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Chapter Six

The Practice of Protection, 1924-1960: Building a Missionary Pastoral Empire

By the time Henry Matthews concluded his superintendentship in 1924 the "protection" of Aborigines associated with the Mission was no longer primarily about refuge, but had taken on the meaning that Brock considered typical of the wider Australian context:

["Protecting" Aborigines took on] new connotations of isolation, discrimination, institutionalisation and invisibility. "Protecting" Aborigines meant removing them from the sight and awareness of the general Australian population, restraining them within carefully defined lands, maintaining them as unproductive, dependent communities which could act as labour pools in times of labour shortage, singling out Aborigines as different from the rest of the population.¹

Unlike many other missions, Mitchell River Mission could scarcely be considered unproductive since, as will be shown, the cattle enterprise succeeded to the extent that it financed the whole of the Diocese of Carpentaria. Despite this, the appearance of poverty and the image of Aborigines as dependent and unproductive was cultivated by field missionaries, their missionary organisation and the church at large. The missionary hierarchy was convinced that such an image, which complemented racial stereotypes of Aborigines, was central to the success of their efforts to gain financial support from the general public.² At the same time as this was being fostered, an extremely valuable asset

² Newton to Montgomery, 1 January 1917, folios 220, 221, OM.AV/61/2, JOL. "We have hopes the cattle will produce an income. We have sold some but the proceeds must go to stocking up and other improvements and we have to be careful the opponent of Missions does not have an excuse of attacking
Mitchell River bullocks ready for the road (late 1950s)

(Source: Doug Sutherland Album)
was being developed in the shape of the mission cattle herd. Cattle have been central to the history of reserve Aborigines over the last century. It was on account of cattle that they had first experienced the depredations of the pastoralists; the decision to form a mission herd assumed a willing Aboriginal workforce; and reserve Aborigines were in high demand as workers on the cattle stations away from the Mission as well. Even though work on the cattle stations offered a temporary break from the life and routine of the Mission, it did not offer independence from missionary control as the role of the Mission as a broker of Aboriginal labour increased with greater Aboriginal participation in the station labour force. On both the Mission itself, and through their involvement with the station labour trade, the missionaries were constructing a pastoral empire which only seemed to emphasise the image of dependence of Aborigines on whites.

There was little to suggest in 1908, when the cattle herd was established, that a herd of 26 cattle would grow, over time, into an asset worth over £200,000 in 1960. Any debate about the direction which the cattle operation might take was settled in 1917, a year in which mission cattle were sold for £405, with Matthews' business sense prevailing over Bishop Henry Newton's humanitarian desire to allow greater Aboriginal benefit from the cattle:

I have advised Mr Matthews to kill more beasts for the station's use. He is loth to do so as cattle are a good price, but personally I believe that the gain in letting

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2 Gilbert White, *ABM Review*, 15 August 1910, p. 107. This value is extrapolated from the value of the Native Affairs Department herd of 5,964 which was considered to be worth £140,273. (Annual Report for year ending 30 June 1959.)

3 Newton to Jones, 30 June 1917, folio 178, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.

4 Newton's humanitarianism is based on a recognition that an impoverished diet could lead to neither vigour nor commitment towards the missionary program. Writing to Chapman he observed, "It is good to hear that you can get them to take an interest in farming and if only they get some results into their stomachs they will realize the good of working". Newton to Chapman, 17 April 1917, folio 82, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.
the people see that they get direct return and benefit from their work with the cattle more than compensates for any pecuniary loss - also the Aborigine is a meat eater and gets tired of a bread or rice or vegetable diet.\textsuperscript{6}

The use of the cattle herd as a food source was grudging in the period between 1918 and 1920, when Trubanaman and Kowanyama were both operating, with a beast being killed on alternate weeks at each place. By the 1950s with a resident population at Kowanyama of around 700 people, a beast was killed on alternate days. Certainly, mission consumption of beef did little to limit the growth of the herd. Herd numbers continued to increase well beyond the demise of mission administration in 1967:\textsuperscript{7}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Cattle</th>
<th>Developments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Establishment of herd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Cattle fund contributes £36 to Mission budget in 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100 head donated to Mission by neighbouring cattle stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>2,421</td>
<td>Second set of cattle yards built at &quot;Red Lily&quot; in 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>4,381</td>
<td>Alec MacLeod becomes cattle manager in 1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>5,101</td>
<td>450 head given to establish Lockhart River Mission herd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Co-operative cattle scheme proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>16,759</td>
<td>(Ten years after Government takeover of Mission)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{6} Gilbert White, "Mitchell River Mission" (no date, follows letter of 4 January 1917), folio 248, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.

\textsuperscript{7} Compiled from Annual Reports.
Ronnie Smiler with mission horses at Kowanyama
For the children swimming in the lagoon the presence of cattle, horses and stock workers was part of growing up. (Late 1950s)

(Source: Doug Sutherland Album)
Apart from the steady, if meagre, supply of beef that was dispensed as part of rations on the
Mission and the growing need for work amongst the cattle, there was little other evidence
of prosperity commensurate with the growth of the cattle herd. The Bishop of Carpentaria
and the Chief Protector acted as co-trustees of the mission reserve, an arrangement that
continued until the regazettal of the reserve in 1958 when the Director of Native Affairs
was proclaimed sole trustee. When a question of agistment of Rutland Plains cattle on the
reserve arose in 1923, Chief Protector Bleakley considered that trusteeship conferred the
power to enter into such financial arrangements and to decide how these funds were
disposed of. With the operational responsibility of the reserve falling to the Bishop and
his missionaries, and with the church being the larger financial stakeholder until the 1950s,
the Church through the bishop had a control over the improvements on the reserve,
including the cattle, that was for most practical purposes the same as ownership.

Like their Lutheran contemporaries at Koonibba in South Australia, it soon became
clear that when the Diocese of Carpentaria used the language of self sufficiency for mission
Aborigines it was not Aboriginal self sufficiency that was their concern but the solvency
of diocesan operations. A mission superintendent, whilst exercising authority in the daily
operations of the mission and empowered to do so under the Act, carried out these duties

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5 Even though both Bishop and Chief Protector were trustees ex-officio they held personal appointments. When the government was seeking to extinguish the Weipa reserve to facilitate bauxite mining in 1957 it first had to secure the resignation of Bleakley, the former Chief Protector who had concluded his duties in 1941, from his trusteeship of the reserve. (Acting Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, Dep’t of Health and Home Affairs, 31 January 1957, Administration Kowanyama Reserve (Boundaries etc), 17A-3, DFSAIA, Interim Transfer R254, QSA).


10 Bleakley to Matthews, 5 September 1923, 23:4904, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.

11 O’Leary to Matthews, 17 October 1961, Administration Kowanyama Reserve (Boundaries etc), 17A-3, DFSAIA, Interim Transfer R254, QSA. “The Church is protected for any investment made on these Reserves and has the full authority and administration of them under the ‘Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Acts’”.

12 Peggy Brock, Outback Ghettos, p.90.
modified by the theocratic character of the mission structure. Superintendents acted to implement the decisions of the Bishop and Diocesan Council in matters to do with the cattle.\textsuperscript{13}

The policy on the management of the cattle and the application of cattle profits was clearly stated by Bishop Henry Newton to Jones, the ABM chairman, in 1917.

... for some time all the money from the sale of cattle should be used to develop the Reserve in any way that will increase the herd and make the herd more productive - buying stock, fencing etc. But we reserved the right to make a special grant for the upkeep [of the Mission] if we thought it necessary at any time.\textsuperscript{14}

To Matthews, Newton was giving even clearer signals that he should not look at the cattle as a source of operational funds, "We do not say we will not use the money for general upkeep of the station but we do not want to encourage a hope of that, at least for some time".\textsuperscript{15} Newton and his successors in office seemed to have no trouble in resisting the temptation of encouraging the hope that people at Kowanyama might see some direct benefits from the cattle that were run on their traditional lands. Even in the general operations of the Mission, there was early evidence of a trend towards the pauperisation of Mitchell River so that other aspects of the operations of the Diocese could be funded. Newton’s successor, Stephen Davies, found that he was able to operate Mitchell River in financial surplus during 1924 and successfully sought approval from the Diocese’s primary church funding body, the Australian Board of Missions (ABM), to apply the surplus of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{The first management committee to run the cattle concern at Mitchell River was formed in 1917 and consisted of Bishop Henry Newton, Tom May and Francis Slade, the dean of the Cathedral on Thursday Island. (Newton to Jones, 30 June 1917, folio 171, OM.AV/61/2, JOL) A separate cattle account was opened with the management committee as signatories. (Newton to Matthews, 30 June 1917, folio 181, OM.AV/61/2, JOL)}

\footnote{Newton to Jones, 30 June 1917, folio 171, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.}

\footnote{Newton to Matthews, 30 June 1917, folio 182, Bishop’s outward correspondence, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.}
\end{footnotes}
£150 to the Torres Straits Mission. In 1921 ABM, in an attempt to keep some control over the operation of the Mission, claimed ownership of the cattle when it ruled "that all capital and plant for industrial purposes is the property of the Board". By a decision of the Board in 1932 this rule was overturned and ABM released the Diocese of Carpentaria from the obligation to consult with the Board in how it arranged its internal finances, a decision which opened the way for the Mitchell River cattle to be administered as a purely diocesan concern. By 1937, the transfer of 250 head of cattle to Lockhart River Mission showed that the cattle herd was treated as a solely diocesan asset, to be used for the general purposes of the Diocese rather than for the exclusive or even particular benefit of the Mitchell River cattle operations or the Mitchell River people themselves.

The establishment of missions at Lockhart River in 1924 and Edward River in 1939 was undoubtedly important in hastening Diocesan control of the Mitchell River cattle as it added extra burdens of cost to the diocesan budget. Edward River Mission was an extension of the influence of the Mission to the north of the Mitchell River. Joseph Chapman’s interest in the Edward River area went back as early as 1923 when he planted bananas and cassava there, an interest wholly supported by Matthews who was keen to purchase a small boat to assist Chapman moving between Kowanyama and Edward River.

