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ABORIGINAL-EUROPEAN RELATIONS

IN

NORTH QUEENSLAND, 1861-1897

by

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PART III

ABORIGINAL - EUROPEAN RELATIONS

IN THE

PACIFIED AREAS
ABORIGINAL-EUROPEAN RELATIONS IN THE PACIFIED AREAS 1869-1897:

THE CREATION OF A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY

Until 1868, there was a state of almost complete hostility between the Aborigines of North Queensland and the invading settlers. During 1868, the first successful efforts were made to reach an accommodation with the Aborigines in the earliest settled parts of the Kennedy District; and by 1869 the process had spread so dramatically that Charles Eden termed it a 'movement'.

The first recorded example of successfully 'letting the blacks in' after a period of open conflict occurred at William Chatfield's Natal Downs on the Cape River. When Chatfield took the station over, he found that it had been almost untenable because of Aboriginal resistance from 1864 to 1867 but, by January 1868, he had very large numbers of Aborigines peacefully settled on the run. In September 1868, the Aborigines had been let in at Vane Creek on the Belyando River, in January 1869 at Jarvisfield at the mouth of the Burdekin and at Woodstock, about thirty miles south west of Townsville. George Bridgman allowed the Aborigines

1. On Lammermoor and Lyndhurst amicable relations had been established from the beginning. In most areas there was an initial period in which there was little or no violence. See ch. 4, pp. 138-9 and Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 98.
2. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 211.
4. W. Hickson, Vane Creek, to Col. Sec., 7 June 1869, Q.S.A. COL/Al27, 2455 of 1869.

These two stations were owned by Robert Towns & Co.
in to Fort Cooper, about thirty miles from Mackay in April 1869. As none of the neighbouring stations or plantations followed suit for over a year, he soon had all the Aborigines in the neighbourhood camped on his run which induced him to apply for a reserve, a decision with far reaching consequences during the 1870's. By May 1869, it was claimed that the Aborigines were wholly let in between Townsville and Bowen.

This was an exaggeration but does indicate how the letting-in 'movement' had spread. At Strathdon, near Bowen, the Aborigines were let in in early February 1869 and into the town, itself, in early May.

The pastoralists made sure that the Aborigines understood and accepted their conditions for the new peace. Thus Hall Scott on Strathbogie near Bowen informed the government: 'We have made terms of friendship with the Native Blacks and have admitted them upon our stations'. Such terms might vary with the landholder but, obviously, included a guarantee not to spear or disturb the cattle, or to fire the grass. On Jarvisfield and Woodstock, though the Aborigines were allowed 'to hunt over all the country held by ... Towns & Co', their behaviour was 'without exception good'. On Strathdon, the Aborigines promised Bode not to kill cattle, to keep to certain parts of the run and not to hunt when cattle were nearby. Bode then persuaded the other colonists to allow the Aborigines to fish at the mouth of the Don River.

7. P.D.T., 15 May 1869, a letter signed 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'.
8. Branston, C.P.S., Bowen, to Col. Sec., 7 May 1869, Q.S.A. COL/Al22, 1662 of 1869; P.D.T., 8 May 1869.
11. P.D.T., 20 February 1869; P.D.T., 6 March 1869.
After from five to eight years of violence and bloodshed the dispossessors and the dispossessed seem to have readily accepted this new initiative.\textsuperscript{12}

This initial letting in in North Queensland depended upon a variety of factors. Humane pastoralists such as Chatfield, Bridgman, and Bode were eager to end the hostilities and there was strong support for this by vocal humanitarians within Bowen itself.\textsuperscript{13} As well, there was a significant change in the balance of power. Although the colonists on the stations were still outnumbered, in many areas, the number of Aborigines had declined as had their will and ability to overtly resist European intrusion. As settlers were aware of this, communal fear was not as great an incitement to violence.\textsuperscript{14}

One of the factors that made the people realize this near Bowen was the withdrawal of the Native Police detachment from the Don River to Dalrymple in 1868 as the Aborigines had begun moving about much more freely.\textsuperscript{15} This measure was prompted by the need for this detachment to serve part-time as a gold escort on the Cape River.\textsuperscript{16}

Indeed, the depressed economic situation that demanded this compromise was probably a significant factor in popularising the letting in movement. The pastoral slump of 1866-9 made the expense of keeping the Aborigines off the runs much less bearable. As a contemporary had explained, the enormous

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] ibid.; J. Gordon, P.M., Townsville, to Col. Sec., 29 April 1869, Q.S.A COL/A122, 1563 of 1869: 'I am happy to state that the natives of this district are now showing a strong disposition to be friendly'. See also f.n. 3 and 4 above and P.D.T., 10 April 1869.
\item[14] ibid., pp. 177-181.
\item[16] P.D.T., 9 May 1869.
\end{footnotes}
amount of country opened up had meant that there were too few Native Police camps, and this and the size of the runs 'compelled every squatter to keep a larger staff of men to protect each other than would otherwise have been required to work the stations'. It is also probable that the threat to their labour supply of the gold rushes to Mt. Wyatt, Cape River, and later, Ravenswood, Gilbert River, and a second rush to Mt. Wyatt encouraged the pastoralists to come to terms with the Aborigines on their runs.17

The process of letting the Aborigines in after an initial period during which their ability to resist was broken was repeated throughout North Queensland during the whole period covered by this research.18 Sometimes action was initiated by an individual settler and applied only to


18. Sub Insp. A.D. Douglas, N.P., Cairns, to Insp. Isley, Cairns, 1 March 1878, q.S.A. POL/12B/G1; J. Davis, Mayor, Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 16 September 1881, encl. q.S.A. COL/A344, 4660 of 1882; P.D.T., 27 October 1883, from Herberton Advertiser, for letting in of some Aborigines at Herberton; W. McDowell, Cashmere, Upper Herbert, to Col. Sec., 15 November 1880, q.S.A. COL/A303, 6323 of 1880; A. Mayou, Sec., Amelioration of Aborigines Committee, Thorndenough, to Col. Sec., 24 November 1882, q.S.A. COL/A351, 6882 of 1882; Queenslander, 26 June 1886, p. 1007, for Aborigines tentatively coming into the township of Cairns; C. Masterton, Daintree, 12 October 1891, to Acting P.M., Port Douglas, encl. q.S.A. COL/139, 1581 of 1894. This is associated with the Atherton initiative. T.C.C. Coventry, Stanthorpe, to Col. Sec., 14 February 1887, and Coventry to Chief Sec., Griffith, 8 October 1886, encl. q.S.A. COL/A480, 1328 of 1887, for admission of Aborigines on the Bloomfield River; Towers Herald, 30 December 1884, for letting in of Aborigines at Cooktown, and also press cuttings from Cooktown Independent, February and early March before 5 March, enc. Insp. H. Fitzgerald, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 5 March 1885, q.S.A. COL/A422, 3053 of 1885; 'Pol. Com's Report', 1897 V. & P., Vol. II, p. 31.
a small number of Aborigines in a limited area. At other times, a number of settlers decided to admit the Aborigines and made deliberate efforts to effect this, action that could involve local authorities, police, Native Police, and even the colonial government. Indeed the letting in of Aborigines at Atherton to defeat the resistance from the rainforest was but the most extensive and complex example of such involvement. It is perhaps fitting that the Police Commissioner's Report of 1897 which inaugurated the period of governmental protection for the Aborigines evidenced the normality of the letting in process when it noted, in passing, that the Coen miners had only recently voted to allow the Aborigines in.

The Native Police played both a passive and an active role in determining when the Aborigines were admitted. When the Police Commissioner removed the Native Police from one place to another where the needs were greater, he was removing an aggressive force which made it difficult, if not impossible, for a station owner in a well patrolled area to reach an accommodation with the Aborigines. Thus,

19. Sub Insp. A.D. Douglas, N.P., Cairns, to Insp. Isley, Cairns, 1 March 1878, Q.S.A. POL/12B/G1; W. McDowell, Cashmere, Upper Herbert, to Col. Sec., 15 November 1880, Q.S.A. COL/A303, 6323 of 1880, for a neighbour's account of Scott's letting the Aborigines in to the Valley of Lagoons. Note also the successful letting in at Lyndhurst, Lammermoor, Natal Downs, Fort Cooper already referred to in footnotes 1, 3, 4, of this chapter.

20. J. Davis, Mayor, Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 16 September 1881, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A344, 4680 of 1882. See the rest of this file for an interesting interplay of private and local government initiative with Native Police and government involvement. J.C. Davies, Chairman, Amelioration of Aboriginals Committee, Thornborough, to Col. Sec., 24 November 1882, and Minute J.M., 27 December 1882, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A351, 6682 of 1882.

21. See ch. 6, passim.

Christison of Lammemoor, in the early 1860's, and Palmer of Gamboola, in the 1880's requested that the Native Police be kept off their runs when they wished to reach an accommodation with the Aborigines. The native Police officer was in the best position to judge when Aboriginal resistance in his area had been broken to such an extent that the detachment could be withdrawn to leave the pastoralists, or the pastoralists and ordinary police, to control the Aborigines. If the Aborigines resumed their raids on the stock and this could not be checked by the locals, the nearest Native Police detachment could make an occasional patrol to 'disperse' the Aborigines again. However, with the withdrawal of the Native Police, the settlers had to face the possibility of an accommodation with the Aborigines.

The Native Police frequently played a more active role in ending the conflict. They tried to influence the attitude of the settlers as to whether they kept the Aborigines out or let them in, and how they treated them on

23. M.M. Bennett, Christison of Lammemoor, pp. 82-85; Under Col. Sec. to E. Palmer, Gamboola Station, Mitchell River, 17 November 1882, Q.S.A. COL/G19, 2091 of 1882; E. Palmer, Linden, Parramatta, to Col. Sec., 13 March 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A356, 1303 of 1883.

24. P.D.T., 12 June 1869; Petition of Bowen farmers to Col. Sec., 22 May 1872, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A169, 1020 of 1872. Also enclosed: S. Yeates to Chief Sec., 18 May 1872; and Barron, Acting Pol. Com., to Col. Sec., 9 July 1872. Here Barron reports the dispersal and the transfer of the detachment. P.D.T., 2 October 1880, letter to the editor signed 'Tete a Tete'; P.D.T., 16 June 1878, from M.M.; P.D.T., 11 January 1879, letter from E.G. Smith, Suttor Hotel; P.D.T., 18 March 1871, a request for Native Police to return to disperse.

25. Laos, Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District 1861-1874, p. 175.
the runs. As well they seem to have sometimes taken an active role in bringing in the Aborigines and establishing a peace between the two races. Thus, Sub Inspector O'Connor tried to establish a truce with the local group at Laura in 1879, Sub Inspectors Carr and Brooke were instrumental in bringing some Aborigines in to Cooktown in 1881, and Sub Inspector Carr brought in several Aboriginal groups to towns and stations in the Cook District in 1883. Such evidence, indicating the role of the Native Police in admitting the Aborigines to the stations and townships, is scanty, like all else to do with Native Police; but as this force was familiar with the Aboriginal haunts and habits in each area and aware of their aggressive capability, it is reasonable to assume that this function of the force was not uncommon.

There is also evidence to indicate that sometimes the Aborigines took the initiative in ending the hostilities when they realized that the settlers were less dangerous. Thus, the Herberton Advertiser reported:


27. Queenslander, 15 February 1879.


About twenty of our black brethren came into town on Thursday from the Silver Camp, where they have been camped for the last five weeks ... and are predominantly very anxious to "sit down along a white fellow", and to that end have established a camp not far from the smelting works. 30

At Bowen and Cooktown, the Aborigines were most anxious to come into the town despite the fears of some of the settlers. 31

There are also records of such overtures not being accepted by cautious settlers. Thus when some Aborigines appeared on the north shore of the Pioneer River, the Police Magistrate Clerk of Petty Sessions and Mayor with one or two other citizens went to meet them in a boat.

... twelve gins, including picaninies, and three blackfellows, one of whom bore the marks of an old wound on his body ... all evinced a desire to come over to the town, and appeared reluctant to return to their native haunts after receiving the blankets, and being informed by signs that their presence was not desired. 32

Records of such incidents are few but suggest that the Aborigines were not merely passive respondents to the settler initiative.

