrain gave advantage to the Aborigines (d) when the Europeans
were apparently unable to defend themselves (e) when the
Europeans were obviously in competition for the economic
resources of the Aborigines (f) when the tentative contact
was prolonged and (g) when the attitude and subsequent
actions of the Europeans were not conciliatory and cautious.

The large number of tentative European contacts with
Aborigines in North Queensland is itself impressive, especially
on the east coast. Indeed many Aborigines who experienced
the European invasion of the 1860's and 1870's must have
been able to remember previous contacts going back probably
to the time of F.P. King in 1819. Many more must have known
indirectly of the intruding Europeans. ²⁰⁰ By 1845, Jukes
could write of 'the daily track of vessels' along 'this
reef-environed coast', ²⁰¹ which must have resulted in many
unknown contacts as well as those chronicled in this chapter.
The use of iron implements, glass, cloth, and canvas
discovered widely scattered throughout North Queensland is
the only tangible evidence of the effect such contacts had
on the Aborigines except at such frequently visited places
as Evans Bay and Rockingham Bay. Clearly some knowledge of
the intruders was communicated to Aborigines who had not

69-71; Heares, op. cit., pp. 35, 36. In 1834, Sharp
discovered that the Jirjorent had no memory or tradition
of violent contact with the Dutch three hundred years
before, nor even of violent contact with the Jardines
seventy years before, but had vivid memories of more
limited violent contact thirty years previously.

experienced direct contact and it seems likely that elements of European material culture were traded ahead of the frontier as was evidenced by Gregory's discovery of the use of iron tools in the interior approximately one hundred and fifty miles beyond the nearest settled area. Indeed while the Aborigines maintained their primary interest in their own way of life, they seem to have had a lively curiosity about the alien intruders once their initial fear had passed. This extended to attempting to gain possession of those elements of the European's material wealth for which they found use.

The attitudes and intentions of the Europeans towards the Aborigines are obvious from the written records and are inextricably mixed. The Europeans, when necessary, blamed their victims. The abrasive lack of restraint of the Dutch produced reactions which gave the Aborigines of North Queensland a reputation for treacherous ferocity. The Royal Naval expeditions, beginning with Cook, were, in effect, disciplined scientific surveys intent on not antagonizing the Aborigines. They soon developed a reasonably safe modus operandi and became condescendingly confident in their attitude towards the Aborigines as was highlighted by Jukes' outburst after the sailor was killed at Cape Direction:

'I have always looked, too, with a favourable eye on what are called savages, and held a kind of preconceived sentimental affection for them, that I believe is not uncommon'.

The 'noble savage' Europeans had created on the basis of the observations of Cook and other Pacific explorers had thus become a relatively harmless and very interesting savage. There are few records of the maritime commercial interests contemporaneously attempting to exploit the coasts and islands of Aboriginal North Queensland. They had at least some and, possibly, many disastrous contacts with the Aborigines and seem to have thoroughly deserved them. The sailors of the Will o' the Wisp, the Dick, and the San Antonio, seem indeed,

262. Ibid., pp. 113, 114.
very reminiscent of the Dutchmen.

The land explorations investigated in this study are also interesting but probably of more immediate importance to the Europeans for the knowledge gained of North Queensland's pastoral potential than to the Aborigines for whom they were most often a passing phenomenon. What struck contemporary readers most in explorers' published narratives were instances of conflict with the Aborigines. It is really much more remarkable that penetration as deep and dramatic as the expeditions of Leichhardt and Gregory could involve so little conflict. Certainly it is unwarranted in the case of Gregory's expedition to single out for emphasis one unsuccessful attack and in the case of Leichhardt's one in which Gilbert was killed, especially when it is remembered that the latter was probably provoked by the actions of Leichhardt's Aborigines.

The tragedy of Kennedy's expedition has been explained in terms other than those of the ferocity and treachery of the Aborigines of the east coast of Cape York Peninsula. The slow passage of this expedition obviously antagonized the Aborigines. Moreover, Kennedy was often moving through areas where contact was complicated by the possibility of prior knowledge of Europeans. Their presence was unwelcome and Aborigines made frequent attempts to hurry them on. It is, perhaps, significant that Kennedy was killed near Cape York where contact with Europeans was greatest. The desire to possess the material wealth of the Europeans was an important motive once the Europeans became stationary and enfeebled. Kennedy's expedition did indicate that suitable terrain made much of Cape York Peninsula a formidable fortress for Aboriginal resistance.

Landsborough, Walker, and the Jardines were experienced frontiersmen employed by the newly separated colony of Queensland. They were sent out by a rapidly expanding pastoralist colony. To this researcher, they have seemed the forerunners of a new age in North Queensland even though they, too, pushed out into areas of little or no prior contact. Their
tentative contacts with the Aborigines are, in reality, the initial contacts that will lead to conquest and dispossession. It is, thus, apt that Landsborough should be atypically famous for his restraint in his dealings with Aborigines and that the Jardines and Walker led two of the bloodiest expeditions in Australia's history and reported their dealings with the Aborigines frankly in well-publicised journals.

By 1859, then, in many parts of North Queensland the Aborigines had experienced tentative contacts with intruding Europeans setting out from remote bases. There is no evidence, and little likelihood, however, that such contacts or knowledge of contacts prepared the Aborigines to accept basic changes to their way of life, and no likelihood that they could have accepted the changes expected of them by the invading Europeans without forsaking the traditional life they found so satisfying.