Chapman’s agitation to establish a mission station at Edward River in 1928 was part of his

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17 "Mitchell River Cattle", internal memorandum, no date but probably 1956, 5/6, ABM Chairman’s correspondence, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 9, ML MSS 4503, Add On 1822.
18 "Report of the Australian Board of Missions to General Synod, October 1932", ABM Board Minutes, vol.5, Box 6, series M4, 29-30 June 1932. ABM Sydney. The only proviso was that, "due regard [be shown] to the particular purposes for which such [cattle and] other possessions were acquired".
19 ABM Review, 1 November 1937, p.184.
20 Matthews to Chief Protector, 10 August 1923, 23:04904, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA. The boat, a motor launch, was eventually purchased the following year. (Stephen Davies, entry for 3 March 1924, Bishop’s diary, OM.AV/114/1, JOL)
Missionaries were not ashamed to depict pauperised Aborigines as this illustration from the *ABM Review* shows. This woman from Mitchell River wears a dress made from a flour bag - an economy encouraging missionary supporters, themselves emerging from the Great Depression, that their support was being treated frugally.

Original caption: "Aboriginal Economy"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 August 1938, p.144)
strategy to block attempts to have the delta and northern coastal areas of the reserve thrown open to pastoral selection.\footnote{Chapman to Chief Protector, 22 October 1928, 28:05357, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.} Walter Daniels spent part of 1932 on the coast near the Coleman River in an attempt to pioneer a mission station but this work lapsed until Chapman himself moved to Edward River, a little further north, in 1939.\footnote{Chapman had spent long periods at Edward River during 1937. (ABM Review, 1 September 1937, p.154.) He moved to Lockhart River Mission to relieve for a period during 1938, (ABM Review, 1 November 1938, pp.203 & 205) before returning to the west coast.} This provided a new focus for the bush-living people from the north of the reserve and left Kowanyama to the earlier-settled Kokobera, Kunjen and Kokominjen who had already formed themselves into three villages close by the mission station. With the Kokominjen and Thaayore bush dwellers settled at Edward River, new arrivals to the Mission after 1939 were generally people displaced from fringe camps on cattle stations, more familiar with living under white control than the northern tribes, and amenable to employment in cattle work.

Even though support for Edward River was a logical extension of the missionary work at Kowanyama, the Diocese stretched the principle of spreading the Mitchell River funds much further. Superintendent Currington experienced occasions when general Mitchell River funds, not cattle funds, were applied to the other Aboriginal missions or more generally in the diocese. Timber ordered against the Mission account for work at Kowanyama was used instead to repair the Vicarage on Thursday Island; goods for Lockhart River were charged to the Mitchell River operational account. Currington felt personally affronted by this sort of dealing but was told by Bishop Hudson, "You've got
to look after your brothers”. This seemed to imply that the needs of the people at Kowanyama were being met, which was far from the case.

Such "looking after" the work of the diocese from the Mitchell River cattle account was used in the post-war period to mask the insolvency of the Diocese. Funds for specific purposes deposited by individual church communities within the Diocese, had not been separately invested, and were used to bolster the Church’s operational funds, resulting in these deposits becoming, in effect, only book entries. The Mitchell River cattle income was the Diocese’s only means of cash to reinstate these unrepresented "trusts". Additionally, the Mitchell River cattle financed the unprofitable cattle operations at Lockhart and Edward to the extent of £10,000, an extraordinarily generous contribution. Hudson reluctantly detailed this sorry position in a confidential statement to his church and government funding agencies in 1958 in a desperate bid to extract increased financial support from them. This revelation, he acknowledged, stood to discredit the reputations of "diocesan officials, past and present", and threatened the Diocese’s credit with business houses if it became generally known. More than this, it revealed that missionary paternalism had exploited the Mitchell River reserve and its people and that its administration had fallen far short of normal fiduciary standards.

After such raids on the Mitchell River funds there was nothing left to purchase basic items like wire, fence posts and replacement stock necessary to maintain the cattle operation at profitable levels. Nothing worthwhile for the people of Mitchell River, apart from the growth of the herd itself, had been achieved by direct diocesan management. In

23 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
addition to the other missions, the Government was the principal beneficiary in this sleight-of-hand style of book-keeping. "Helping your brothers" had left all of the Carpentaria missions impoverished and made much less demand on the government purse than departmentally operated settlements. The Queensland Government was the ultimate beneficiary, its state wards at Kowanyama the ultimate losers.

In addition to the operational grant for each mission, capital grants to improve various aspects of the economic and social life of the missions were made available from the government coffers. The government provided a capital grant of £500 for the construction of the school at Belburra in 1929. These funds were from the Aboriginal Protection Property Account, a government fund accumulated from deceased estates and unclaimed wages of Aborigines. The term of Wiffie Currington’s superintendentship coincided with Con O’Leary’s term as Chief Protector and subsequently as Director of Native Affairs. Currington discovered that capital funds were largely held in O’Leary’s gift. He recalled making strenuous representations to O’Leary for grant funding to purchase bulls only to have details of the sale of 800 head of Mitchell River cattle quoted back to him as reason for the Mission to buy them itself. Consequently, the apparent prosperity of the Mitchell River cattle operation further disadvantaged Mitchell River from gaining access to available grant funds, meagre as they were.

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25 McFarlane to Bleakley, 18 July 1929, 29:04344, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.

26 Bleakley to Under Secretary, Home Department, 14 February 1928, 28:01233, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.

27 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987. Currington’s plea for “50 good Shorthorn and Devon Cross bulls to improve the herd”, was made in his 1950 and 1951 annual reports. (AR, 1950, QPP, p.1095 and AR, 1951, QPP, p.1119)
The government grant remained static and unreviewed for long periods at a time, suggesting a lack of active management of this funding source on the part of the Diocese. Incompetent central administration had relieved pressure on government funds during the 1950s which was a time of expanding government expenditure on Aboriginal affairs generally, and a period when government was showing an increased willingness to intervene on missions to raise living standards. Towards the end of this period, Yarrabah’s grant was five times greater than that for Mitchell River even though both places had a similar number of residents.28

**Mitchell River Mission Operational Funding**29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ABM Grant</th>
<th>Government Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925 to 1934</td>
<td>£1,040</td>
<td>£600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935 to 1950</td>
<td>£1,040</td>
<td>£900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951, 1952</td>
<td>£1,040</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 to 1955</td>
<td>£1,040</td>
<td>£4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>£6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>£7,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>£10,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>£850</td>
<td>£11,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The negotiations between the Diocese and the government over the foundation of a mission on the East coast of the Peninsula required a significant investment from the Diocese which was represented by the 450 cattle from Mitchell River taken to Lockhart River in 1937 and

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28 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, Director of Native Affairs Corres., 8 March 1960, 60:1985, OF69, DFSAIA.

29 Compiled from annual financial assistance papers, OF 40, DFSAIA.
1939. A further 300 breeders were transferred in 1950, making a total of 750 head given away over 13 years. In 1939, the same year as 200 head were transferred to Lockhart River, the Aboriginal garden workers at Mitchell River were being labelled, without any intended irony, as "indigent". Mitchell River Aborigines were being portrayed as dependent and unproductive at the same time as a considerable resource was being siphoned off the reserve.

There was a uniqueness about the cattle operation at Mitchell River, certainly unique when compared with the other diocesan ventures and with the other missions and reserves in Queensland. It was one of the few enterprises that fulfilled the missionary hope of building an economic base for an "industrial mission", an enterprise that would keep Aborigines busy and instil industrious habits as well as generate a financial surplus. This achievement came through the persistent application of a policy of herd building that commenced in the fourth year of the Mission's existence. Both Aborigines and missionaries acted to achieve these things with considerable diligence and care. Even though the financial management of the Diocese was often chaotic, there was no sense of the diocese making decisions which would threaten the income producing capacity of Mitchell River, even though they were hesitant in making investment decisions which would have enhanced this capacity. By the end of the 1950s it was an extremely valuable diocesan asset, treated as an adjunct to, but different from, the Mission. This was shown in the privileged position of the cattle management over other mission workers. In 1960, when

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20 Stephen Davies, *ABM Review*, 1 November 1937, pp.184, 185. Davies, speaking of the 250 head of Mitchell River cattle taken to Lockhart River in 1937 commented, "By this gift the Church has now fulfilled the last of the conditions which the Queensland Government insisted upon when they asked us to undertake missionary work on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula".

31 Annual Report, 25 September 1951, Director of Native Affairs, QPP, p.1119.

32 Alec MacLeod, *ABM Review*, 1 June 1940, p.88.
missionary wages were £350 per annum, Jack Trewick, the cattle manager, was being paid £900 and George Wheeler, the head stockman, £600.33 The cattle operation was the only area of mission life where industry standard wages would be paid and then only to those in charge, not to the Aboriginal stockmen who were still working for rations. Missionary records focus on the appointment of cattle managers as key initiatives in pushing the development of the cattle operation forward but neglect to identify the significant role of local Aborigines in building up the pastoral industry on the Mission.