After years of violent conflict, the Aborigines were understandably eager to be let in as J. Earl who had let in two groups of Aborigines pointed out. He observed that the first settlers were treated as bitter enemies but that 'after they have fought the white man to their hearts [sic]

31. P.D.T., 6 February 1869; P.D.T., 3 April 1869. See also P.D.T., 23 July 1881, from Cooktown Courier, 13 July 1881, for account of four Aborigines coming voluntarily from Cape Bedford to Cooktown 'with the consent of the tribe of that locality'. They accompanied Sub Insp. Brooke.
32. M.H., 7 May 1870. See also H.A., 11 February 1887: twelve Aborigines from the Russell River expressed their intention of 'sitting down' permanently at Carrington but as they had abundance of arms and ammunition from previous raids the settlers were alarmed. See also H.A., 30 September 1887, when a party of Aborigines visited Kelly's store at Atherton.
content ... they never forget the first white man that takes
them in and makes an asylum of rest for them'. 33 This, in
part, explained the dramatic ease with which such men as
Chatfield and Bridgman established working relationships
with the Aborigines. In a dangerous world suddenly and
inexplicably 'asylum' was granted.

The period when communications had just been established
between the two races was one fraught with fear and potential
danger. An ex-Native Police Officer wrote:

My experience has led me to believe that when the blacks
are let in to the stations and fed they commit fewer
depredations on cattle but at first it is very dangerous
for the whites as without great care and firmness in
their treatment they are not to be depended upon but
after they have been in for some time this danger passes.
I do not remember any blacks committing any personal
outrages after they have been let in for twelve or
eighteen months individual cases are known but this
has been most likely to revenge some injury. 34

The Aborigines' failure to understand or accept the terms
offered, sometimes led to disaster. Thus Henry Williams
of Walshtown was killed when he attempted to establish communica-
tions with the local Aborigines. He believed the Aborigines
who had allowed themselves to be seen were indicating their
desire to come in and led a group of unarmed miners towards
them. 35 Similarly, E. Watson of Pine Creek Station on the
head of the Archer River was killed and a companion wounded
only a few weeks after Watson had permitted the Aborigines
to come in. Such apparent ingratitude incensed the colonists

33. J. Earl, Butchers Hill, to J. Hamilton, M.L.A.,
5 August 1894, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 13850 of 1894.
The groups were on the Belyando River and at Butchers
Hill near Cooktown.

34. Fred Margetts, Central Auction Mart, Townsville, to
J. Hamilton, M.L.A., 6 August 1894, encl. Q.S.A.
COL/139, 13850 of 1894.

35. Inquest of Henry Williams, Engineer, killed by Aborigines
near Walshtown on 17 August 1873, Q.S.A. JUS/H37, 182
of 1873.
Cooktown Aborigines Soon After Being Let In.
who applauded the subsequent dispersal of five Aboriginal camps during which Sub Inspector Urquhart made sure he 'dealt with' all of Watson's murderers. As late as July 1897 Inspector Lamond warned that, what must have been one of the last Aboriginal groups to be let in in Queensland, might 'become a serious trouble again' when they 'begin to know their own strength'. The letting in process with its concomitant tensions was repeated with one Aboriginal group after another to the very eve of the era of protection.

In addition to humanitarian motives which the advocates of letting in tended to stress, there was strong economic motivation. Indeed, Charles Eden defined the 'letting-in' of Aborigines to a station in purely economic terms:

let in ... that is, allowed and encouraged to come and make themselves useful, shepherding a few sheep, chopping wood, stripping bark, and a thousand odd jobs to which they are adapted, receiving in return protection as long as they behaved well, and little presents of blankets, tomahawks etc.

Indeed, in the pacified areas each race provided economic resources for the other to exploit. The Aborigines were freed from some of the more serious restraints previously

36. C.C., 14 May 1889.
37. Insp. J. Lamond, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 4 July 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/140. There is no registration number in this copy from the Police Commissioner's office.
39. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 211.
operating on their traditional life and now found that they
could earn food, tobacco, alcohol, opium or clothing in
exchange for their labour or their women.

Aboriginal labour had many obvious advantages. It was
very cheap. Initially, it was plentiful and readily available
so that it could often by utilised in accordance with the
demands, a few Aborigines being employed permanently or
semi-permanently, the others being sent for when needed.
Thus, the Queensland described the success of the Hildebrand
brothers on the Don River:

Necessarily with all this potato growing and other work
considerable labour is required. At first, starting
some sixteen years ago ... white labour was employed
to the extent of five or six men, who had to be paid
25s. per week. Finding that at this rate they would
soon go to the wall, Messrs. Hildebrand hit upon the
idea of employing the native blacks; they have two
boys always residing with them who can do any farm
work even to ploughing ... When extra hands are required,
such as at potato planting or digging, or the maize
harvest, or for hoeing, word is sent to the tribe of
blacks belonging to the district, and some are at once
told off by their 'chiefs'. They are well fed and
clothed and paid little if any money. At the time
of my visit the potato field looked like a hacketay
plantation in consequence of the score of blacks picking
up, sorting and bagging the produce. The blacks are
also employed by the other German settlers of the
district. 40

The Aborigines were often very useful for certain kinds
of rough, menial, or casual labour which no one else would
do, or do economically. Thus, Aborigines were doing menial
work in the towns, 41 working for miners, 42 for small
farmers; for teamsters. 43

40. P.D.T., 5 November 1881, from the Queensland. See
also 'The Australian Black', Newspaper Cutting Book:
Album (E.I. MSS 1893, carton no. 4), for reliability
of Aboriginal labour.
41. P.D.T., 27 October 1887; P.D.T., 25 September 1880,
editorial.
42. P.D.T., 10 June 1876; R. Talbot, New Hidden Valley, to
Sgt. Stubbs, Bowen, 12 October 1892, Q.S.A. PCL/11E/G4,
p. 450; Cottow, to Col. Com., 2 August 1892,
enc. Q.S.A. COL/142, 9944 of 1898: 'easily earning
food by "dollying" for the miners'.
43. W.B. Kelly, Atherton, to Col. Sec., 19 October 1894,
Q.S.A. COL/139, 12292 of 1894.
and packers, for sawmillers, and for sugar planters. As has been noted, the beche-de-mer industry was dependent on the cheap labour of Aborigines as was the pearlshell industry when swimming divers were needed. Aborigines were especially useful to settlers in newly opened up country, clearing scrub, carting timber, hoeing, wood splitting, looking after unfenced cattle and sheep, finding lost animals, and, not least, acting as informants against threatened Aboriginal attacks.

Aborigines proved their usefulness to the pastoralist of North Queensland. Some were employing local Aborigines on stations before the gold rushes but Bolton's conclusion that, after the discovery of gold many stations would have found it difficult to keep going except for Aboriginal labour is well founded. A report in the Northern Argus

44. P.D.T., 20 May 1876; C.C., 5 November 1895.
45. Bowen Historical Society, 'John Withnail: as told by his daughter and sons'. (Unpublished ms. at Bowen).
46. T.C.C. Coventry, Tenterfield, to Chief Sec., Griffith, 8 October 1886, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A490, 1328 of 1887, Villele Plantation, near Bloomfield River; Queensland, 28 February 1886, p. 349, reports 200 Aborigines employed at Villele Station, Bloomfield River.
49. Such as Christison of Lammermoor, Fulford of Lyndhurst, Chatfield of Natal Downs and apparently the Annings of Reddy Springs. See Bennett, Christison of Lammermoor, pp. 56-95. Anning, Sun on the Right, pp. 12, 13.
in 1875 indicated that in the wake of the Palmer rush, Aboriginal labour was in great demand.\footnote{51} Initially, southern Aborigines were employed. Thus, Eden, writing of the 1860's before Aborigines were let in, claimed there were generally one or two on each run, he himself employing two Aboriginal men and their wives.\footnote{52} However, at Lammermoor, in 1881, Christison had 150 Aborigines constantly employed,\footnote{53} while Chatfield of Natal Dows was the largest employer of such labour in the Bowen District and was so dependent on the Aborigines that he could not have run sheep without them.\footnote{54}

More typical perhaps was the situation revealed when a survey was made of the Cloncurry District in 1899. It was reported that 76 local Aborigines were permanently employed on the stations within about one hundred miles' radius of Cloncurry while others of the 108 still semi-nomadic Aborigines did odd jobs to supplement their diet.\footnote{55}

The cliche that Aboriginal labour was useful only in the pastoral industries, the fisheries, and the initial clearing of the land\footnote{56} was invalidated repeatedly in North Queensland. Thus the European settlers of the Atherton Tableland found the Aboriginal labour so valuable as late as 1888 that they vigorously campaigned to deny the Chinese farmers access to this labour pool. They alleged that the Chinese farmers were supplying opium to the Aborigines.

Both concluded that this was untrue and that, in fact, the Chinese paid the Aborigines better and treated them with more respect. The hundred European farmers of the Atherton District in

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51. C.C., 18 March 1875, from Northern Argus.
52. Eden, By Wife and I in Queensland, pp. 90–91, 106.
53. P.B.T., 5 November 1881.
1898 had permits for 116 Aborigines while the two hundred Chinese farmers employed only between fifty and seventy. There were over four hundred Aborigines of all ages in the district. The Chinese who were paying quite a high rent to the European farmers insisted that they could not make their farms pay without the use of Aboriginal labour. At this time over half the land in the district was worked by the Chinese. 57 Indeed, European resentment of Chinese access to Aboriginal labour had been building up from at least late 1891, less than two years after peace was made with the Aborigines of the Atherton rainforest. 58 The attractiveness of Aboriginal labour in performing such menial but essential jobs as carting wood and water was further evidenced by the report that, after the Aborigines were let in at Maytown on the Palmer, 59 the Chinese were not employed. 60 In 1895, there was another report that, on the Palmer, the Aborigines had completely replaced Chinese labour. 61

A reading of the newspapers and reminiscences of nineteenth century North Queensland reveals unmistakably the importance of the labour of Aboriginal women. Very frequently they were the first Aborigines contacted and taken into the stations as domestics or concubines, even before the cessation of hostilities. 62 They then could act as emissaries to their hunted relations. 63 Someone who had

57. Roth, Atherton, to Pol. Com., 20 October 1898, Typ'd copy encl. Q.S.A. COL/139 (no registration number).
60. Queenslander, 27 September 1890, p. 582.
61. Queenslander, 26 January 1895, p.150.
62. Loos, Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District 1861-1874, pp. 180, 193; P.D.T.: 20 February, 3 April, 10 April, 1 May, 22 May, 5 June 1889.
known north and north-west Queensland in the early 1870's described the usefulness of the typical Aboriginal station domestic:

In the far away back country the gins as domestics are invaluable, and being gentle with children make good nurses; and when properly trained were adept waitresses, did all the washing, punkah-pulling, and general household work. Many a station manager and owner would never have been able to take out his women folk had it not been for the lubras, as they with a good cook and Chinamen gardener, assisted to make life out there more endurable. 64

Eden's account of station life in the 1860's supports this conclusion. He employed two Aboriginal women, one as the baby's nurse, the other as general help: 'Kitty served our purpose admirably, and with constant looking after, would help to wash, sweep out, and scrub the house, and make herself very useful. She rode as well as well as Dick.