There were often large gaps in between the appointment of outside cattle managers when the cattle operation was in the hands of the Kunjen man, Gregory Leonard.34 Gregory was born at Trubanaman and grew up at Koolatah station.35 He had learned stock work at Koolatah but preferred to live at the Mission on the conditions of a mission worker, apparently preferring the life of, as Rowse terms it, an "insider" on the Mission, a trusted missionary lieutenant, to the more marginal role offered on the station.36 On the Mission he was in charge of droving trips to bring horses to Mitchell River from Valley of Lagoons and Merluna, and, as well, ran the stock camp when there was no white cattle manager. With Alec MacLeod’s appointment to this position in 1931, Gregory worked as his head stockman and when MacLeod became mission superintendent in 1938, Gregory’s influential role as MacLeod’s trusted "offsider" increased.37

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33 Diocese of Carpentaria, Wages and Salaries, p.27. OM.AV/121/1. George Wheeler was employed on the award rate of £600 per annum.
34 Gregory was obviously sought after by the stations as he had built up a bank account of £84.8.4 in 1931. (Protector, Somerset District to Chief Protector, 22 August 1932, 32:06606, OF 46, DFSIA.)
35 Gregory, the son of Annie and Leonard Arfangatun is the ninth person baptised at Trubanaman. (Entry in Baptism Register for 5 June 1910, OM.AV/10/1, JOL)
The cattle operation exposed Kowanyama people to Aboriginal leadership in areas of the Mission’s life that was otherwise the exclusive preserve of whites. In addition to Gregory Leonard, Mapoon Aborigines particularly were employed in management roles in the cattle work: Willie Hudson in the late 1930s, Arthur Callope in the 1950s and George Wheeler from 1957 occupied positions otherwise filled by whites. At least in George Wheeler’s case, an exempted Aborigine from 1957, he was paid at the award rate that whites would expect to receive. 38

The white men who worked the mission cattle were not missionaries, they were employed specifically for their cattle experience, living a life that was often away from Kowanyama, on the stock camps or droving bullocks. These head stockmen were usually known to mission Aborigines through their work on cattle stations in the region. Unlike the missionaries proper, who invariably came from places vastly distant from the Peninsula, the Mission’s white stockmen and cattle managers were more likely to be part of the human community of the Peninsula. Where the missionaries showed remarkable continence, some of the stockmen had been involved in sexual relationships with Aboriginal women. Bob Barr and Henry Butler were the fathers of Aboriginal children, and Arthur White became married to Barr’s Aboriginal daughter, Cora. 39 As Trigger discovered at Doomadgee, behaviours that indicated a previous closeness to the Aboriginal domain were likely to result in whites being accepted as less of an intrusion into the Aboriginal domain on the Mission. 40 While the cattle operations were distinctive as a diocesan controlled economic

38 George and Mildred Wheeler were exempted from being protected persons in 1957 before they arrived at Kowanyama (Register of Exemptions, 1942-1967, A/58979, QSA.)
40 David Trigger, *Whitefella comin’,* Cambridge, 1992, p.92. Even though Aboriginal and white domains were clearly marked on the stations, Lindsay Aidan and Aurukun stockman, Silas Wolmby, were in the habit of camping with Arthur White on the stock camp at Dunbar station so that they could sleep more
Map 10: Locations of cattle properties that employed Mitchell River labour.
unit as far as the Diocese was concerned, they were distinctive for mission Aborigines as an area that was more clearly part of the Aboriginal domain than other areas of mission activity.

Aborigines were encouraged to believe that the cattle corporately "belonged" to the community. This sense became particularly obvious in the concern Aborigines showed for the ownership of the cattle at the time of the hand over to government administration in 1967.41 Kenny Jimmy said that people believed that the Bishop "should have stuck to all those cattle", (ie. not handed them over to government control).42 Jerry Mission recalled missionary Joseph Chapman being lenient towards him in the 1930s, when he and some other young men killed a bullock to eat, on the basis that the cattle belonged to Aborigines as it was the efforts of Aboriginal labour that had been responsible for building up the herd.43 The fact of mission cattle being slaughtered to supply beef from very early in the mission’s life was a compelling reinforcement to this belief, especially as the meat had been distributed as part of the mission rations.44 It is likely that missionaries used the language of corporate ownership even when they knew that the relationship between cattle profits and any benefit to Kowanyama residents was, at best, indirect, and often meagre.

However, the management structure of the cattle operations involved some Kowanyama men living at mustering camps on the reserve for periods of time and gave

soundly than was possible if they camped with the older Aboriginal men who tended to stay up late into the night talking (Lindsay Aidan, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 March 1988.)

41 Sam Zingle, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988.
43 Jerry Mission, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 November 1987. Chapman, as an agriculturalist, may have had little personal commitment to the prosperity of the beef industry on the Mission especially since the cattle became very destructive towards any attempts at gardening as their numbers grew.
44 Bishop Henry Newton believed that, "an extra beef ration will give the natives on the Mission more interest in the herd and make them more contented". Meeting of 22-23 June 1921, ABM Board Minutes vol.1, M4, Box 3, ABM Sydney.

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them access to better rations than if they had stayed at Kowanyama itself. Access to beef, which was more liberally supplied to mustering camp workers, was shared with family members back at Kowanyama as the opportunity arose. Work in the mustering camp also provided an opportunity to hunt and fish at places normally inaccessible to Kowanyama "inmates". Cattle work offered a place for the distinctive bush skills and even ritual knowledge of the land to be used to advantage. James Gibo recalled that when he was head stockman at Rutland Plains he would call out in language to the "old people", the spirits of the traditional owners of that land, "to let all the cattle out of the scrub", an effective enlistment of tradition in the furthering of the cattle work. Mustering provided a mission sanctioned reason to travel to traditional tracts of land and for young men to learn from their elders the stories of the land and the brutal contact history of their forebears, an opportunity that was not present without missionary surveillance back at Kowanyama. James Gibo was able to take me to a place on Rutland Plains where, many years before, he had been shown human bones in the sand and was told the accounts of Bowman’s atrocities by older Aborigines.

For the majority of people who lived at Kowanyama the presence of so many cattle, along with improvements like fences and yards, had the effect of imposing further restriction on access across the reserve land. Grass burning, a traditional event, needed to be curbed so as not to destroy fodder. Cattle contaminated the waterholes and general access was only allowed when it did not interfere with mustering. Even gardening activities on the Mission had to withstand the grazing assault of so many cattle. An unforseen

46 AR, 1948, QPP, p.893. "I am afraid that this year we may not be so successful with our sweet potatoes as the cattle found a weak place in the fence and got in one night and caused a considerable lot of damage".
Bone fragments at Coastal Springs on *Rutland Plains* which James Gibo believed was a massacre site.

(Photographed 6 February 1988)
consequence of the increase in the size of the cattle herd was to increase the pressures which confined most Aboriginal activity to the actual mission station.

For most people, though, the greatest opportunity offered by pastoralism was for experience outside the Mission, with the opportunity of working for wages rather than mission conditions of rations and a token wage. Aborigines had been an integral, if undervalued, part of the pastoral workforce from before the Mission’s foundation. The earliest use of the Mission as a sanctuary was by station Aborigines seeking to get away from pastoralist control. The Mission’s success in providing pastoral workers with protection had its corollary in the preference for station work increasingly shown by some missionised Aborigines.

This arrangement of moving between the Mission and stations suited the expectations and circumstance of some Aborigines, especially those whose traditional land was distant from the mission reserve. The missionaries sought to discourage this movement when it was unregulated and for the convenience of the Aborigines concerned, but willingly sanctioned it when it took place within mission controlled structures and subject to employment agreements. Thus, Chapman had no hesitation in sending Leonard Arfangatun and his family packing when they had come to the Mission after leaving Shalfo, part of their traditional Kunjen country. He objected to their "making a convenience of the mission". Similarly, unsanctioned departures from the Mission were certain to arouse

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48 Ibid., p.79
49 Ibid., p.144, "Thomas Bruce, who was born at Mitchell River mission in 1927 and went to work on *Van Rook* station at about the age of fifteen, had no desire to go back to the mission for holidays. He worked at the station for six years, mostly offsiding for the horsebreaker. Early in 1947 he decided that he wanted a change and went to Normanton where the local protector signed him up for work on nearby *Magowra* station".
50 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 15 November 1919, "Leonard and family put in an appearance having absconded from Shalfo. He wanted to be taken on. I advised him to return to Shalfo and not make a
missionary disapproval of the kind shown by Chapman when Ethel, May, Amy, Roland and Bullie went to Rutland Plains without his permission in 1936.51

Work off the mission acted as a kind of "safety valve" that helped to perpetuate missionary order by removing Aborigines from potential conflict situations for the greater part of the year.52 This seems to have been the situation for men like Bob Dunbar who came to the Mission as adults with a familiarity of station work. By the 1950s when Kowanyama was a major supplier of station labour, a new generation of mission-born Aborigines called Kowanyama home even if their traditional country was not part of the reserve. For these Mitchell River people, brought up with the expectation that they might some day work on the stations, the Mission was a place to return to and find some respite from their demanding work on the station. During the 1950s, at the peak of demand for pastoral workers of both sexes, the mission population swelled by 50% over the wet season when station workers returned for a "spell". The extent of this influx guaranteed that there was only a token attempt to incorporate such a large number into the mission workforce. Even though the mission routine was often rigid and uncompromising, it probably appeared comparatively lax over these wet season layoffs since it struggled to cope with the large seasonal increase in population.

Even though male station workers were in no confusion as to who was boss on the stock camps, the nature of their work, if not living conditions, was more broadly egalitarian between black and white than was the women's work on the station homesteads. Here, Aboriginal women had very clear insights into a rigid hierarchy, particularly as it was

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51 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 31 October 1936.
manifested in the division of the domestic space on the big stations. On Abingdon Downs in the 1950s for example, three separate eating areas existed: for the Aboriginal stockmen and their wives, for the white stockmen in the kitchen, and for the manager and his family. Doris Gilbert recalled that each of the white dining areas were served by five Aboriginal women.\textsuperscript{53} Compared with the Mission, even with its spatial and social distinctions between the Aboriginal villages and the missionary area, this sense of social distinction on the stations represented an intrusion into the domestic domain that made it seem all the more powerful. On the nearer stations to the Mission, distinctions were brutal. Lindsay Aidan worked at Dunbar and Koolatah and experienced how Aborigines were served a standard diet of corned beef and damper on the woodheap.\textsuperscript{54}

A woman who left to work at Taldora station at the age of 14 years, thought life on the station, in terms of its demands, was like living in the mission dormitory. On Taldora she had to rise at 4.00 am to start her work and was not finished until 8.00 pm. Even with this, there was a sense of freedom that had not been experienced on the mission; the opportunity of finding romance and the challenge of learning to cook, set table, make beds and clean the homestead.\textsuperscript{55} Even for older people who had grown up on the Mission, station work was usually their first experience of living away from the Mission.