... She knew all the horses by name and would go and catch any particular one you wanted'. 65 The editor of the Cairns Morning Post, similarly attested to the value of Aboriginal labour, in general, while encompassing the role of the women:

Is it not within the recollection of every man who knows North Queensland, that casual aboriginal labour has been the salvation of the wives of pioneer miners and pastoralists. Without such labour the settlement of the North would have been retarded if not prevented.66

Capitalists were not the only ones to exploit Aboriginal female labour. The working classes could often avoid the most unattractive tasks. A Bowen resident described how her white servant hired an Aboriginal woman:

Biddy's a superior girl,
Who's moved in 'igher spheres,

64. 'The Australian Black', Sydney Morning Herald, Newspaper Cutting Book: Album (M.L. MSS. 1893, carton no. 4). The date was omitted from the cutting.
65. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 108.
66. Morning Post, 31 October 1902.
She says as folks as knows her well
Would take her anywhere.
Oh yes, she'll do the parlour hout,
But sweep the kitchen floor
She really can't demean herself,
And really won't, that's more.
She hired a gin, and Biddy now
Inspects her sweep the floor,
And gives her own directions
From her stock of household lore. 67

Employment was not strictly assigned to Aboriginal women in accordance with the sexual division of labour of contemporary Europe as Eden has already indicated. Inspector Douglas who had long experience in the Native Police reported that many stations employed Aboriginal women as 'stockmen', especially in areas where the male population had decreased disproportionately: 'they could ride well and do good work as stockmen'. 68

It is unfortunately rare that the colonists reported on the modified Aboriginal society. One commentator, however, described a reversal of roles in the new society in which the woman was 'the breadwinner, the tobacco provider and general provider of the camp' while the men produced little or nothing. This was very different from the role of the sexes in traditional Aboriginal society where, though the women provided much, the men had a very important role in providing the larger game and much of the fish. The article, published in 1903, referred to a group close to a town and it is likely that as some towns became more sophisticated, there was less need for the labour of Aboriginal men, but still a great demand for the women as domestics. The writer claimed that this had resulted in the women becoming more

assertive in their relations with their husbands, in fact dominating them, and becoming more confident and aggressive in their relations with the settlers. She wrote:

With regard to our sable sisters there is a great contrast between the meek, patient slave of the bush, always toiling in the rear of her lord and master; ... and her sister aboriginal of the back settlements. The services of the latter are in request and well aware she is of this fact. ... She precedes her husband both in the line of march or in negotiations for remuneration and her demands are not characterized by modesty. ... The bump ... of self esteem becomes enormously developed in these ladies. "They rule the Roost," and to dislodge them from their perch will require more astuteness than their lords seem to possess. 69

The writer then gave several examples of this role reversal.

Indeed the greater use found for female labour in the towns helps to explain the contrast often remarked between Aboriginal men in the towns and in the country. Men lost their confidence in this new situation, especially in the environment of the town 'blacks' camp'. On the stations they had at least found a meaningful role with a certain if inferior status in the newly emerging colonial society. 70 Thus, in 1899, within 100 miles of Cloncurry, 60 of the 76 Aborigines permanently employed were men. 71 The labour and sexual services of the women were always in demand. Through both they often received an intimate understanding of the colonists denied to their men, especially in the towns, and felt less powerless in the new situation.

It is indisputable that the colonists of North Queensland

69. N.Q.R., 20 December 1903, 'Aboriginal Jottings'.
70. P.D.T., 16 June 1877, letter from W. Chatfield Jun. See also the editor's comment where the difference is drawn between Aborigines working on Natal Downs and 'the semi-civilized and wholly demoralized blacks that infest the streets and the jetty'.
found Aboriginal labour useful and sometimes essential. Those who used it most effectively had to adjust their expectations or adapt themselves to accommodate Aboriginal patterns of behaviour. Thus Chatfield commented:

These people, if properly managed, are docile, intelligent, and for a short time hardworking, but the migratory instinct is too strongly developed to be overcome by a coup de main. 72

Christison found them 'very good servants considering their nature and want of training' and believed 'the North Queensland aboriginal ... capable of a fair degree of civilization if properly dealt with'. 73 Other colonists who were unable or unwilling to adapt their labour needs to the Aborigines strongly criticised their unreliability or their inability to work hard for long. 74

It is not surprising that the Aborigines often refused to tie themselves down to do the menial drudgery many colonists expected of them, especially as the remuneration was generally so poor. Many could subsist as they had done before contact or find employment with other colonists. As their traditional tool kit was often enriched by steel axes, knives, fish hooks, and metal or glass implements and they could obtain clothing from the settlers, much of the time they would have previously spent in manufacturing traditional artefacts - as well as the time spent on neglected ceremonies and rituals - was available for food producing activities. Unlike the kanakas, few were legally bound to work for an employer so they could often escape from unpleasant work.

73. P.D.T., 5 November 1881. My underlining.
and still subsist. Such independence did not suit many employers.

There is some evidence to suggest that, after a few years in the settled areas the Aborigines worked with less efficiency and greater reluctance than when they were first let in. In 1884, the Fort Denison Times remarked:

Not long since Bowen was known throughout the north as a place where the blacks were very far above average, and many were recruited for employment on stations etc. 75

Firstly, this probably reflected their unpleasant realization that their conquerors were the permanent possessors of their land, a concept Aborigines found difficult to accept or even understand. 76 Secondly, the tensions and anxiety of acculturation - of which dispossession was an important factor - led many to an addiction to alcohol or opium which seems to have affected adversely their labour value to the settlers. A Bowen resident claimed they were no longer spending their earnings on food and were presenting 'a very debauched appearance'. Numbers could be seen lying about intoxicated while further north they were incapacitated by opium. 77 The editor had earlier lamented that 'the colonists get but little work out of them'; 78 although eager to use Aboriginal labour. Yet when it was announced that a reserve would be established at Bowen by Bridgman and the Aborigines Commission, the editor had immediately urged:

It should not be too far from town, as the blacks are very useful for certain kinds of rough work, and the townspeople have as much right to their services as country residents. 79

75. P.D.T., 19 January 1884.
76. K.M., 29 (1897), p. 67, note C; Dixon, Dyirbal Language, p. 36; K.M., 20 (1888), p. 2. This Aboriginal attitude will be discussed later in this chapter.
77. P.D.T., 19 January 1884, letter from 'A Resident'. Bowen.
78. P.D.T., 2 June 1883, editorial.
79. P.D.T., 27 October 1877.
A settler of the Cooktown District claimed that the Aborigines would not work for more than a day, except at stockriding, although they would do anything for opium. Two factors need to be considered which may clarify these conflicting views. White employers probably became less satisfied with Aboriginal labour as they became more familiar with it. However, the shortcomings of servants, slaves and employees is a regular conversation piece of employer/owner classes in most societies and should not necessarily be taken at face value. It is seldom evidence of any willingness to dispense with that labour.

Despite its shortcomings and the criticism levelled at it, Aboriginal labour was a valuable element in the nineteenth century work force. There are no overall figures before 1897: a few employers signed Aborigines under the Masters and Servant Act; others obtained Aboriginal labour from the Native Police, but most through personal and ad hoc arrangements of which no adequate record remains. Under the 1897 Act work permits were required but the records of these are difficult to interpret. Roth reported 1,116 in North Queensland in 1899, but this excludes many Aborigines in casual employment as indicated by his figures for 1898 when he was trying to have all employment registered. The

82. P.D.T., 29 August 1891, 'Bowen Police Court': W. Macdonald V. Tommy, an Aboriginal, charged with absconding himself from hired service without just cause. P.D.T., 2 June 1883; [A settler], Geraldton, to J. Hamilton, M.L.A., 8 August 1894 encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 13850 of 1894. This is a 14 page letter but the final page(s) are missing, so no signature appears.
83. [A settler], Geraldton, to J. Hamilton, M.L.A., 8 August 1894, loc. cit; Davidson, Journal, 16 March 1866, p. 30: 'Marlow promised me a blackboy from Wide Bay, if possible'.

present writer concludes that not fewer than 2,000 were employed at any one time in North Queensland in the closing years of the nineteenth century and not fewer than 4,000 in Queensland as a whole. The Queensland total is equal to more than one-third of the Pacific Islanders employed in Queensland in the peak year and equal to the largest number imported in any one year. In North Queensland the proportion of Aborigines employed to Pacific Islanders.

84. 'Report of the N.P.A., for 1899', 1900 V. & P., Vol. 5, p. 581: Roth reported that 1,116 employment permits were registered in the second half of 1899 in North Queensland: 303 at Normanton, which encompassed the Burke District; 50 at Townsville; 239 at Cooktown; 241 at Thursday Island (the number discharged from the fisheries at the shipping office); 24 at Charters Towers; 55 at Mackay; 112 at Coen; and 92 at Cairns. In addition 'many blacks' and 'many employers' objected to making agreement for casual work and were not forced to register their agreements. In 1898 when Roth was trying to have all employment registered, over 1,100 permits were granted in the Cook District alone and 60 refused, whereas only 634 were registered in 1899 in the same district: 239 in Cooktown, 241 in Thursday Island, 112 in Coen, and 92 in Cairns. In 1898, Roth had estimated between 166 and 186 were employed on the Atherton Tableland alone so the figure of 92 for Cairns seems as misleading as does the figure of 1,116. See f.n. 57 above and Roth to Pol. Com., 1 July 1898, 'Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897: First Half Yearly Report', encl. Q.S.A. COL/142, 13442 of 1898. Figures for Burke and Kennedy Districts were not known at this stage. In 1900, Meston reported 2,300 Aborigines employed in south and central Queensland. See A. Meston, Protector of Aborigines, South Queensland, to Under Sec., Home Office, 24 November 1900, Q.S.A. COL/145, 19269 of 1900. Compare Meston to Under Sec., Home Office, 14 February 1899, Q.S.A. COL/140, 3618 of 1899. Meston was just beginning to issue and record work permits issued and estimated at least 2,000 Aborigines in service south of the Tropic of Capricorn.
ranged from about five to nine to about five to seventeen. Thus it can be seen that Aborigines made up an important segment of the unskilled labour force.

Although the work conditions of Aborigines was not a subject likely to be publicly aired, there is scattered evidence of poor treatment before 1897, especially with regard to the payment of wages. In 1874, Chatfield pointed out that Aboriginal labourers would work only for employers they knew as they had been cheated of their pay so often. The working of the 1897 Act provided much fuller information on this subject although power to regulate wages had been deliberately omitted. Two years' experience, however, convinced Roth that this was a deficiency and he sought to remedy it. He reported publicly: 'I am satisfied the blacks do not, as a rule, receive the wages — small enough as they are — which they are justly entitled to under their agreements'. In this same report, he compared European employers of Aboriginal labour most unfavourably with the despised Chinese and was supported by the Sub Inspector

85. Parnaby, Britain and the Labor Trade in the Southwest Pacific, Appendix and Tables I and II. The largest number of Pacific Islanders employed in the colony occurred between 1883 and 1886 and was probably greatest at 11,443 in 1883, while the largest number introduced in any one year was 4,004 in 1883. The number employed in Queensland from 1887 to 1900 varied from 7,489 in 1894 to 9,428 in 1891, the average being 8,362. (See Table II). In North Queensland, between 1899 and 1902, the number of Pacific Islanders employed varied between 3,621 in 1894 and 5,686 in 1902. See Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 242: 4,216 in 1889; 5,659 in 1891; 3,621 in 1894, 5,686 in 1902.

86. P.D.T., 25 July 1874, letter from W. Chatfield Jun. See also P.D.T., 5 August 1876, 'The Aborigines', and Croydon Golden Age, 23 November 1897, for ill treatment of an Aboriginal, Marco, which led to his death.

of Police at Mackay:

My experience here is that the Chinese farmers who employ aboriginals treat them very much better than most of the white people who employ them. The Chinese offer better wages, and what is more, pay the aboriginals their wages when due; they also house and feed them well. 88

Attempts to regulate Aboriginal employment in the early years of the twentieth century evoked intense European hostility. 89

There is surprisingly little evidence that white workers in North Queensland objected to the use of Aboriginal labour probably because they were rarely in competition. However, a correspondent to the Port Denison Times in 1876 mentioned the 'jealousy of many working men who, to use their own expression, don't wish to see the bread taken out of a white man's mouth by a nigger, and endeavour in many cases to entice or frighten them from any work they may be employed in'. 90 It is difficult to say how common this hostility was but such objections were made in southern Queensland in the lean times of 1900. 91

Another factor attesting the usefulness of Aboriginal labour to the settlers was the widespread evidence of kidnapping in the pacified areas throughout the whole period of this research. Europeans kidnapped pacified Aborigines as soon as the opportunity existed. In Bowen, while the

88. ibid.
89. Morning Post, 31 October 1902, editorial. See also Sub Insp. Cooper, Cairns, to Pol. Com., 3 June 1898, Q.S.A. COL/142, 7179 of 1898; Roth, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 1 July 1898, encl. Q.S.A. COL/142, 13442 of 1898. This topic is beyond the scope of this present study.
91. Worker, 21 July 1900, encl. Q.S.A. COL/140. 'Scrub-Cutters', Brisbane, wrote of a station in the southwest Queensland that employed only Aborigines and locked eight or nine women up each night.
letting in process was hesitantly taking place, one resident announced that he was going to the Aborigines' newly-established Queen's Beach camp 'to catch himself a young one'. The editor felt constrained to point out that Aborigines were not monkeys, and that 'kidnapping Aborigines was punishable by law'.22 Within a year of coming to terms with the Aborigines on Natal Downs, Chatfield informed the Attorney General that it was becoming 'a common practice in this district to kidnap boys from the camps of quiet blacks'. Only six weeks previously two men had kidnapped three boys and taken them to the Cape River diggings. He was willing to prove that two of these (one had escaped) were offered for sale after being locked in a hut. Chatfield asserted that stealing and selling boys paid so well that the offence would probably be repeated, thus alienating the Cape River Aborigines.93 He knew of other instances of childstealing which he could not prove and the Aborigines on his station constantly complained of the practice.94

To indicate its extent it should be noted that reliable references have been found of kidnapping from Bentinck Island in 1868,95 at Normanton in 1874,96 at Bowen and other coastal towns in 1880,97 at Watsonville near Herberton in 1884,98 at Flaggy Creek near Herberton in 1884,99 at Thornborough in 1884,100 near Cooktown in 1885,101 at Mossman

92. P.D.T., 3 April 1869.
93. W. Chatfield, Natal Downs, to Attorney General, 6 January 1869, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A121, 1483 of 1869.
94. W. Chatfield, Natal Downs, to P.M., Bowen, 14 January 1869, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A121, 1483 of 1869.
95. W. Landsborough, P.M., Burketown to Attorney General, 19 July 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A115, 4031 of 1868.
96. P.M., Normanton, to Col. Sec., 29 September 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A2063, 2913 of 1874.
97. P.D.T., 25 September 1880, editorial. The kidnapping was referred to in passing as being 'well known'.
98. H.A., 13 September 1884, 'The Old Complaint'.
100. H.A., 17 December 1884, 'More trouble' and 20 December 1884, report of a court case.
River in 1889, at Normanton in 1890, from the Staaten River for Croydon in 1892, at Bloomfield River in 1892, throughout North Queensland generally in 1894, at and near Cardwell in 1896, and at Whitsunday Island in 1898. This does not encompass references to kidnapping for the beche-de-mer and pearl fisheries. Considering how little legal protection was available to Aborigines, this is a significant number of reported instances. Still more convincing are the comments of well informed contemporaries.

In 1874, the Police Magistrate at Normanton wrote:

'... the stealing of gins and children from the blacks is a matter of frequent occurrence here the consequence is the roads are not safe.' In 1880, the editor of the *Port Denison Times* remarked dogmatically: '... it is well known that the numerous black children in the coast towns are either forcibly taken from their parents or the parents killed'. The *Herberton Advertiser* captioned the kidnapping of an Aboriginal child in 1884 as 'The Old Complaint'.

While summing up in a court case in Cairns in 1891, Mr. Justice...

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103. P.M., Normanton, to Assistant Under Col. Sec., 10 November 1890, and rest of file encl. Q.S.A. COL/1839, 12476 of 1890.
106. C.C., 2 April 1892, 'The Black Gin Market'.
107. Queenslander, 13 January 1894, p. 58.
110. P.M., Normanton, to Col. Sec., 29 September 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A203, 2913 of 1874.
111. P.D.T., 25 September 1880.
CllUbb said:

Mr. Mighill wanted a black boy and a Mr. Murdock got him one. This man stealing was very fashionable it appeared but it was slavery, and he cautioned any offender against the law coming before him. In this case a savage who couldn't speak English was captured and put to clean boots and soon afterwards disappeared.

The law however was as powerless to prove the offence in the pacified areas as it was on the sea frontier. Several times Police Magistrates were urged to use 'The Slave Act' (5 Geo. 4 Cap. 113) but it was admitted that the kidnapping of an Aboriginal was 'a very difficult thing to prove'. No instance of an attempt to prove the kidnapping of an Aboriginal in the pacified areas has been discovered.

There are rare examples of the police trying to prosecute blatant kidnappers on a lesser charge, but they were only occasionally successful, and then the punishment was unlikely to deter potential kidnappers. It was only on the infrequent occasion when concerned Europeans were willing to give evidence that even a charge of aggravated assault was successful. Thus for flogging an Aboriginal

113. P.D.T., 18 April 1891.
114. Minute R. Gray, Chatfield, Natal Downs, to P.M., Bowen, 14 January 1869, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A121, 1483 of 1869: 'The Slave Act 5 Geo. 4 Cap. 113 would remedy such practice'; R. Gray, for Under Col. Sec., to P.M., Burketown, 17 December 1868, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A304, 6821 of 1880. This advice was referred to again in 1880 and 1884. See above file and annotation, 21 August 1884, P.M., Burketown, to Attorney General, 19 July 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A115, 4031 of 1868.
115. See Minute, P.M., Normanton, to Col. Sec., 28 October 1874, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A263, 2913 of 1874.
116. See P.M., Normanton, to Assistant Under Col. Sec., 10 November 1890, and the rest of this file, Q.S.A. COL/A639, 12476 of 1890; H.A.: 17 December 1894 and 20 December 1884.
woman, 'Dot', and obviously forcing her to stay in his employment, John Casey of Karumba was fined £10, with £2/15/6 costs, for aggravated assault. At Thornborough a settler, Vallely, who had forcibly taken a woman, Ebola, from a camp was charged with her murder when she was found dead at the foot of a cliff but was eventually fined 5 shillings with 7/6 costs for the assault on an Aboriginal boy, 'Monday', as the police could produce no evidence for the other charges. In another instance, a settler Jones who employed an Aboriginal and his wife bullock droving, fencing, and splitting logs, tried to retain possession of the Aboriginal's wife and child by accusing the man of threatening the lives of Jones and his family. For this he was brought before the bench and sentenced to six months in gaol as he could not provide sureties to keep the peace. The Inspector of Police at Cooktown knew the Aboriginal and was so sure that there was a miscarriage of justice that he had him released. Jones reluctantly surrendered the Aboriginal woman to her husband but refused to part with the child, despite the Inspector's request. The making of false charges to the police or Native Police by settlers to have unwelcome fathers or husbands removed was apparently quite common.

The kidnaping of Aborigines was regarded by most Europeans and by most police as a minor crime. After six armed Pacific Islanders kidnapped three Aboriginal women at

118. H.A., 17 December 1884 and 20 December 1884.
120. W. Craig, Niagara Vale, Cardwell, to Col. Sec., 4 April 1896, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 13634 of 1896.
Mossman River, Senior Constable Portley only 'cautioned the Kanakas not to meddle with the gins again and told them if they did that they would all be arrested'.  

This report went to his Inspector and eventually to the Police Commissioner without comment. Indeed, preventing an Aboriginal from leaving his employment was often not seen as a crime at all and sometimes the police helped to return runaway employees. Corfield recorded in his reminiscences how he had an Aboriginal woman returned against her will as did Police Magistrate, Charles Eden. It was only in some older settled areas near the towns, that more acculturated Aborigines were able to resist such impositions. The Aborigines had in effect become an inferior racial caste. For not only was the exploitation of Aboriginal labour almost incredibly callous, it was also an important factor in the development of a stratified, multi-racial society in which the Aborigines were powerless to change their status. The exploitation of Aboriginal women was another factor of equal importance and it was no less callous.

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Sexual relationships between Aboriginal women and male colonists were extremely common and varied in nature from casual encounters through to long-standing, stable


125. F.D.T., 18 April 1891.
relationships that were marriages in all but name. They varied from the prostitution of Aboriginal women with the sanction of the Aboriginal community to rape, from 'white slavery' to relationships freely and maturely entered into by both partners. In this section there will firstly be a discussion of the prostitution of Aboriginal women, then of those relationships where Aboriginal women were forced to be sexual partners, and finally of those which were maintained without the use or threat of force. Significantly, there were no instances of actual marriages between Aborigines and whites in the period being studied. 126

Throughout the nineteenth century male colonists greatly outnumbered female colonists. In North Queensland, in 1876, there were over twice as many European men as women. On the frontier, of course, the disproportion was much greater. Thus at Gilberton there were five times as many European males as females and on the Palmer over 22 times as many. The sex ratio was further unbalanced when the Chinese and Pacific Islanders are taken into account. Thus, in the 1876 census the Pacific Islander population of North Queensland was given as 1,617 males and 53 females and the Chinese population as 8,531 males and two females. The overall result was that male colonists outnumbered female colonists by 1.6 to 1 in Townsville and Bowen, by 3 to 1 at Cardwell, 6 to 1 in the Burke District, 10 to 1 at Somerset, and almost 20 to 1 on the Palmer. It should be noted that the predominantly male Chinese population of North Queensland was estimated to have doubled in the next year. 127 This sexual imbalance persisted throughout the nineteenth century on the

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126. This topic will be examined for its relevance to European racial attitudes in ch. 12.
frontier and to a lesser extent in North Queensland as a whole where there were still 138 males to 100 females in 1891. 128

To satisfy their sexual needs the settlers were able to exploit the powerlessness of Aborigines and their traditional sexual practices. Among Aborigines, although sexual expression was traditionally restricted and regulated, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations were common and often socially sanctioned. A husband could lend his wife who would normally acquiesce dutifully. Sexual relations outside marriage were often associated with gifts, and elopement to escape from a spouse was common. 129 In addition, Aborigines traditionally used sexual relationships as a means of maintaining or improving social relationships. In the disturbed situation in which the Aborigines found themselves it was predictable that, in North Queensland, as throughout the history of Aboriginal-European contact in Australia, 130 the women would be used to establish communications with the conquerors, to placate them, and to try to place them with some degree of predictability in their kinship system. Indeed, sex must have been the common human denominator by which Aborigines and settlers thought they best understood each other. Moreover, with the traditional economic life of the Aborigines greatly changed and restricted, Aboriginal women would be able to obtain food, clothing, and the desired elements of the Europeans'...

130. ibid., p. 441; Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, p. 30.
material culture. They could also obtain tobacco, alcohol, and opium which would become increasingly important to relieve the tension implicit in the culture contact situation and to escape its crude harshness.

It is clear that such casual sexual relationships were very common indeed. The official reports of the Northern Protector, Both, confirm the widespread nature of the prostitution of Aboriginal women. His reports for 1899 and 1900 both complained of 'whites at blacks' camps' and requested legislative action to prevent this. There is much evidence to suggest that while the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by Europeans as well as Asians and Pacific Islanders was publicly criticised, it was in fact an accepted integral part of frontier society. Thus when the European settlers at Atherton complained that the Chinese and Malays were prostituting the women and, for this reason, should not be allowed to employ Aborigines, the Police Magistrate added ironically: 'Nor am I at all sure that the action complained of is confined to the alien population of the scrub'. Even in the townships themselves, Aboriginal women were much exploited. A resident of Bowen requested that Aboriginal women should be prevented from roaming at their own sweet will through the alleys of the town and plying after nightfall a nefarious calling that accounts for the degenerate bleary-eyed appearance of so many youths that infest the street corners. Much earlier the same newspaper had indicated that at least some European women feared the domestic discord a 'young

133. P.D.T., 21 January 1833, 'Lucubrations by a Peripatetic Mosher'.

and good looking gin' could create if given employment. 134

There is ample evidence that Aboriginal women were commonly raped and forced into sexual relationships with colonists against their will. Thus a correspondent to the Cooktown Courier recounted how two whites rode an Aboriginal woman down and kept her all night despite her protests and those of her husband. 135 On the Mulgrave, John Conway was murdered when he tried to take away a woman against the wishes of the Aborigines. 136 The Normanton Police Magistrate described how some Chinamen were forcibly detaining an Aboriginal woman, such kidnapping being 'of frequent occurrence'. 137 In fact the normality of rape is perhaps best brought out by Roth's approval of the brothers Webb at the Starcke River:

I learnt also that practically all the miners are very kind to these local aboriginals, a conduct in great measure due to the two leading men - the brothers Webb - insisting upon a firm code of honour among the remaining 25 or 26 diggers. Not so long ago, these two, I am informed, gave a sound thrashing to one of the Europeans for attempting sexual connection with a gin against her consent: of course, where the woman is a consenting party, no interference is made. 138

There is also some evidence to suggest that Aboriginal women were procured for profit. Thus Roth objected to the granting of work permits to publicans not only because they were generally paid in liquor but because they were kept, practically for the purpose of prostitution, to attract clients, especially at ports where they were used to decoy men paid off boats. 139 It was also discovered that in the