At Rutland Plains, Dunbar and Koolatah it was likely that other Aboriginal workers were kin or known from the Mission.\textsuperscript{56} On the more distant stations, Kowanyama people

\textsuperscript{53} Doris Gilbert, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{54} Lindsay Aidan, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 March 1988. He described this as the situation at Dunbar, Rutland, Inkerman and Koolatah.
\textsuperscript{55} Maudie Fraser, taped interview, Kowanyama, 8 April 1988.
\textsuperscript{56} Susan Brumby, taped interview, Kowanyama, 11 April 1988. After her marriage in 1955, Susan and her husband George went to work on Koolatah station and subsequently to Rutland Plains. On Rutland she stayed at Lochnagar outstation with her husband's brother Frank and his wife Maisie, another relative, Mission Dick, was the “home boy” on the outstation.
were often confronted with a situation where there were no familiar faces and were dislocated from important family events. Arthur Major, who started his station career as a teenager in the 1930s, spent ten years at Esmeralda in the Croydon district. This separation from Kowanyama meant that he was away on both occasions when his parents died. For others, away for a long time, their kin had often given them up as dead. Norman Junior was held up in Winton for two years on account of wartime travel restrictions when he was returning north after taking a mob of Esmeralda cattle to Blackall. Upon his return home after the war he was surprised to learn that his parents thought that he had died.

Norman Junior’s experience as the Aboriginal "boy" on Billy Corrigan’s droving plant demonstrates the unequal power relationships that continued outside the Mission and the social isolation that resulted from working amongst whites. First recruited to Macaroni station by Billy Wilson, Norman Junior joined Corrigan and was the only Aboriginal in what was otherwise a family concern: Corrigan’s wife, son and daughter made up the rest of the workforce. Deprived of any experience of equality with the Corrigans, he had also been discouraged from developing any solidarity with Aborigines along the droving track. At Boulia, Corrigan told Norman that the local Aborigines were cannibals who would "take their same colour away and eat him", and offered to protect Norman from this alleged danger by allowing him to camp with the family instead of in his usual place, alone and, at a distance from them. Being young, isolated, and suddenly fearful, he was glad to accept Corrigan’s offer. This same apprehension was encouraged when an all-Aboriginal droving plant was encountered along the stock route. Norman described his reaction to seeing these Aboriginal drovers as again one of fear that they might take him away with them, a fear

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Vera Dick carrying swag and sack returning from work at Rutland Plains (Late 1950s)

Children are waiting in keen anticipation to discover who is disembarking and what they might be bringing with them.

(Source: Doug Sutherland Album)
Cousin brothers together on the cattle station, probably Dunbar
Ezra Michael and Lindsay Aiden (late 1950s)

(Source: Doug Sutherland Album)
undoubtedly cultivated by Corrigan to reinforce his place as the "boy" on the droving plant
lest this example of Aboriginal leadership and autonomy stir up similar aspirations in
Norman.

More positive experiences of meeting with other Aborigines happened at Winton, during his long wait for the War to end before he could return to Kowanyama. Here he felt happy to talk with them on Friday nights when they came in to see films at the picture theatre. He had become aware too, of the "invisibility" of Aboriginal people in a place like Winton, where they were apparent in the town only at times sanctioned by whites. Norman's experience broadened his horizons even though it had dislocated him from his Kowanyama community and frustrated important possibilities of developing broader relationships with other Aborigines. His experience was one of far warmer community on the Mission than he had found as a drover, and saw him develop a career as a mission "insider" in preference to continuing with station work.59

For others, life on the station exposed them to brutality and abuse that they had not experienced on the Mission. Lindsay Aidan had seen an Aborigine bashed on the head with a shovel, and his brother bore a scar on his arm from being flogged with a stockwhip by the head stockman on Miranda Downs. Drunken whites were in the habit of wanting to pick fights with Aborigines, something that was humiliating and mocked their inferior social position on the stations. Aborigines knew that they would be the ones who would be punished if they defended themselves. The inequality of power relations was a constant fact of life for station Aborigines and intruded into all areas of their life. Women were exposed

59 Norman Junior, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 April 1988. His career on the Mission included work around the Superintendent's house, and then, later, at the end of the mission period, as a policeman and Justice of the Peace in the government time.
George Lawrence's (born 1939) depictions of work amongst the cattle, 1952. George was a Kowanyama school student at the time and shows not only a flair for art but a good understanding of stockwork.

(Source: Sylvia Card's memorabilia, JCU Cairns)
Leaving Kowanyama for the station. Peter Michael making his thumbprint while Luke looks on, c.1950s
(Source: Wiffie Currington Album, Normanton)

On the DC-3 aircraft to the station, c.1950s
left to right: Oscar, Anderson Dunbar, Cecil Horace
(Source: Wiffie Currington Album, Normanton)
to the risk of sexual harassment, forced sexual activity and even rape. Their husbands were forced to accept the humiliation of the situation for fear of confronting the force of white solidarity that usually formed if any charge of misconduct was made against a fellow white. 60

Despite the injustices of life on the station, increasing numbers of Kowanyama Aborigines after the War went as drovers, stockmen or domestics to the stations. This high demand for Aboriginal labour is demonstrated in Wiffie Currington's comments in his Annual Report:

[1946] Demand extra good for stock work. No complaints from any of the stations where boys [sic] employed.

[1948] Demand for stock boys [sic] extra good, and all boys [sic] that are suitable are out on employment.

[1951] During the last twelve months, the demand for native labour for the cattle stations has been far in excess of the amount [sic] of boys [sic] we have been able to send out.

[1955] Usual demand for native stockmen is being met as far as possible.

[1958] All able bodied men not required for Mission maintenance have no difficulty in obtaining employment on cattle stations, and we are not able to supply all the labour that is needed. 61

In the dry season of 1958 there were only six able bodied men left on the Mission, an arrangement that was typical of this post-war period of high demand for station labour. 62

In 1940, when 120 agreements for Aboriginal labour were issued from Mitchell River, extra planes were needed to take the workers to the stations, a problem solved in future years by


61 AR, DNA (for the years cited), QPP.

Australian National Airways taking over the run and using much larger DC-3 aircraft.\textsuperscript{63} Considering that 1937 was the first time people at Kowanyama had seen an aircraft, their use of and familiarity with air travel was a direct result of their value as station labour and at odds with their experience of technology on the Mission which was otherwise unsophisticated.\textsuperscript{64}

At the same time as the Diocese was given a free reign in the administration of the Mitchell River Cattle operations by ABM, the government was claiming back its role as the financial guardian of Aborigines. Up until 1931 savings accounts held on behalf of some mission Aborigines were maintained by the Diocese; others had been kept by the Chief Protector’s office from the start. The accounts handed over to the Chief Protector demonstrated that work on the stations had the potential to raise Aborigines, at least on paper, far beyond the indigence in which they were so often depicted.\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Oscar & £67.17.9 \\
Willie Koolatah & £76.6.4 \\
Gregory & £84.8.4 \\
Leonard & £94.17.11 \\
Toby & £152.0.1 \\
Henry & £200.3.4 \\
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\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{63} ABM Review, 1 August 1941, p.115. The ANA route travelled from Cairns to Abingdon Downs, Normanton, Vanrook and then Kowanyama. (Doug Sutherland, The life and times of Douglas Milton Sutherland, typescript, no date, p.28.)

\textsuperscript{64} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 1 October 1937, AB/1, QSA, "[Captain Howard, the pilot ] arrived at 11.30 am and flew over the buildings several times. The people were very excited, some were afraid and hid themselves. It was the first plane the natives had seen, and the first to fly over the Mission". The Mission had its landing ground approved for use by single engine aircraft six weeks later. (Alec MacLeod, diary entry for 1 October 1937, AB/1, QSA.)

\textsuperscript{65} Stephen Davies, entry in Bishop’s Day Book for 9 July 1931. OM.AV/126/1, JOL. and Protector, Somerset District to Chief Protector, 22 August 1932, 32.06606, OF 46, DFSAIA.
These were substantial savings representing many years’ work, large amounts by missionary standards. When Alec MacLeod was appointed mission cattle manager in 1931, his gross salary was £125 a year. Authorisation to draw against individual accounts was given by the local protector, usually the police officer or court official in the towns or the superintendent on the missions. Kenny Jimmy found that the only time he actually handled his own money, even though he was earning £5 a week droving, was when he went into Normanton for the races and was given a small cash amount by the Clerk of Petty Sessions. The stations, like the Mission, operated on a rations system with food and clothes being given in lieu of wages, with cash considered only "pocket money" for special events. By 1967, the time of the government takeover of the Mission, some mission Aborigines had several thousand dollars in their accounts.

In addition to hefty savings balances, the experience of working on the stations had opened up a wider window on the world than was possible for those who only knew the Mission. Air, rail and motor travel were commonplace means of travelling to the stations at a time when the work and transport on the Mission was mostly unmechanised. Some stations had exposed mission Aborigines to better accommodation, the convenience of reticulated water and the health benefits of properly organised sanitation at a time when the Mission lagged far behind even small country communities in these things. Aborigines on the stations participated in a world where their labour had value and where stations competed for their services. Hector Highbury spoke of the confidence this gave the people.

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67 Stephen Davies, Bishop’s Day Book entry for 20 April 1931, OM.AV/126/1, JOL.
68 Kenny Jimmy, taped interview, Kowanyama, 4 May 1988. Kenny said he was earning "five bob a week" which seems erroneous given the rates of pay set down in 1952, his apparent confusion only emphasising his point that he didn’t have the opportunity to manage his earnings. (AR 1952, DNA, QPP, vol.2, p.966.)
69 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
in their own abilities: "We used to get a lot of jobs, anywhere". They saw whites carrying out similar labours exercising real choices in how they lived their life and spent their money, choices that they were not open to them on either station or mission.