134. P.B.T., 12 May 1877.
135. C.C.; 18 September 1891; 2 October 1891.
137. P.M., Normanton, to Col. Sec., 29 September 1874, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A263, 2913 of 1874.
138. Roth, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 24 June 1898, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139

139. Roth, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 4 February 1898, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139.
Mossman, Saltwater, and Daintree areas, several people were able to employ Pacific Islanders on a nominal wage 'by allotting them aboriginal gins'.\textsuperscript{140} Finally, in the Petty Debts court at Ayton on the Bloomfield River, one item claimed by a European of a Cingalese settler was £2 per week ... for expenses while endeavouring to procure a black gin'.\textsuperscript{141}

As well as such fleeting willing or unwilling sexual encounters, another feature of colonial society in North Queensland was the large number of permanent or semi-permanent liaisons between European, Asian, and Pacific Islander men and Aboriginal women. White men making such liaisons were termed 'combos', the practice itself, 'comboism', that is 'the maintaining of black women on a station by a white man'. This was publicly scorned in the press and in towns where the European family structure was the norm but was tolerated or accepted in the remoter areas. The Sydney Bulletin pointed out: 'No one on the stations sees much harm in these practices. The native women are the legitimate perquisite of the white man'.\textsuperscript{142} There were varieties of 'comboism'. Many working men formed a relatively stable relationship with an Aboriginal woman and accepted responsibility for the mother and the children. Some station managers and owners, however, formed such liaisons but very rarely acknowledged their children or provided for the mother and children once they had tired of the liaison.\textsuperscript{143} Archibald Meston, Southern Protector of Aborigines, claimed that the appropriation of the most attractive Aboriginal women by those in authority on the station was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{140} Insp. Stuart, Pt. Douglas, to Pol. Com., 13 April 1889, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A579, 4281 of 1889.
\item \textsuperscript{141} C.C., 2 April 1892, 'The Black Gin Market'.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Sydney Bulletin, July 1901, Bertie Newspaper Cuttings, no. 73, p. 2, (N.L., Canberra).
\item \textsuperscript{143} Queenslander, 31 August 1901; Residents, Bloomfield River, to Home Sec., 29 November 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 16399 of 1897.
\end{itemize}
'painfully common' in the west and north-west of Queensland. Publicised exposes of the concubinage of Aboriginal women produced white-wash enquiries by the local police while routine reports by the police and the post-1897 protectors revealed situations similar to the publicised charges. Thus Sub Inspector Jocelyn Brooke of the Native Police informed his Inspector:

I may say that it is a common practice for men to keep gins up here and if I enquire into the matter I am told the gins belong to a black boy so that I can do nothing to prevent it though I believe this is the cause of most of the depredations.

The Bloomfield River will serve as an example. In a report on this area, in February 1898, Roth reported selector R. Hislop of 'Wyalla' as keeping his three part-Aboriginal children although he had dismissed the mother; three Portuguese selectors of 'St. Nicholas' living with Aboriginal women and caring for their three part-Aboriginal children who attended the local school; a selector, Baird of 'Cunnamurra', a former mayor of Cooktown, with two part-Aboriginal children cared for and sent to school. Indeed of the thirteen selections and fifteen selectors on the Bloomfield River

144. A. Meston, Southern Protector of Aboriginals, Brisbane, to Home Sec., 11 August 1900, encl. Q.S.A. COL/142, 17276 of 1900.
147. Roth, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 24 February 1898, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139 [typed copy].
in 1898, five selectors on three selections were 'combos' who acknowledged their children. As well, six miners were then living with Aboriginal women, at least four of these against the wishes of the Aboriginal groups from which their women were obtained. Here, too, it is clear that the men who acknowledged and looked after their part-Aboriginal children were well in the minority. There is no reason to believe that the Bloomfield River was an atypical frontier community.

The public acceptance of 'comboism' on the frontier and the private acceptance of it by men who understood the frontier, such as Roth and even the Home Secretary, Tozer, was clearly illustrated. One 'combo', the former mayor of Cooktown, was a Justice of the Peace while an attempt to denigrate Hislop to the government brought forth a petition with fourteen signatures to vouch for his good character, an assessment agreed with by Roth and the Home Secretary. The petitioners added:

With reference to Hislop's having half-caste children we beg to inform you though correct he feeds clothes and looks after the children and their mother at his own expense not like the majority who allows them to run wild unacknowledged and uncared for.

Permanent or semi-permanent liaisons of Asians and Pacific Islanders with Aboriginal women were expected and accepted, although sometimes with a distaste based on a racial prejudice. Sub Inspector Cooper of Cairns reported that in his district there were 'a good number of cases of Chinese and Kanakas who have been living with gins for

148. ibid. Roth does not make it clear if two of the six had the consent of the Aboriginal group.
149. Residents, Bloomfield River, to Home Sec., 29 November 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 16399 of 1897.
150. ibid. See also minute H.T. Home Sec. Tozer, 26 December 1897. See also Roth to Pol. Com., 24 February 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139 [Typed copy].
from three to fifteen years and have families of half-caste children'. He suggested that such liaison be not interfered with by means of the 1897 legislation. Yet, at Atherton, residents and settlers had strong objections to Pacific Islanders enticing women from Aboriginal camps. Roth himself, like most of his contemporaries, had strong racial prejudice against the Chinese. In a society where Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal women and girls were so commonly exploited by white men, Roth justified his removal of half-caste girls to missions by special reference to the Chinese males. Of a nine or ten year old half-caste Aboriginal, he emotionally commented: 'Any day the Chinamen may get hold of her'. And while approved Europeans would be allowed to employ young half-caste or full-blood girls in the new era of protection, all Asians were refused.

The number of half-caste children in North Queensland was increasing despite infanticide and attracting attention before the end of the century. Some concern was expressed that there were many such children in the north roaming about almost wild without any education. After twelve months in office during which he had made a survey, Roth estimated that there was one half-caste to every twenty-five Aborigines in North Queensland adding that this did not represent the true picture of half-caste children born as 'many were killed as a matter of principle - the colour


The attitude to half-caste Aborigines varied from concern that partly white children were being degraded to the level of 'savages' by being left in Aboriginal camps to an emotional horror of 'piebaldism'. This will be further explored in a subsequent chapter.

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The nature of the relationships between Aborigines and colonists which developed after letting in is typified by the attraction of large numbers of Aborigines to the towns and settlements of North Queensland. This occurred throughout the whole period of this research, the trend only being reversed by the post-1897 Protection legislation. This important multi-racial aspect of colonial life has been seemingly overlooked. Yet the Aborigines were a useful and integral part of the urban and village societies despite the fact that the townsfolk often found their presence distasteful. As late as 1896, a Missionary named Poland wrote that in Cooktown they seemed to be 'audible and visible everywhere', although they had been admitted to the town, after several earlier attempts, in late 1884. Indeed, when a meeting was called by the police in 1889 to ban the Aborigines from the town not one man voted in favour of it.

156. See f.n. 154 above.
157. Sydney Bulletin, July 1901, Bertie Newspaper Cuttings, no. 73, p. 2 [N.L./]: giving two samples of 'piebaldism' from North Queensland.
159. Towers Herald, 30 December 1884.
Cooktown, about 1875.

Sydney Street, Mackay, about 1875.
It is important to remember that the ubiquitous 'blacks camps' near each township represented an interdependence between Aborigines as providers and the colonists as utilizers of menial labour and services. Nothing in this research has revealed the likelihood of colonists' altruistically supporting a large (or small) number of Aboriginal beggars for any length of time. The colonial concept of Aboriginal beggars in large measure reflected the wages paid and the nature of the work and services required. At most, begging supplemented an inadequate subsistence.  

The usefulness of cheap Aboriginal labour around the towns was rarely commented on whereas the colonists' distaste for the life style of the Aborigines among them was referred to frequently. In the early years of each town, many residents objected to the nakedness of the Aborigines and their ignorance of 'the decencies of life'. The Northern Miner reported with horror that at Millchester a 'completely nude' Aboriginal woman gave birth to a half-caste child between two shops 'almost within eyesight'. The Ravenswood Miner reported that the Aborigines had made their camp in the centre of town. 'Night was rendered hideous by their yells, ...


162. H.M., 14 March 1874, 'The Blacks at Millchester', from N.M., 21 February 1874. See also J.M. Murphy, Municipal Clerk, Townsville, to Col. Sec., 13 November 1879, encl. Q.S.A. Col/A287a, 4535 of 1879, for the Townsville Council's objection to Aboriginal nakedness.
Burdekin River Aboriginal, about 1870.
Bolton, Richard Daintree.

Aborigines in Transition.

Aborigines in Transition.
Kennedy, The Black Police, pp. 16, 268.
and chatter ... and sleep, to those ... near them ... quite impossible'.

The attraction of large numbers of Aborigines to the towns placed new stresses upon Aboriginal social life with the result that quarrelling among them was accentuated and this was often aggravated by the bringing together of different Aboriginal groups who may have had traditional enmities or may not have been used to living in such proximity for long periods of time. In 1891, there was an hour long fight between the Cooktown and McIvor Aborigines in Hope Street, Cooktown, during which one Aboriginal was speared through the thigh and one hamstrung with a tomahawk. In December 1893, the Mt. Cook Aborigines fought the Normanby Aborigines one hundred yards from the railway station, one Aboriginal receiving four spear wounds. In 1894, it was reported there were many scattered camps within the municipal boundary of Cooktown. The fact that they had 'frequently' quarrelled 'of late' and the number of scattered camps suggest that the attraction to the town of a number of different Aboriginal groups was resulting in increased tensions between them. Battles took place in the back streets between several dozen Aborigines who hurled spears and other weapons at each other much to the alarm of neighbouring householders. The concentration of large numbers of Aborigines sometimes comprised of inimical or potentially inimical groups for atypically long periods of time was a function of the colonial towns. It then produced noisy fights which the residents objected to. The disturbing

163. R.M., 24 February 1872.
164. C.C., 4 August 1891.
165. C.C., 19 December 1893, 'Tribal Fight'.
166. C.C., 26 October 1894, editorial. The Aborigines had earlier annoyed Cooktown residents with their fighting. See C.C., 25 January 1889.
aspect of concentration similarly offended the missionaries. The importance of this as a disturbing factor of Aboriginal society is examined in chapter 9 in association with the findings of transcultural psychiatric research on the subject.

There were thus various traditional factors of Aboriginal life that obviously offended the colonists in the towns: the noises of the Aboriginal camp at night, their nakedness, their numerous dogs, their fighting in the streets, their sexual activities; while such a custom as carrying the body of a baby wrapped in bark was found abhorrent.

There were other features of Aboriginal life that developed because of acculturation in or near a town such as: petty theft, begging, prostitution, disease, and

167. See ch. 10, pp. 532, 537, 592. See also P.D.T., 29 April 1882, for 'yelling and fighting every night'.
169. M.M., 14 March 1874, from M.M., 21 February 1874; P.D.T., 7 August 1869, letter from 'Candidus'.
170. P.D.T., 21 October 1882; P.D.T., 21 October 1876; P.D.T., 6 February 1886.
171. See f.n. 164; C.C., 20 June 1839; Townsville Herald, 9 May 1877; Argus, 6 August 1875, from Brisbane Courier, 16 July 1875: a very good description of a large scale fight in the middle of Townsville.
172. P.D.T., 7 August 1869, letter from 'Candidus', 'The Aboriginal Abomination': This article complained that white children were familiarised 'with the undisguised appearance of open, shameless, unrebuked vice, producing a moral and perhaps indelible taint'; M.M., 14 March 1874, from Northern Miner, 21 February 1874.
173. C.C., 30 June 1891.
174. C.C., 27 July 1894; P.D.T., 28 May 1892; B.M., 7 September 1872; Insp. H. Fitzgerald, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 5 March 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A22, 3053 of 1885, enclosing cuttings from Cooktown Independent of 1885; Croydon Golden Age and Normanton Advertiser, 13 July 1897.
175. J. Palmer, Mayor of Bowen, to Col. Treasurer, 19 May 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A239, 3011 of 1877; B.M., 24 February 1872; P.D.T., 2 June 1888.
176. P.D.T., 21 January 1888, 'Lucubrations by a Peripatetic Masher'.
177. Ibid.; Croydon Golden Age and Normanton Advertiser, 13 July 1897; M.M., 26 May 1877, in Bowen and Townsville.
drunkenness. There were also occasions when Aborigines refused to accept European orders or became aggressive to them.

Inevitably, there were many requests to have the Aborigines excluded from the town at night and some for total exclusion. The correct legal reply to these requests was given to the Mayor of Townsville in 1879 when he was informed:

The aborigines are on the same footing as others of Her Majesty's subjects so long as they conduct themselves properly and do not violate any of the provisions of the Police Acts.

However, the Aborigines' rights as a British citizen were not respected in practice. Thus, by 1871 the camp of the Bowen Aborigines had been moved out of town. At Ravenswood, in 1873, some Ravenswood residents drove the Aborigines away although they subsequently allowed them back to work during the day. Indeed, in 1876, the Police

180. P.D.T., 2 June 1838; J.M. Murphy, Municipal Clerk, Townsville, to Col. Sec., 13 November 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A287a, 4535 of 1879; P.D.T., 6 November 1886; Mayor, Mackay, to Col. Sec., 15 January, 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A453, 551 of 1886; Croydon Golden Age and Normanton Advertiser, 13 July 1897; C.C., 26 October 1894; R.M., 8 June 1873.
181. P.D.T., 1 April 1876; C.C., 4 August 1891; M.M., 14 March 1874, from N.M., 21 February 1874.
183. P.D.T., 17 June 1871.
184. R.M., 8 January 1871.
185. R.M., 28 June 1873.
Commissioner had to issue a 'General Order' to police to refrain from using illegal methods in solving the towns' 'black problem', probably to quieten white complaints of illegal police actions:

It having come to the knowledge of the Government that the police have in some instances, used whips to expel the Aborigines from certain towns, ... such practices must be discontinued; and it is to be distinctly understood that any member of the Force who flogs, or authorizes the flogging, of an aboriginal will be instantly dismissed the force. 186

Yet, the Police Commissioner subsequently permitted the police at Mackay to assist remove the camp of 'the large numbers' of Aborigines but insisted that Aborigines who came to the town during the day, dressed and orderly, could not be removed or arrested. 187 It is obvious that in frontier towns the police and local authorities did not concern themselves with such legal niceties. Thus, in 1894, at Townsville, when a number of young Aborigines inconvenienced and annoyed passersby, the police forced them to leave the town. 188 At Cooktown, the police eventually made the Aborigines camp on the North Shore at night with the Endeavour River between them and the town. 189 As most residents did not want to lose this cheap source of menial labour, the solution developed of a 'black's camp' outside

188. Town Clerk, Townsville, to Town Clerk, Cooktown, 22 October 1894, Townsville City Council Records. The Town Clerk humorously wrote: '... the Police, at the request of the Municipal Council took such steps as resulted in the dispersion of the cause of complaint'. This reference was given to me by Mr. Lon Wallis, an honours student at James Cook University.
of the town. Whether or not a curfew was imposed seems to have depended on local initiative. Thus, the Bowen Aborigines who had been forced to camp beyond the boundaries of the town in 1871 were reported camping within the town and lighting fires in 1886.190 Indeed, in 1895 the Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer, issued a decree that deliberately ran counter to British law, accepting the colonial custom:

Aboriginals are, and should be removed after the sun goes down, and no law is necessary to justify this, save the law of necessity. 191

The philosophy of the 1897 Protection Act was suggested in this ironical discounting of the fiction of the Aborigines' British citizenship.

As the Aborigines were unused to the permanent occupation of a particular area, it soon became an unhygienic eyesore. C.A. Meyer of the Bloomfield River Lutheran mission pointed out:

For once the blacks have inhabited an area for a fair stretch of time, it is turned into a cesspool, because of their unhygienic practices. And it is small wonder if they get ill. 192

J.W. Collinson, an early Cairns resident and local historian, described the Cairns 'blacks' camp' established in 1886:

... a camp of 'town' blacks had been formed on the banks of Lily Creek, at the turn-off of the West Cairns Road and Mulgrave Road. Ten years had sufficed to bring about all the degradation civilization could bestow; ... they begged and did a little wood and water carrying

191. Insp. Lamond, Cooktown, 18 July 1896, District Order no. F30 of 1896, Q.S.A. POL/12D/A2. The Colonial Secretary's decree of 30 June 1895 was quoted in this District Order.
for a miserable existence. The camp was a nondescript
of miasmas, built of bags, old kerosene tins, and
bark, with a population of aboriginals and skinny
and noisy curs. The men scavenged the town, but became
a menace to lonely housewives, and it became necessary
to shift them from the town boundaries. 193

A description in 1903 of the 'blacks' camp' at Charters Towers
revealed not only a similar situation but also the contempt
for the Aborigines that their condition around towns aroused
and augmented.

Those who wish to see an ideal camp should pay a visit
to the reserve on the Dalrymple road, a few miles out
of town, where a cluster of gunyahs built of bags
and branches of trees form the most primitive community
that it is possible to find in any part of the world.
To take one of these dusky inhabitants from the
squaller [sic] of a camp such as this and place him
in a luxuriant villa would kill him. ... Our arrival
at the camp was greeted by the barking of about a
hundred of the mangiest famine stricken mongrels that
ever wagged a tail. As it is their custom to resume
their most savage habits when alone in the camps, ...
They were naked, and evidently ashamed – they hurriedly
put on trousers, or other garments which proved handy.

It is hard to escape the fact that in his scorn and ridicule
of their condition the writer had transferred the responsibil-
ity for their plight to the Aborigines. He suggested
that their begging, their use of the scraps of white society,
and even their conquest and dispossession was indicative of
an inherently defective nature. Thus he noted that there
were approximately twelve gunyahs, thirty inhabitants, '100
dogs and a troupe of performing fleas, without which no
blacks' camp is complete'. He ridiculed the Aboriginal
spokeswoman who approached him:

Queen Beatrice was arranged in all her royal robes,
which consisted of an old white shirt opening down
the back, ... she lifted up an old wooden pipe and
grinned again.

had been editor of the *Cairns Post* and much of his
factual information seems derived from this.
To the nineteenth century observer, the lack of adequate reparations for the conquest of the Aboriginal land implied a contemptible Aboriginal race rather than a contemptibly mean government and electorate:

The interior of the palace royal is furnished with blankets - bearing the Queensland Government brand. These blankets constitute the payment for value received in the shape of the richest territory in the world.

The poverty of the Aborigines and their inability to find a meaningful place in the conqueror's society was again thought contemptible:

These habitations contain all the earthly possessions of the tribe, principally old clothes and blankets.

They have to work to make boomerangs, and they don't like work, it is far easier to beg. 194

The repeated efforts to have the camps removed from the towns was partly based upon their noisome nature. 195

Most contemporaries treated the 'Blacks' Camp' simply as an unsightly nuisance and its inhabitants as mere parasites on white society; they were in fact fulfilling an important economic role. For though the settlers in the towns were willing to let the Aborigines live and die in unhygienic, degrading conditions out of sight, they were still eager to exploit their labour and the Aborigines were increasingly attracted to a subsistence based on European goods. 196 Poland, the Hope Valley missionary described the interaction in 1896:

During the night the blacks are separated from Cooktown

194. The Evening Telegraph, 20 August 1903.
196. See, for example, Missionary Pfalzer's comment on the attraction of the Aborigines to Cooktown. K.H., 21 (1889), p. 35.
by the river, which is fairly wide. Early in the morning this northern shore is a hive of activity. The blacks have left the camp and are preparing to come across the water. They come over in groups, mostly family groups, using canoes, which mostly leave only when they are very fully occupied. Once they reach the town they seem to be audible and visible everywhere: dirty and very scantily clad, they shout and chatter, but they know where they are heading for. Many of them are being expected. ... The wife of the Clerk of the Court is calling one black girl.

'Come on, Annie, quickly, it's Saturday, I have a lot of work for you today, you have to sweep all through the house for me.'

'Tobacco, missy, just a little bit!'

'Afterwards, Annie, as much as you like, afterwards; but now get on with it!'

And elsewhere: Long Ah Kong, the jovial plump Chinese is beckoning to a black lad, while carefully tucking up his long plait:

'Billy, lad, come and sweep my store for me. I'll give you a lovely watermelon!

There is a third, Tommy, who does not need to be told what to do. He has some wood to split every morning for C., the publican, and he doesn't mind doing it, because the reward is well and truly worth it ... beer!

This is hardly the picture of unwanted, useless beggars.

Yet it is clear that acculturation in towns was very different from acculturation in the country. The towns often attracted more Aborigines than they could adequately feed especially when, with the stress of acculturation, the Aborigines could be paid cheaply in alcoholic drinks, tobacco, and opium. With the impairment or breakdown of the kinship system there was sometimes much suffering, especially among the children and the old, as inadequate food was brought back to the camp for distribution. Thus, at Townsville in 1889, an Aborigines Protection Society was formed with the Anglican Bishop, Stanton, as Chairman to ameliorate the condition of the 250 to 500 Townsville Aborigines. 198


198. C.R. Hauggar, Hon. Sec., Townsville Aboriginal Protection Society, to Col. Sec., 10 September 1889, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A595, 9668 of 1889. See rest of this file. See also N.S. Telegraph, 2 July 1885.
By 1877, eight years after they were let in, the editor of the *Port Denison Times* claimed the Aborigines of Bowen were 'semi-civilized and wholly demoralized' while Chatfield was claiming that those of Natal Downs were 'docile, intelligent, and for a short time hardworking', still living a nomadic life that had to be respected.\(^{199}\) Ironically, a year after the Aborigines had been admitted to Bowen, the editor had written:

> The aborigines of this part of the colony seem to be intelligent, docile and honest, and willing to work to earn any little food or clothing that is given to them.\(^{200}\)

Some of the criticism of the Aborigines reflected their growing understanding of their new society and some of its values. Thus, the *Northern Argus* reported that 'The old type of the Australian black is fast dying out', being replaced by a 'civilized darky ... by no means an improvement'. The local Aborigines who had once given a good day's work for tobacco, flour, and sugar, were now bargaining 'with all the shrewdness of a white man' as they realized that labour was so scarce and dear as a result of the Palmer Gold Rush. The report lamented the Aborigines were becoming lazier and more demanding.\(^{201}\) Similarly, the *Port Denison Times* reported with disapproval:

> The blacks are becoming very independent and we know that some of them are possessed of (for them) considerable sums of money.\(^{202}\)

It is clear that very soon many Aborigines found no satisfaction in the work they were expected to do.

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201. *C.C.*, 15 March 1875, from *Northern Argus*.
The colonists' growing despair that the Aborigines would become a cheap, useful source of subservient, menial labour is misleading. It obscures the fact that revolutionary changes were occurring within Aboriginal society. This was most obvious with regard to their material culture. Although the permanent presence of the conquerors upon their land restricted their traditional life, Aborigines also freely modified it so they could best exploit the new conditions. The conqueror's culture rendered obsolete various aspects of traditional culture as the Aborigines, with surprising speed, utilized materials such as steel axes, knives, clothing, and metal containers which they could obtain with less effort from the intruders and which were often an improvement on their traditional implements. In 1898, Roth could only send the Police Commissioner two dilly bags from Cape Bedford, the site of Hope Valley Mission a few miles north of Cooktown, two message sticks from Highbury on the Mitchell River for which he apologized:

I am well aware that the above curios are not of any extra special interest, but the local blacks are too civilized to make anything for themselves: as soon as I can get out into the back country, I shall be able to do better. 203

Unfortunately very little of the continuing and developed aspects of traditional Aboriginal life emerges from the extant records; yet this was an important facet of the multi-racial society that evolved in the nineteenth century.