Compared with even the smallest country town, the mission "store", commenced in 1922, offered virtually no choice beyond those items deemed appropriate by the missionaries for subsistence. Flour, rice, tea, sugar and tobacco were the staples of the store and often, towards the end of the "wet", would be in a poor condition, mouldy or weevily. The initial idea was to give greater and more economical access to a basic range of consumer items for those who had accrued savings balances but these aspirations were not met to any appreciable extent. For nearly forty years it remained a voucher-operated arrangement in parallel with the doling out of mission rations. Beyond the very modest expenditure possible through the mission store, Wiffie Currington had a policy of not allowing people to draw more than £50 at a time and then only for approved expenditure, like Christmas shopping. This was an application of the time honoured "protection" policy and had the effect of masking the difference between the affluence, on paper, of people with large savings balances and the poverty of those who had stayed on the Mission with very little opportunity of earning cash or accruing a savings balance. Even though Currington had raised the "wages" for working on the Mission from one shilling to five shillings per

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70 Hector Highbury, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 November 1987.
71 Matthews to Bleakley, 27 October 1921, 21:6141 and Bleakley to Matthews, 9 December 1921, 21:6141. Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.
72 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
73 The "Memorandum with regard to the hiring of female Aboriginal or Half-Caste servants", summarised this aspect of the policy of protection well, "Servants may draw on their bank account at any time on application to the Protector or Officer in Charge of Police, who will see, if necessary, that the money is judiciously expended for clothing and other requirements". (no date, but referred to in correspondence from 1919; Chief Protector to Matthews, 29 September 1919, 19:3478, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.)
Bulk store at Kowanyama where rations were dispensed, late 1950s

(Source: Doug Sutherland Album, Brisbane)
The missionaries were fascinated by the elaborate mourning rituals of the Kokobera. This photograph was interpreted by May Smiler as a mother mourning the death of her son (signified by the white clay smeared over her body). May Smiler remembered Joseph Chapman taking a photograph of Poppy, Rio’s mother, when she was in mourning.

(Before 1915, Trubanaman, photograph courtesy of Margery Webb)
The physical remains of the corpse wrapped in their bark coffin and placed on a platform made of saplings. It is unclear what purpose the two men to the right of the photograph have apart from helping this illustration from the *ABM Review* convey the sense of fear Aborigines were believed to have about death.

Original caption: "An Aboriginal burial"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 May 1936, p.66)
week, this was of no consequence compared with wages of eight pounds per week that were being earned on the stations.\textsuperscript{74} When all were brought to the same subsistence level of life on mission rations, the monetary disparities were glossed over.

This protection policy had the effect of allowing very little personal material progress on the Mission throughout the period of post-war high employment. It was a policy that allowed little latitude, as assistant superintendent Norman Clarke discovered after he had purchased a set of kitchen chairs for Smiler Mission and transported them back to the Mission without first gaining Currington’s approval.\textsuperscript{75} Even though Smiler, a mission "insider", had built up ample funds through selling crocodile skins, he was discouraged, as a "protected" Aborigine, from utilising his money for the material improvement of his home and family. Additionally, Currington may have interpreted Clarke’s actions as an attempt to cut between him and an Aboriginal confidante by appearing to challenge the superintendent’s central role in dispensing favour and approving purchases.

Kowanyama Aborigines showed almost no interest, however, in seeking to be exempted from the provisions of the Act. Younger Aborigines heard their elders express a mixture of disapproval and amazement towards Aborigines who became exempted when they encountered exempted Aborigines on the stations or along the droving camps: "Doesn't he feel shame, one blackfellow amongst the white man?".\textsuperscript{76} The prospect of living with whites and having no contact with family or community was largely inconceivable to

\textsuperscript{74} Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 September 1984. The store continued to operate on a ration and credit deduction system until the early 1960s when cash transactions were introduced. (Philip Robinson, taped interview, Nambour, 18 August 1987.)

\textsuperscript{75} Norman Clarke, taped interview, Mareeba, 25 September 1992.

\textsuperscript{76} Lindsay Aidan, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 March 1988.
Kowanyama people. "We never worry about it", was one man’s response to the possibility of becoming exempted.\textsuperscript{77}

The Mission had become well integrated into the pastoral economy which it served. In addition to supplying labour from Kowanyama, the mission acted as an agent for the Presbyterian mission at Aurukun, all at no cost to the stations. The Mission was an active participant in enforcing labour agreements. Chaplain Doug Sutherland described the summary treatment Geoffrey Philip received when he walked off Donors Hill station and made his way, in excess of 400 kilometres, back to Kowanyama, only to be immediately sent back.\textsuperscript{78} The Normanton protector’s comments on this incident reflect a grudging admiration of Geoffrey’s endurance. Despite his admiration, the use of force in upholding the labour agreement was harsh and unbending:

Phillip Geoffrey [sic] shot through from Donor’s Hills about one month ago and walked back to the Mitchell River Mission - about 280 miles - carrying a swag - not a bad effort. He was returned on the plane last week and has gone out to his employment today. He was put in the cell for a few days[,] until he went out[,] to quieten him down.\textsuperscript{79}

This eagerness, on the part of the Mission, to be a party to enforcing labour agreements concealed an ongoing struggle for authority between the mission superintendent and the protector in Normanton. This relationship went back to 1907 when Chief Protector Richard Howard suggested that Matthews be allowed to act as a deputy to Inspector James Lamond, the protector in Normanton.\textsuperscript{80} Howard’s decision to involve the missionary in this way was explained in terms of better conveniencing the neighbouring pastoralists, since the

\textsuperscript{77} Lindsay Aidan, taped interview, Kowanyama, 15 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{78} Doug Sutherland, The life and times of Douglas Milton Sutherland, typescript, no date, p.30.
\textsuperscript{80} Howard to Lamond, 3 September 1907, 07:2142, Chief Protector of Aboriginals correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.
Act prescribed a Justice of the Peace as witness to the agreement. Undoubtedly this provision of the Act was unworkable in the remote pastoral regions where hundreds of kilometres and seasonal flooding separated the already reluctant pastoralists from their nearest centre of government administration.

In 1942 the Normanton protector instructed that Bullie, Nipper and Barbara be sent to Normanton from Rutland Plains for re-employment in the Normanton protectorate only to have the then mission superintendent, MacLeod, intervene to have them returned to Kowanyama.\textsuperscript{81} Bullie was once again in the centre of the struggle for authority between Kowanyama and Normanton in 1953 when the Normanton protector requested she be sent to a station. Currington’s reply was direct: "[She] is approximately 60 years of age and has a credit balance of over £600 and as she herself wished to remain on the Mission, I would think that she was entitled to".\textsuperscript{82} Currington asserted that it was his role to place Aboriginal workers and to manage their work schedules, a role equally claimed by the Normanton protector in satisfying the labour hungry stations. O’Leary backed Currington’s claims, effectively, if not legally, granting him an exclusive sphere of influence. O’Leary thought Currington’s declaration, that he intended to "hold all labour wherever possible for use on the surrounding stations, before allowing any labour to go to other Protectorates", "fair and reasonable".\textsuperscript{83} Missionary paternalism, even though capable of being rigid in enforcing agreements, still offered more consideration for Aborigines and their individual

\textsuperscript{81} Protector of Aboriginals, Normanton to O’Leary, 24 June 1942, Administration - Kowanyama Employment, Aborigines, 17A-13, DFSAIA, Interim Transfer R254, QSA.
\textsuperscript{82} O’Leary to Protector of Aboriginals, Normanton, 30 January 1953, 6E/21, Administration - Kowanyama Employment, Aborigines 17A-13, DFSAIA, Interim Transfer R254, QSA.
\textsuperscript{83} O’Leary to Protector of Aboriginals, Normanton, 30 January 1953, 6E/21, Administration - Kowanyama Employment, Aborigines 17A-13, DFSAIA, Interim Transfer R254, QSA.
circumstances than did a distant protector inclined to treat them as mere labour commodities.

In addition to its role as a "safety valve", work on the stations did little to disturb the equilibrium on the Mission. Practices on both stations and mission supported the pauperisation that had become as integral a part of the mission ideology as paternalism. As long as the Mission controlled the place that Kowanyama people considered "home", Aborigines were willing to make the transformations between station and mission and all that this required of them. Even though Aboriginal labour was productive it was treated as unproductive. When Aborigines had become rich they were treated as if they were poor. All the while the Kowanyama people were being told that the mission cattle herd was theirs, its profits were being raked off into the unaccountable morass of diocesan finance already described. The self critical survey of missions by Robertson, the ABM chairman, in 1952 identified the limited aspirations for native people which he saw being characteristic of ABM's work not only in Australia but also in New Guinea and Melanesia.

... we have simply provided... food and clothing - we have attended to his educational and physical needs, but we are still looking upon him as a "hewer of wood and drawer of water". In these days of national consciousness we must do more.84

Robertson sought a solution in the formation of co-operatives.85 This still echoed the "self sufficiency" rhetoric of Matthews, decades earlier, when the cattle enterprise was commenced. Robertson was impatient that the achievement of economic power was a long way off:


We may be forced to help them [Aborigines] for a generation but they are capable, in time, of being able to stand among us as a respected people, instead of mere satellites that we are forced to feed and clothe.86

Targets for self sufficiency and economic viability were continually revised. Gilbert White considered that 500 head of cattle would be sufficient to ensure self sufficiency, Robertson placed self sufficiency a generation in the future even though, at the time of his comments, White’s numerical target had been achieved tenfold. By 1958 there was very little in the way of general material progress to show at Kowanyama for over fifty years of missionary control. When Norman Clarke went there as assistant superintendent he found the place almost exclusively concerned with cattle and supplying labour to the stations. Clarke’s description of the village life at Kowanyama in 1958 shows the extent of material deprivation;

The people live in small poorly ventilated cabbage tree huts, mostly with dirt floors, very few of them are in line so that no streets can be made, they are set in a sea of long grass and rubbish so that it is hard to tell that there is a village at all... Most of the houses have no furniture and the people just sit on the ground to eat and prepare meals... the dormitory and school children, though they sit at a table, only eat with a spoon or their fingers... There is electricity and water laid on, but only for the whites, there is one tap to a village as far as water is concerned and as the villages are fairly scattered many of the women have to carry water a long way. The store is a ramshackle old affair and no attempt has been made to make it look like a shop. There are public lavatories scattered throughout the villages and men are employed to empty them; they slack on the job if they get a chance but you can hardly blame them as they have to carry the pans on a yoke over their shoulders, two at a time anything up to nearly half a mile... there is no arrangement for disposal of rubbish and tins etc are just thrown into the grass.88

Even this poor arrangement was an improvement on the situation in 1954 when there were only toilets for the staff and two Aboriginal families. The communal toilets, criticised by Clarke, were part of a hookworm eradication program commenced only four

87 Gilbert White, Missionary Notes, 26 July 1909, p.66.
88 Clarke to McFarlane, 13 July 1958, ABM Chairman’s correspondence: series 5, box 2, folder 9.
years earlier.\textsuperscript{89} The condition of the school building was so bad that a government inspector feared that it could collapse and cause loss of life.\textsuperscript{90} The years between the end of Matthew’s superintendentship in 1924 and the end of Currington’s in 1960 witnessed minimal material change in Kowanyama compared with the extent of change in the wider community or even on the other Aboriginal communities.\textsuperscript{91}

The ABM’s post-war slogan for its new Aboriginal policy, "The Aborigines Call for Our Best", suggested far more than was achieved, at least as far as Mitchell River Mission was concerned.\textsuperscript{92} The policy, envisaged the development of "community, health, education and recreation services commensurate with the responsibility we owe to our original Australians". From the apparently low base of missionary operations towards the end of the Second World War, when Currington continued alone, without any other white assistants, the appointment of additional missionary staff was the main initiative during the post-war period.

Whereas the pre-war Missionary propaganda dealt with the material concerns of the Mission, especially towards the various schemes to build an economic base, post-war writing emphasised the personality and struggles of individual missionaries. This change of focus to the missionary rather than the Mission may reflect a recognition that an economic base had been established in the cattle, but more likely reflects the organisational needs of ABM in its attempts to meet its personnel requirements in the post-war period.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} Doug Sutherland, The life and times of Douglas Milton Sutherland, typescript, no date, p.41.
\item \textsuperscript{90} O’Shea to Director General Health and Medical Services, 3 December 1958, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Correspondence, OF 40, DFSAlA.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Annual Report, Director of Native Affairs, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1960-1961, p.1167. O’Leary reported that progress in housing on Church Missions was "not comparative [sic] with that applicable on Government Settlements", a comment that applied to Kowanyama in most other areas as well.
\item \textsuperscript{92} ABM Review, 1 September 1947, p.131.
\end{itemize}
The re-building of the New Guinea mission, new missionary opportunities in Japan and a new spirit of missionary co-operation in the areas of concern to ABM displaced Mitchell River from its pre-war prominence in the pages of the ABM Review. When interest in Aboriginal missions experienced a resurgence in the 1950s, it was in the shape of the wildly enthusiastic propaganda for the co-operative experiment at Lockhart River. Even when Lockhart River was being advanced as the model of the way forward for Aboriginal missions, there was no recognition of the extent of resources that had been applied from the Mitchell River cattle funds to prop up the Lockhart finances.

Incredibly, ABM had been kept in the dark about the internal financial arrangements of the Diocese until Robertson, encouraged by the Board’s finance committee, decided to ask the obvious question, "[What was] the income received from the cattle industry on the Mitchell River Mission?" Hudson’s answer must have shocked ABM’s Sydney administrators. For the six years from 1950 to 1956, cattle sales had amounted to £46,299. Even though this period’s figures opened with accumulated deficits, the Diocese was able to operate four of its missions in surplus to their budgets in some of the years during this period. This meant that savings had been made on staff wages and other operational items and that the missions concerned were run at a lower level of services than even their meagre budgets suggested. By a combination of operational stringency and application of cattle

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95 Robertson to Hudson, 18 September 1956. ABM Chairman’s correspondence, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 9, ML MSS 4503, Add On 1822.
96 Hudson to Robertson, 13 October 1956. ABM Chairman’s correspondence, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 9, ML MSS 4503, Add On 1822.
funds all deficits were absorbed by 1956.\textsuperscript{97} When the net subsidy for each of the diocesan missionary operations was calculated, the return of funds to Kowanyama was worse than even Currington had supposed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan Administration</td>
<td>£5,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Straits Mission</td>
<td>£16,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s Mission, Torres Straits</td>
<td>£2,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockhart River Mission</td>
<td>£7,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward River Mission</td>
<td>£2,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell River Mission</td>
<td>£4,908</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering that annual wages, even for well paid whites, were under £1,000 at the end of this period,\textsuperscript{98} the amounts represented here were significant, their total, equivalent to over a million dollars at present day values. Even the amount for Lockhart River, the most subsidised of the Aboriginal missions, seemed insignificant beside the combined subsidy to the two missions in the Torres Straits and to the diocesan administration on Thursday Island.

Richard MacFarlane, the Registrar (chief administrative executive) of the Diocese, wrote a scathing attack on Currington to Frank Coaldrake, the ABM Chairman, in July 1958 after he had resigned his appointment on Thursday Island:

I am certain that Mitchell River has not progressed one “iota” since the end of the War and further that it will never progress as long as the present Superintendent remains. The man is not a churchman in the proper sense of the word. He has no administrative ability. He has no foresight, no leadership, and no sense of co-

\textsuperscript{97} This surplus was effectively a profit from the combined incomes of ABM grant, government grant and store trading.

\textsuperscript{98} Dawn May, \textit{Aboriginal Labour}, p.121. The highest level of the station hands award, a head stockman, earned £819 per annum in 1957.
I have no axe to grind with Currington, but I think that in fairness to the natives, to the ABM, the Government, and the Church in Australia this man should be asked to leave. Mitchell River will never progress while he is there.  

Even though MacFarlane had not visited Kowanyama, he had formed strong opinions that the blame for Mitchell River's predicament lay entirely with Currington. He had not considered that there might be a deeper seated issue about the way that the Diocese, under his administration, distributed the wealth that was primarily derived from Mitchell River itself, with Currington as its loyal agent and chief supporter.

Through the alienation of the Mitchell River cattle money from the people and the "protection" of their personal savings, they were cast as irretrievable dependants upon government and church "benevolence" and charity, apparently dependent upon handouts for any improvement to their circumstances. "The Aborigines at Mitchell River do not benefit from the wealth they produce", was ABM chairman Frank Coaldrake's accurate assessment of the situation in 1959. It had taken forty years for the Anglican missionary hierarchy to acknowledge this patently obvious situation.

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Gilbert White’s account of events for 18 June 1905 gives some clues to the missionary approach to the evangelisation of the people on the mission reserve:

Had our Trinity Sunday celebration at 7.30 am, with fresh lilies from the lagoon on our little altar. Just as we were finishing breakfast a fearful din broke out in the camp, and James Noble ran over followed by the rest of us. We were just in time to prevent a fight which was beginning between two tribes over rights of hunting. The protagonists were Urdell the giant and a Koko Widdee man. Both were furiously angry, and we had to stay some time for the tumult to subside. I took Morning Prayer and Mr. Gribble Evening [Prayer].

Gilbert White’s group of Anglican missionaries ordered their life by the calendar, sacramental actions and devotions of the Christian faith. The "fearful din" from the Aboriginal camp was no doubt seen as a significant intrusion into this missionary world since it had taken place on Sunday, the holiest day of the Christian week, and coming as it did straight after the celebration of the Holy Communion, the sacramental centre of Anglican life. As an intrusion into the new Christian order that the missionaries were bringing to the reserve, the noise of conflict was representative of the supposed "heathen" character of the Aborigines which White and Gribble and their associates had felt called to change by the principles of their Christian faith and their English culture. Just as they had decorated their altar with the native waterlily flowers, they sought to bring the Kokobera to the faith of the Christian church as they understood it. The repression of this first sign

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"Urdell the giant", one of the protagonists in the fight that confronted the missionaries on 18 June 1905. When they rushed in to quell the trouble, they were signalling a new era when missionary order was to claim precedence over customary law.

(Source: ABM Collection, Mitchell Library, Pic.Acc.5975, Box 10)
of conflict amongst their Aboriginal hosts figured significantly in the strategies they believed would further this aim.

The missionaries seemed, in fact, to be intent on creating a more "Christian" society than the one they had come from. In the face of frontier violence, Aboriginal dispossession and the limitations of their own effectiveness in countering these realities, they sought a utopian ideal that combined the familiar and the fantastic. Their utopianism sought to merge the familiar elements of English village life with an other-worldly expectation of "good blackfellows" living a life free from conflict, sexual intrigue and other realities of adult life. They hoped to create a village where Aborigines would live under missionary domination. These Aborigines, it was assumed, would be a childlike people happily content with their lot in this missionary scheme. In this way, the missionaries hoped, Aborigines would be led from their "heathen" state to a higher stage of "civilisation". Bishop John Hudson was clear about this principle in his letter to new missionary Beth Mussett in 1953:

We are to do whatever we can and whatever we see to be necessary and helpful to the furthering of the missionary object [sic], which is to educate the people to become Christian citizens.