To a large extent the Aborigines were still at the mercy of the settlers, especially on the stations and selections, and it is clear that many serious restrictions were placed on them which forced them to modify their life style. Firstly their freedom of movement was limited to suit the needs or the whims of the settlers. This obviously hampered their traditional economic, social, and religious life. Thus

the well intentioned Hall Scott, of the Bowen District,
informed the Aborigines Commission that his first step was
to make the Aborigines discontinue their nomadic habits
and to prevent them holding corroborees and meetings. He
forbade intertribal gatherings to which he knew Aborigines
sometimes travelled hundreds of miles as he believed these
led to theft, robbery, and murder. Indeed he insisted that
the Aborigines remain within their 'native place'. Presum-
ably he confined each local group to its normal foraging
area thus greatly inhibiting its social, religious, and
economic interaction with other local groups. Hall
Scott stated that several times he had successfully made
agreements with the leading men of such sub-tribal groups
on stations he had owned. Some pastoralists, like
Chatfield of Natal Downs, did not object to such extended
movement or lived in areas where Aborigines could travel
without alarming them. Thus Chatfield reported that the
Cape River Aborigines sometimes met Aborigines from the
Ngooa and Dawson at Peak Downs which would indicate
considerable travelling by all three groups through areas
where they would presumably be unknown. Similarly,
in 1899, the remnants of three previously discrete tribes
whose old way of life had been shattered by settlement had

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204. P.D.T., 18 April 1874, letter from J. Hall Scott,
enclosing a copy of the letter he had written to the
Aborigines Commission. See also R.M. & C.H. Berndt,
The World of the First Australians, pp. 44, 45, for
'horde' and pp. 42-46 for other possibilities.
205. P.D.T., 18 April 1874, letter from J. Hall Scott
above. His term: 'chiefs of tribes'.
206. F.M. Tompstone and W. Chatfield Jun., 'Natal Downs
Station, Cape River', E.M. Curr, The Australian Race,
Vol. II (Melbourne, 1886) p. 473. A communication
route may have been provided by the rugged Great
Dividing Range in this case.
intermingled as one tribe and moved in small parties through
an area within 100 miles radius of Cloncurry. How far each
small group would or could move within this area was not
indicated. 207 Roth reported that the trade routes within
and beyond this area were still in existence up to 1897
but that some were disturbed by the hostility of the
pastoralists and new routes found. 208 Presumably lengthy
journeys of small groups or individuals could occur but
it is hardly likely that many settlers would allow larger
gatherings as they would have had to live off a land now
depleted of much of its game and a great deal of its
vegetable products by the presence of the intruders with
their vast numbers of heavy, hard-hoofed, voracious animals.
Hall Scott was no doubt correct when he asserted that such
gatherings would lead to stock losses and often to an
excitement which could threaten the lives of the intruders.

There were very commonly other important limitations
on the Aborigines' use of their land and water resources.
If water was scarce Aborigines would be prevented from
using the remaining water holes lest they disturb the
cattle. The police sergeant at Burketown informed his
inspector:

The Acting Sergt. does not wonder at Cattle being
ekilled by the blacks ... All the Freshwater is
surrounded by cattle and if an unfortunate black
happens to be seen by any of the station hands he

207. Sgt. M. Green, Cloncurry, to Insp. Lamond, Normanton,
8 June 1899, Q.S.A. POL/14B/15, 58 of 1899.
'Kalcadoons': Kalkadoon (Roth), Kalkadunga, Tindale;
'Nyathidy': Mitakoodi (Roth), Maithakari, Tindale;
'Unamurra': Woonamurra (Roth), Wanamara, Tindale;
W.E. Roth, Ethnological Studies Among the North-
West-Central Queensland Aborigines (Brisbane, 1897),
Plate I. Tindale map, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia.

208. Roth, Ethnological Studies Among the North-West-
is hunted whipped [sic] and severely maltreated. 209 The sergeant of police at Cloncurry casually informed his inspector—who accepted the limitation as normal even in 1899—that in this dry district in winter 'pastoralists cannot allow [aborigines] to hunt near the water-holes as they disturb the stock at the waterholes when hunting' the game and birds attracted there. 210 This was the area in which the spirited resistance of the Kalkadunga and other tribes had occurred when they had been ruthless restricted to the barren ranges to prevent their disturbing the cattle. 211 The Aborigines were let in if they accepted the conditions that the Native Police and squatters demanded. The Police Commissioner, Parry-Okeden, in his 1897 report, and Roth, repeatedly, pointed out how the Aborigines were prevented from hunting freely in their homeland. 212 As late as 1901, Roth made public the brutality with which pastoralists in Cape York Peninsula drove Aborigines off their runs with stockwhips and even from areas where they were running cattle which they did not hold legally under leasehold. 213 In Roth's annual report for 1904, after six years of 'protection' some settlers were still complaining that the Aborigines were frightening their cattle and camping on waterholes, forcing Roth to retort: '... the Aboriginals have as much right to exist as the Europeans'.

211. G.P. Preston, Oakwood, to Premier Griffith, 16 October 1885, encl. Q.S.A. COL/433, 8460 of 1885.
Another important aspect of their economy forbidden the Aborigines was grass burning. Constable McGuire of Thornborough reported as a sign of the success of the Atherton initiative that there was less grass burning during 1892 than in past years as the Aborigines had been informed their rations would be stopped if they persisted. Sergeant Whiteford reported in similar vein to indicate the success of the Parry-Okeden initiative to inaugurate the era of protection. A Mr. James MacGlashan, a resident for ten years of the area between the Cape and Belyando Rivers, informed Curr how a girl of fifteen and several others were shot dead in 1889 when they unwittingly allowed the grass to take fire on the bank of a river on which they were fishing. There was never any question by the squatters or their government that Aborigines had a right to exploit their land in any way that conflicted with the interests of the colonists.

A small incident near Bowen illustrated this truism. In 1879, some residents of the town discovered that turtles could be easily and profitably caught at Holborn Island. The local Aborigines pointed out to these residents that they thought the Europeans ought to limit themselves to the turtles nesting on the mainland. The editor of the Port Denison Times philosophically remarked:

There is some sense in that, but when savages are concerned the conquering race is satisfied with nothing less than all. What is to be will be.

218. P.D.T., 29 November 1879.
No more was heard of Aboriginal objections. 219

In some areas the structure and effectiveness of Aboriginal social groups was disrupted severely. Limitations on hunting, on fishing in the rivers and waterholes, and on foraging meant that the food taken back to camp was diminished which often resulted in dependents, such as the very young and the very old, going hungry. While the group was a cohesive unit this was one of the chief inducements to steal from the settlers or to become dependent on them through work or prostitution. 220 As well, there was often a great diminution in the number of adult males through frontier conflict or attraction into employment. This resulted in difficulty in securing large game such as kanagroos or emus which would normally be brought back to the camp to be divided according to kinship obligations. Much or all of the small game would be consumed away from the camp which also deprived the very young and old dependents. Inspector Lamond pointed out this fact and it was the rationale for establishing feeding stations in critical areas. 221 He added that his long experience with the Aboriginal had convinced him that 'if he has food to spare he will see nothing go hungry'. 222 Such restrictions could thus threaten their physical survival.

Yet it was not only the limitations imposed on their traditional life style that caused Aborigines to associate

219. P.D.T., 6 December 1879: boats collecting turtles on Holborn Island and shipping some to Sydney; P.D.T., 6 December 1884: obtaining turtles and turtle eggs from Holborn Island.

220. Zillman, P.M., Herberton, to Under Col. Sec., 18 June 1889, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 5684 of 1889. This is Zillman's insightful conclusion of the Aboriginal raids in the Atherton District.

221. Insp. J. Lamond, Herberton, to Police Commissioner, 27 November 1891, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 823 of 1895.

222. ibid.
with the invaders. There can be no doubt that some features of white society exercised a powerful attraction on them. Many young men and women were drawn temporarily or permanently to the seemingly more glamorous or exciting life that the intruders had to offer. As has been seen, approximately 300 Aborigines were employed in the fisheries, most of these willingly once they had been introduced to the life. At Mapoon, where a tribal life was possible, at least half of the approximately one hundred males recruited were willing to ship, despite the active discouragement of the Missionaries after 1892.\footnote{223} As noted previously in this chapter, large numbers of Aborigines were employed willingly on stations and in towns removed partly or completely from their Aboriginal groups. Young Aborigines, especially, would travel considerable distances to exploit the resources offered by intruders. Thus, the Police Magistrate at Herberton had to establish rationing for about fifty mainly old Aborigines at the Tate River:

\begin{quote}
they informed me that the young men and gins, had removed to the Griffiths [?] mining camp some thirty miles distant and that they were unable or unwilling to follow. \footnote{224}
\end{quote}

This situation was not uncommon.\footnote{225} There were thus the two forces competing with the desire to follow the traditional way of life: European restriction of Aboriginal life and the attraction of settler resources, especially for the younger men and women. It was possible for these three forces to co-exist and fluctuate in many areas throughout

\footnote{223. See ch. 7, pp. 356, 362.}
\footnote{224. A.C. Haldane, P.M., Herberton, to Under Sec., Home Sec's Office, 5 November 1896, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 7080 of 1897.}
\footnote{225. See E. Hannam, Northbourne, Nyola, to Col. Sec., 3 October 1895, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 10639 of 1895. Croydon Golden Age and Normanton Advertiser, 10 May 1897: a number of Aborigines had travelled hundreds of miles from the Mitchell River to Normanton.}
and beyond the whole period of this study.  

Only the dramatic aspects of the continuing traditional or modified traditional life caught the attention of the settlers. Incidents where Aborigines attacked or killed other Aborigines were sometimes reported; as were the ritualised combats between two groups of Aborigines, Aboriginal funeral rites, and accounts of cannibalism of other Aborigines. In fact, such incidents were sometimes viewed as entertainment for spectators and interesting subject matter for articles on the savage life at the colonist's door. Thus, at Mt. Albion in 1887 and Townsville in 1875, the settlers had calmly watched Aborigines in ritual combat. In the latter case three hundred Aborigines had assembled over the course of a week to join combat only fifty yards from Townsville's main street. At Thursday Island, the Torres Straits Pilot reported the

228. F.D.T., 5 May 1877; C.C., 10 January 1890; Const. J. Higgins, Atherton, to Sub. Insp. Lamond, Herberton, 7 December 1891, Q.S.A. POL/12B/NI; F.D.T., 26 February 1881; C.C., 19 December 1893; Argus, 6 August 1875, Aborigines: Newspaper Extracts 1875-80, Vol. 1, p. 21 (M.L.).
229. M.M., 12 December 1874, from Townsville Times. This ceremony was at Townsville.
Prince of Wales Islanders' annual corrobories had 'drawn large "houses" nightly'. 232

The new stresses placed upon Aborigines trying to live a traditional life in the pacified areas must have often been very great indeed. There was the obvious provocation of having alien Aboriginal employees of the settlers working and living on their land, and there are indications that often such Aboriginal intruders were resented, and sometimes action taken against them where it would not have been taken against whites for fear of the greater retaliation this would bring. Thus this research has revealed four murders of Aboriginal employers by the local Aborigines in areas where such Aboriginal aggression would not have been expected against white settlers. 233 It is probable that such murders would not be often reported.

One would expect these new conditions to accentuate the potentialities for conflict within Aboriginal society and there are a few reports which support this. It seems that in some areas at least male competition for women had increased so much that Aboriginal groups raided other groups more frequently, and this often led to bloody reprisals. Thus J. Allingham of Hillgrove near Charters Towers reported that the abduction of women by other Aborigines was a daily occurrence that no pastoralist could or should prevent. 234

232. C.C., 27 November 1888. See also Croydon Golden Age, 19 October 1897, 'An Aboriginal Romance: A Fight for a Wife', for a satirical article on Aboriginal life.
233. P.D.T., 3 April 1886: Aborigines from the Belyando River killed an Aboriginal at Conway Station near Proserpine; P.D.T., 19 November 1887: Belyando River Aborigines killed a Proserpine Aboriginal in the Bowen District at Elgin Downs; P.D.T., 7 September 1889: four Geraldton Aborigines (now Innisfail) killed an Aboriginal 'belonging' to F. Hann; H.A.: 26 June 1885 and 3 July 1885: an Aboriginal near Irvinebank had been in contact with pacified Aborigines. The Aborigines had resented his interference with their wives.
234. P.D.T., 14 April 1883, from T.D.B.
Occasionally, it was reported that the interference of alien Aborigines with the local women had led to violence and death.\footnote{235} The evidence as to whether there was increased inter-group fighting away from the towns is meagre although there is an occasional reference to such distortions of traditional life.\footnote{236} Roth makes the most specific reference about the Butcher's Hill Aborigines:

These Butcher's Hill aboriginals used in the old days to have their walk-about comprising the head of the Daintree R., the Bloomfield, Mount Windsor, and sometimes to the Laura and Maytown: at present however there are some party feuds on, and their peregrination is very limited. \ldots They have apparently at ways misprint: always been, and still are, at enmity with the Deighton blacks. \footnote{237}

It seems likely that pastoralists and selectors prevented many large scale conflicts themselves, or called in the local police.