The first sign that the missionaries were serious about the agenda for change that they had announced at Yanda Swamp on 1 June 1905 came with the day’s events for 18 June described by Gilbert White. On this day the missionaries made a conscious decision to cross the spatial barrier between their missionary camp and the Aboriginal camp and then to intervene to re-order certain unexceptional aspects of Aboriginal life. The missionaries were in no danger from these events and fear seemed to play no part in their intervention.

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3 Hudson to Mussett, 17 February 1953. [Correspondence in the possession of the recipient, Mrs Beth Pidsley (nee Mussett), Townsville.]
On hearing the noise of the trouble in the Aboriginal camp they ran towards it and, guessing that a fight was about to develop, intervened to stop it. Satisfied that they were "just in time to prevent a fight which was beginning between the two tribes" they sought to establish the cause of the trouble. They understood the issue to have been, "over rights of hunting". The focus was an issue between two Aborigines and, even after the missionaries had intervened, the conflict did not widen to threaten or injure any of the missionary party. It was obvious from these actions that the missionaries would not be detached observers, patiently building an understanding of Kokobra customs and practices, but interventionists who took seriously their own charter that "good blackfellows" did not fight with each other. Unlike other Munpitch the Kokobra had encountered, pastoralists and police, these Munpitch were more interested in intervening in their affairs than they were in shooting or abducting them.

For much of the year the Kokobra and other groups with lands on the reserve were dispersed in hearth group camps with little need or occasion for contact between them. When there were opportunities for larger gatherings, usually for ceremony or co-operative exploitation of a food source, private grievances would often lead to the conflict sequence reaching a public phase. Accusation, challenge and threat might all be part of the grievance being brought to a dramatic focus perhaps culminating in a fight or trial at arms. By the time this phase in the conflict was reached emotions were highly charged and other people,

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4 Gilbert White, Thirty Years, p.134.
5 Marc Ross, The culture of conflict, New Haven, 1993, p.17. It is helpful to understand conflict as "a process, involving the disputants' sequences of responses to each other", and for the Kokobra this sequence could involve both public and private elements. Privately, a person might simply harbour a grievance or resort to sorcery if the grievance was thought best dealt with in this way. For some transgressions of ritual and ceremonial prohibitions, ambush and attack may have been the means of dealing with the grievance outside of the public domain. Many times a public response would be the initial or consequent development.
in addition to the original parties, were likely to have taken sides according to kinship for
the looming fight or joined a third group comprising people with conflicting kin loyalties
that made it difficult to take the side of either one of the disputants. Even here emotion and
indignation were held in some restraint by the traditional kinship patterns and an awareness
of what really was at stake and what would defuse the tension and resolve the grievance.
This very vocal, public and potentially violent phase of the conflict process would only
proceed as far as was needed to satisfy the restoration of harmony. Even enemies were in
relationship and excessive violence in conflict beyond that approved by the social norms
would be long remembered and accrue a debt that would invite retribution. It was an
approach to conflict that allowed a "clearing of the air" and a return to the important matters
for which people had come together in the first place, an effective and pragmatic approach
to relations between groups of people who only met together infrequently. Conflict has
been described as one of the most fundamental realities of human society:

Conflict is a ubiquitous feature of behaviour within and between human groups. Problems of theft, murder, unpaid debts, sexual assault, jealousy and anger are
human universals in that there are virtually no communities where they are
unknown.

Conflict was a normal feature of life for the Kokobera and was managed so as to restore
harmony when this had been fractured.

In this context, the gathering of the Kokobera in the first few weeks of June 1905,
due to the presence of the missionaries, was no different from the countless other occasions

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7 Taylor, ibid., p.287, describes in greater detail the function of these three groups.
common interest is also involved in the relationship of antagonists. Winning does not usually have a
strictly competitive meaning, "... it is not winning relative to one's adversary. It means gaining relative
to one's own value system; and this may be done by bargaining, by mutual accommodation, and by the
avoidance of mutually damaging behaviour".
9 Marc Ross, The culture of conflict, p.2.
of tribal gathering that had preceded it. Not unexpectedly, the traditional conflict resolution process was at work in the camp that had formed itself around the missionaries at Trubanaman, when the violent confrontation erupted on 18 June 1905. This dispute, involving two principal antagonists, had spilled over into the wider public domain with its concomitant level of noise and involvement from all present. A situation like this, except for the presence of the missionaries, would have been unremarkable for all involved and led, in due course, to a restored harmony with perhaps some bruises or wounds as the cost of the resolution.

The sources of conflict amongst the Kokobera and their neighbours and the means of conflict resolution were matters that the missionaries did not understand. In considering the dynamics of the conflict of 18 June 1905 it is inconceivable to think that the Aborigines involved would have understood the intervention of the missionaries as anything other than an arbitrary siding with one party, most likely understood as a defence of one party from the other. Intervention in such a dispute, that entailed all the traditional perspectives associated with conflict resolution, without having an understanding of these things would, in any circumstance, set some very unpredictable outcomes in place. Since the actual public event of the fight was part of a much bigger grievance resolution pattern, the termination of this important phase prematurely could scarcely be thought to resolve the grievance. Instead, it remained unresolved.

There is no evidence that any of these considerations informed the missionary intervention; rather this was the intervention of superiors into the affairs of inferiors, a crude display of the dominance the missionaries assumed would be their right to enforce over the inhabitants of the reserve. It was the sort of intervention a teacher might make in
a school yard scuffle, the assumption that a sudden imposition of peace would in its turn lead to forgetfulness that there ever had been a grievance. Anthropologist A.P. Elkin spelled out in very clear terms to Robertson of ABM what was needed if missionaries were to make proper sense of Aboriginal conflict:

I don't know Mr Chapman personally. He was helpful to my research worker, but unless he really has got a mastery of the language and of the social organization and ritual life he is not likely to be in a position really to understand the movements making for trouble and tribal clashes. In the long run for the natives it is a dual life, and the missionary sees only one side of it. That is a simple fact.°

Anthropologist John Taylor's research at Edward River answered the question, as far as Joseph Chapman was concerned, that Elkin had left open: "the missionaries as a whole had little real understanding of why Aborigines disputed".°

The missionaries seemed unable to resist becoming involved in situations of conflict between Aborigines. Missionary contempt for Aboriginal society had convinced them that Aborigines were incapable of resolving conflict without missionary intervention. Indeed this had become Joseph Chapman's primary missionary aim after the establishment of Edward River Mission in 1939:

When Mr Chapman founded the Mission, he believed that he was only called to bring peace to the tribes... [he] did nothing to teach the Christian faith... Chappie deliberately made Sunday a hunting day and most of the people left the mission on hunting expeditions, and on the other days of the week Chappie made things as difficult for [Cyril Brown, the chaplain] to have much contact with the children and adults.°

This seems an incredible reversal from Chapman's boldly evangelistic assertion in 1918 that the church building at Kowanyama was, "the centre of all our work".°° Indeed, the

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12 Doug Sutherland, "The life and times of Douglas Milton Sutherland", typescript, no date, p.67.
13 Joseph Chapman, ABM Review, 1 July 1918, p.58.
period between 1918 and 1939 was one of unparalleled conflict at Kowanyama and both Chapman’s new approach and the foundation of Edward River Mission itself can be seen as reactions to this tumultuous period. In fact, episodes of conflict between Aborigines, styled as "tribal fighting" by the missionaries, was the clearest test to identify where Aborigines stood with respect to the missionaries and with respect to the disputants in such conflicts.

The practice of direct missionary intervention, of a kind with the events of 19 June 1905, was favoured by missionaries throughout the history of the Mission. Chapman is remembered striding between the contending sides, disarming fighters, breaking their spears and generally, by these means, attempting to assert missionary dominance even during a spear fight. James Housden, the chaplain between 1930 and 1932, made one attempt to intervene in this way but was so terrified by the experience he said, "I didn’t try it a second time". MacLeod caught in a similar situation sent Gregory, his Kunjen assistant, to fetch his revolver so that he could discharge it into the air to demonstrate that he was serious about bringing the fighting to an end and using violent means if he needed to. Currington on the other hand, considered that it enhanced his authority to be seen to be confident to get in amongst the fighters unarmed and break their spears. He maintained that Aborigines said, "This man’s not worried, he doesn’t carry a revolver". Currington had determined that the constant fighting he had witnessed at Kowanyama towards the end of MacLeod’s time as superintendent could not be permitted to continue when he took over this responsibility in 1941. He instituted a regime where any sound of fighting after the

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16 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
ringing of the mission bell at 9.00 pm resulted in the closure of the store, a strategy he claimed was so effective in curtailing fighting that he had no need for a jail. His entry in the mission diary in 5 May 1948 suggests that the use of imprisonment had, by then, lapsed for a considerable period:

At night 7 girls, some having been punished by teacher, ran away. Robert and Mark sent after them. In case it had to be used I inspected cell. Found it occupied by Barr’s chickens, some mash, and the corner looked and smelled like a urinal. Cleared my own storeroom of everything in case a cell were needed. 17

Whether it was James Noble in 1905 or Robert and Mark in 1948, the missionaries’ own records show how heavily they relied on Aborigines to act as their deputies in enforcing missionary order. Even though the missionaries at Mitchell River resorted to the administration of corporal punishment themselves, it was a relatively unimportant strategy in enforcing the missionary order compared with the sort of influence they were able to achieve through fear of exile and through Aboriginal intermediaries. They were keen to maintain "distance" between their own power and any personal challenges to it. Certainly they were quick to punish any challenge by imprisonment, either in a cell or by leg-chaining to a post, and by banishment from the Mission, but were reluctant to do anything likely to invite a direct response against them. Chapman took Seymour, the chaplain, to task after he had "thrashed" some of the young Aboriginal women in 1936, insisting that he "lead the people not drive them". 18

This meant of course that the Aborigines who carried out the missionaries’ bidding needed to negotiate their way through the difficult relationship situations that arose within the Aboriginal community as a result. In an analysis of the dynamics of race relations on