There are indications also that some Aborigines were able to utilize the aid of Europeans against traditional enemies. An Aboriginal group on the Murray River near Cardwell informed the constable at Cardwell that the Aborigines inhabiting the rainforest-covered ranges to the west were responsible for burning down Rockingham Station in January 1895. The constable reported the 'range blacks' 'numerous and treacherous' and 'totally uncivilized' and it seems probable that they were also worrying the coastal Aborigines.\footnote{238} In 1897, while inaugurating.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[235]{M.M., 11 September 1875; H.A.: 26 June 1885 and 3 July 1885.}
\footnotetext[236]{M.M., 4 May 1878: mentions three large 'tribes' Belyando, Bowen, and coast tribes 'often called by their chiefs to meet to do battle with their neighbours'.}
\footnotetext[237]{Roth, Cooktown, to Pol. Com., 6 June 1898, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139 \textit{Typed copy}. Butcher's Hill is near Cooktown.}
\footnotetext[238]{Const. J. Splaine, Cardwell, to Insp. Murray, Townsville, 21 January 1895, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 13634 of 1896.}
\end{footnotes}
the Parry-Okeden policy of conciliation, Sergeant Whiteford, at the Musgrave Station south-west of Princess Charlotte Bay, was informed by about 200 Aborigines that the 'Cookaminnie Aborigines' were going to spear cattle on the Hann River, adding as an afterthought that they had also stolen one of their women. After changing his plans to prevent the raids on the cattle, Whiteford reported:

The real reason that the Radnah blacks had for wanting the Sergeant to go after these blacks was that they wanted him to get a gin, which these blacks had stolen from them, and the Radnah blacks were cute enough to know that when they told the Sergeant that these blacks were spear ing cattle that he would go after them. The Sergeant did get the gin...

At Cape York, where inter-tribal hostility seems to have been atypically fierce one of the smaller Aboriginal groups had allied itself to the European intruders at Somerset against other more powerful groups. Indeed the 'chief' was speared for passing information about the different tribes to Chester. 240 There were even reports that some Aboriginal groups took care to spear horses and cattle and, in one case, a settler, outside their own district, certainly hoping to escape retaliation and, possibly, to direct it to an enemy Aboriginal group. 241

Roth also demonstrated the proprietary paternalism settlers could exhibit to Aborigines who were conforming to European expectations. He remarked of a group of thirty-four Aborigines near Cooktown:

It is this tribe which is always made the scapegoat by neighbouring blacks for any deaths etc. ...

239. Sgt. J. Whiteford, Musgrave Station, to Insp. Lamond, Cooktown, 8 November 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/140.

240. H.M. Chester, F.M., Somerset, to Col. Sec., 31 March 1870, 'Records of Somerset: 2 September 1868 to 30 December 1871' /D.L./.

241. C.C., 5 November 1895, 'The Case of P. Bannan'; Cooktown Independent, 7 April 1897, letter from A. McNickle, encl. Q.S.A. COL/142, 14887 of 1897.
are comparatively weak, without any friends, yet are
good workers, the best turtle fishers, and the most
civilized comparatively speaking. They alone would
appear to want protection from physical violence at
the hands of their enemies. 242

This information had been given to him by the settler on
whose land these Aborigines camped. He had empathised with
this group, could communicate easily with them and was
able to see the world somewhat through their eyes.

Such identification of the Aboriginal group with the local
settler and vice versa was common, arising from a need they
both had for amicable relations so that both races could
exploit the land. 244 Each race had become a part of the
other's environment.

It is rare, of course, that one finds the expression
of Aboriginal opinion about the continued presence of the
intruders. The Myola Aborigines felt free to express their
thoughts to a sympathetic settler, Mrs. Hannam:

... they complain that we have cut their trees down
taken their creek from them and sent away their
wallabies etc. This is all true. 245

The Aborigines expressed their contempt for the Chinese
to the German missionaries at Hope Valley. They refused
to wear the wide trousers the Germans wore because they
were similar to those worn by the Chinese. When they
wanted to insult someone, they called him a Chinaman. 246

242. Roth, Cocktown, to Pol. Com., 24 February 1898,
loc. cit.

243. ibid. The daughter of this settler, Osmundsen, of
Rannabilla could speak the Aboriginal language fluently.

244. P.D.T., 16 June 1877, letter from W. Chatfield Jun.,
Natal Downs; P.D.T., 13 April 1874, letter from J. Hall
Scott; E. Hannam, Northbourne, Myola, to Col. Sec.,
3 October 1895, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 10689 of 1895;
P.D.T., 14 April 1883, letter from J. Allingham,
Hillgrove, from T.D.B.

245. E. Hannam, Northbourne, Myola to Col. Sec., 3 October
1895, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 12189 of 1895.

The Germans believed they hated the Chinese more than the white settlers. 247 This may have been true in the Cook District where the Chinese had often been the most numerous invader. One would like to know what the Aborigines said to the Chinese of the white settlers. As has been pointed out previously, the Aborigines' preference for employment with the Chinese at such places as Mackay and the Atherton Tableland was based partly on their greater accord with them. 248 The German missionaries at Hope Valley also discovered that the Aborigines had a hearty contempt for the intruders, using the word 'evil spirit' to represent the whites, a fact which was only partly suggested to them by the initial belief that the whites were the returned spirits of deceased Aborigines. The adult Aborigines showed their disdain for the whites by using them and their artefacts as the base to express their scorn for Aborigines they disapproved of, such as the young girls who would not leave the mission. Thus Poland noted: 'The women mocked the girls who stayed, called them "white folk" and told us to get them a house. They were no longer suited to the natives' huts .. they regard it as disgraceful to try to copy the white man'. 249

The most interesting Aboriginal attitude revealed by this research was the firm belief that the intruders were not permanent possessors of the Aborigines' land; that they would leave and the Aborigines would once again control their own destiny. Though such references are few it is significant that they were expressed in two widely separated areas to whites who understood the local language and who

were not closely identified with the dominant white power structure. This was reported firstly from Hope Valley mission in 1888 and 1897 and secondly from a cohesive group of Tully River Aborigines as late as the 1960's. In both cases it was associated with the idea that the Aborigines would inherit the material wealth of the invading white culture. Thus Poland remarked with surprise:

The blacks do not admire, respect or envy our building skill in the least. On the contrary they feel sorry for us, for we seem to them condemned to work and they do intend to inherit from us in the end anyway. 250

Pfalzer had reported eight years previously that Aborigines had informed him they expected to rise from the dead as whites to inherit the settlers' material wealth and knowledge thus emphasizing their belief that the disadvantage they suffered in comparison with the intruders was only temporary. 251 These two references should be taken in conjunction with the belief of the Aborigines of the Tully River reported by Dixon from his field work of the 1960's:

Perhaps the main factor in the survival of the Dyirbalgan has been a solid hope that one day the white man would be driven out, and the tribe would once more be able to resume peaceful occupation of its traditional lands. 252

It is tempting to conclude that this belief may have been common among Aborigines who maintained an integral link with their land. It is not inconsistent with the limited understanding such Aborigines must have had about events beyond the normal area in which they communicated.

252. Dixon, Dyirbal Language, p. 35. This should not be confused with the modern Aboriginal claim for land rights.
Occasionally Aborigines in the pacified areas found it impossible to tolerate the presence of the intruders and overtly resisted white authority in ways ranging from simple refusal to accept the dictates of the settlers to upsurges of unexpected violence. Thus Aborigines on the Mulgrave and Russell Rivers, south of Cairns, who had previously accepted the European presence killed two settlers in separate attacks and threatened others. North of Cooktown Aborigines had been warned four times to cease killing cattle but stubbornly refused to obey.

There were other more dramatic examples which were referred to in the nineteenth century press in terms more applicable to white lawlessness, but which would probably be better understood in terms of Aborigines and part-Aborigines finding their life in the new society so unsatisfactory that they indulged in aggressive behaviour towards the dominant white culture. Thus there are references to 'the half-caste cattle duffer and desperado, Joe Flick', of Normanton who escaped from custody, shot a police constable, and wounded two of his other pursuers when tracked down to Lawn Hills; the 'notorious blackboy known as Jacky Norman' who shot dead one of the policemen endeavouring to catch him with the policeman's own gun; and the 'notorious' Aboriginal Jimmy, 'an object of terror and alarm, not only to the white community ... but also

253. P.D.T., 24 August 1878. An Aboriginal near Bowen informed a squatter trying to prevent him going through a paddock 'that he would not go out of the road for a bloody whitefellow' and threatened to kill him.
254. C.P., 1 January 1885; C.P., 21 August 1884.
256. Queenslander: 21 September 1890, p. 533 and 2 November 1890, p. 821.
to his own countrymen', who stole from residents in and close to Bowen and intimidated the settlers into giving him tobacco, food etc.\(^\text{258}\) Roth's early reports also mention under the term 'Aboriginal Crime' Aborigines who were a source of danger or 'possible danger' to the white population.\(^\text{259}\)

Such men as 'Missie' of the Starcke River, 'Tommy Roderick' and 'Billy Nolan' of the Normanby, 'Long George' of Mt. Amos and young 'Larry' of the Endeavour River were exiled from North Queensland as common criminals when it seems likely that their 'anti-social' behaviour was a refusal or inability to accept white authority.\(^\text{260}\)

Any show of Aboriginal aggression or resistance to white authority was thoroughly crushed either by resort to British law, against which such Aboriginal resistance so often offended, or by extra-legal means. The records of nineteenth century police stations which have survived show that surveillance of the local Aboriginal populations was an important part of their duty.\(^\text{261}\)

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258. P.D.T., 23 June 1883 and 14 July 1883.
observed:

The police in each district know more about the blacks and their movements, centres, number, requirements, and condition generally, than anyone else. They are so to speak more in touch with them than other people are and the blacks on their side know perfectly well who the police are - and respect them for these reasons any many others. 262

But neither settlers nor the police felt much constraint about using extralegal means to assert white authority over Aborigines. Thus a police sergeant's flogging of an Aboriginal woman for stealing a child's petticoat was applauded by the editor of the Port Denison Times 'though perhaps not strictly legally the right thing to do under the circumstances'. 263

The use of such means or the threatened use of firearms to enforce obedience was common both by police and non-police. Even in pacified areas, 'troublesome' Aborigines were still killed without legal justification, largely with impunity, by both police and settlers. 265

Thus, in the last third of the nineteenth century, a multi-racial society came into being throughout North Queensland.

262. [Unidentified settler], Geraldton, to J. Hamilton, M.L.A., 8 August 1894, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 13850 of 1894. Hamilton thought this man's opinion should have weight because of his 'long experience with the blacks'. See J. Hamilton, M.L.A., to Col. Sec., 1 December 1894, enclosed above. The last page(s) of the letter from Geraldton are missing.

263. P.D.T., 12 June 1869.

264. P.D.T.: 25 February 1871; 23 March 1872; 1 June 1878; 3 May 1879; 23 June 1883; and 14 July 1883; C.P., 23 April 1885.

The Europeans had complete power and asserted their authority, whenever they thought it necessary, over the Aborigines who were a conquered and despised people. Yet, as each race was dependent on the other, a racial caste system came into being to provide the mechanics for such interdependence. The dynamic forces creating this new society were economic and sexual. The Europeans' need of cheap Aboriginal labour and the Aborigines' need or desire for the colonists' material wealth brought the two races together on stations, farms, and mining fields, in the fisheries, and in the towns. Similarly, the largely male European population on the frontier commonly turned to Aboriginal women to satisfy their sexual needs and, in doing so, created another area of dependence in which each race exploited the other. Quite often permanent or semi-permanent unions created a stable family situation otherwise lacking on the frontier. Such unions and the children of such unions resulted in a third racial caste cut off to a large extent from the main Aboriginal or European groups. The dynamic changes occurring in both the European and Aboriginal populations were masked by the demoralizing effects of acculturation on the Aborigines and their drastic decline in population. Thus, the reality of the multi-racial society was unnoticed and the illusion of 'a doomed race' accepted as reality.