17 Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 5 May 1948.
18 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 29 January 1936.
the pastoral frontier Rowse demonstrated that the colonists in the Western Australian Kimberley region divided Aborigines into "insiders" and "outsiders", a division that was maintained for a long period in that area. The "insiders", played a crucial role in mediating the world of the colonists to "outsiders":

The most trusted lieutenants among the station community more than accommodated to pastoralism: they helped define the pastoral order, negotiating its boundaries with an unruly world outside. They were a new breed, moulded as factotums from a young age, skilled in their knowledge of country, cattle, horses, Aborigines, and their masters' wishes. 19

The missionary agenda for the people of the Mitchell River contained an incipient social structure with clear distinctions between the inside and the outside of the Mission. Rewards would be dispensed and punishments imposed relative to the standing of any individual across this divide. James Noble's decision to lead the missionaries to the fight on 18 June 1905 was thus the sort of "insider" behaviour typical of someone like Noble who occupied the role of trusted lieutenant to Gribble. James Noble's eagerness to lead the missionaries to the fight between the Kokobera and Kunjen men was undoubtedly conditioned by his experience of Yarrabah and his familiarity with Gribble's suppression of any fighting that took place there as well as his expectation that the missionaries wanted the same principles employed at Mitchell River. 20

Aboriginal intermediaries played an important role in the foundation of the Mission, John Grady in interpretation, and James Noble as the first of the missionary party on the scene in this conflict. Even though the missionaries used these insiders to simplify their relations with Aborigines in general, the arrangement was usually far from simple from the

19 Tim Rowse, "'Were you ever savages?': Aboriginal insiders and pastoralists' patronage". Oceania, vol. 58, no. 1, December 1987, p. 83.

20 Ernest Gribble, A Despised Race, Sydney, 1933, p. 42. Gribble describes the 1894 intervention of a Yarrabah missionary, Sister Menia, in a "tribal fight" by standing in between the contending parties.
James Noble, "pioneer missionary", to Mitchell River and Roper River missions. Noble was the first of the missionary party to rush to the fight on 18 June 1905.

(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, "Personalities, "Carpentaria", Box 9, folder 14)
Aboriginal perspective. If the missionaries correctly understood the issue between the Kokobera man Urdell and his Kunjen adversary on 18 June 1905, it is likely that Urdell, confident in the security of being on his own land had aired a grievance of some kind against a member of the river tribe. From the Kokobera perspective, the missionaries had travelled from the East through Kunjen country with eastern Aborigines including Bendigo, an *Uw Ingan* speaking Kunjen man. The further fact of their intervention in a challenge by a Kokobera man against a Kunjen man would have appeared as favouritism of the tribe whose members were most associated with these *Munpitch*. The potential to manipulate the *Munpitch* to a particular advantage in traditional conflicts was no doubt evident as was the influence that Aboriginal intermediaries could have over the *Munpitch* in their role as cultural interpreters. Even if the missionary *Munpitch* didn’t know it, they were soon to be adopted as the Kokobera’s own.

The early years at Trubanaman saw the missionaries working most closely with a group of adult Aboriginal men whom they consistently describe as "boys". This missionary depiction of these Aboriginal men totally obscured the Aboriginal self understanding of their significance. Bondonally of the Kokobera, Manirr clan is generally portrayed by Aborigines as the Aboriginal patron of the missionaries, the traditional custodian of the land at Trubanaman who allowed the missionaries to settle on his land and under whose patronage they dwelt in safety.

[Bondonally said] "Don’t be frightened of whites, they are just like you and me, we want to be friends",... the missionaries gave them tobacco and tea and sugar in those early days.\(^21\)

\(^{21}\) Sam Zingle, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988.
The missionaries were not merely tolerated intruders but represented a valued resource that the Kokobera were keen to cultivate and if possible monopolise. They knew that this would not be an easy task, knowing as they did, through lengthy experience, how arbitrary and suddenly dangerous the Munpitch could be. Men like Bondonally were bush-living Kokobera, whom Bowman had not "let in" to Rutland Plains; some had wives and children living in the bush at the time they had taken up residence on the Mission, others were unmarried. Unfamiliar as they were with the ways of the missionaries, they needed, initially at least, close supervision and instruction to carry out the tasks set for them by the missionaries. They were considered by the missionaries to be the nucleus of a workforce to construct mission dwellings, cultivate mission gardens and be the subjects of missionary evangelisation. In addition to their relegation to the missionary category of sub-adult autonomy as "boys", they were further considered to be "inmates", client members of the missionary institution with all of the loss of freedom that the term suggested.

They were "insiders" of a lesser category than the "Captains" who operated more closely to the missionaries with somewhat greater autonomy, even if this was only because the missionaries were more confident in the Captains' adhering to missionary rules. The primary routine focus of the Captains' work was the organisation of the other men for the many tasks around the Mission. In this way Grady was put in charge of the men engaged to carry supplies up to Trubanaman from the boat landing, and was sent on errands to Rutland Plains.

Experienced and reliable "insider" Aborigines were of as great value to missionaries as they were to pastoralists. Gribble had no desire to part with James Noble or Ernest.

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22 E. Selwyn Chase, diary entry for 24 April 1906.
23 E. Selwyn Chase, diary entry for 30 April 1906.
Bounghi who had accompanied him from Yarrabah. Instead, the foundation missionaries at Mitchell River had to make do with the relatively inexperienced Peter Bendigo and John Grady as their insiders. Both men had been baptised by Gribble in Yeremundo lagoon on the 1904 expedition to the reserve. Gribble’s description of this event emphasised the liminal role of these first baptisms for the Mission which was to be established the following year:

For the next few weeks we had natives in large numbers with us as we prospected about the reserve looking for a suitable site for the new mission. The natives piloted us to a lagoon called “Yeremundo”. Here we made a camp for the time that we remained on the reserve. One day in the presence of about two hundred natives, Bendigo and Grady were baptized in the lagoon. They had been prepared at Yarrabah for Holy Baptism. On the opposite side of the lagoon to our camp the natives with the two candidates for baptism stood with their spears. Palgrave and I entered the water and the boys met us in the middle and were made members of the Church. It was a most impressive scene, that gathering of wild natives in the bush. That was the first baptism on the Mitchell River. There have been very many since, and no doubt some of those ignorant natives who witnessed that scene have been admitted to Christ’s Body, the Church since. Grady was given the name of John and Bendigo that of Peter. 24

Grady, a Kokobera man, 25 was employed under a labour agreement by White in 1903 and acted as the interpreter for Roth and White’s visit to the reserve area in that year. 26 He had been with White to Thursday Island and with Gribble to Yarrabah for training in missionary work generally but more specifically in preparation for his baptism. At Yarrabah he met and married his wife Rhoda. 27 By accompanying the party to establish the Mission in 1905 he was separated from Rhoda for five months until she accompanied Chase from Yarrabah when he arrived at Trubanaman to take up the superintendentship in October 1905. 28 John Grady’s missionary life at Mitchell River was relatively brief; he died

24 Edward Gribble, A Despised Race, pp.63, 64.
26 Roth to Under Secretary for Lands, 11 August 1903, A/58783, QSA.
28 Chase to Roth, “Report, Trubanaman Mission 1905”, no date, 06:1000, A/58783, QSA.
on 10 March 1910 at Trubanaman, with Matthews paying tribute to his role in the foundation of the Mission, describing him as: "The first pioneer of this Mission to cross the River".29

Either inexperience at playing the role of an "insider" or a simple unwillingness to be moulded as one, showed when Bendigo struck Thomas Williams during an altercation over Bendigo’s non-attendance at a church service.30 Even though Superintendent Chase had used physical violence himself against an Aboriginal man only two days before, Bendigo’s act was condemned and punished.31 With missionary dominance at stake, a secure building was hastily completed so that Bendigo could be locked up as punishment for striking Williams.32 Gilbert White considered this to be a "serious case of insubordination" and congratulated Chase for the way he had dealt with Bendigo.33

Bendigo, exiled in 1901 to Fraser Island for cattle spearing on Dunbar,34 came under Gribble’s influence when the Fraser Island people were relocated to Yarrabah and was an obvious choice for Gribble to take with him on his exploratory expedition to the Mitchell. He was in the awkward role from his personal point of view, but a vital one as it concerned the missionaries, of intermediary between white and black.

Unlike the "insider" Aborigines who served the Duracks in the Kimberley, Bendigo and Grady had only been under white influence for a few years and had not resigned their independence to the extent required by the whites. They demonstrated that their

30 E. Selwyn Chase, diary entry for 7 March 1906.
31 E. Selwyn Chase, diary entry for 5 March 1906. Chase administered one stroke of the cane as punishment to Barry after he struck another man on the back with a stick, noting formally in the mission diary, "this is my first act of corporal punishment".
32 E. Selwyn Chase, diary entry for 8 March 1906.
33 Gilbert White, diary entry for 12 April 1906.
34 Rivers to Roth, 17 February 1901, 01:02989, COL/483, QSA.
commitment to solidarity with Aborigines was more important than protecting the missionary interest when it came to a conflict between these interests. When Thomas Williams economised on flour by making the damper for the mission Aborigines from equal measures of flour and crushed, home-grown corn Grady took exception and protested that the damper was inferior and would make everyone ill.\textsuperscript{35} This was not the sort of response expected from an "insider" like Grady and was met by Williams' threatening to send everyone bush to search for their food if they objected to his economies. Not surprisingly, this tactic isolated Grady and silenced his objection. Any "insider" privileges came at the cost of acceptance and perpetuation of missionary domination.

It is evident that the Trubanaman missionaries were searching for Aborigines to occupy this "insider" role and were willing to use a combination of reward and punishment to achieve it. Bendigo's incarceration was the punitive side of this attempt to better prepare him for this function. Six months later, when Gilbert White ordered that Bendigo's house be enlarged by the addition of an extra room, he was wanting to reward Bendigo for his cooperation since his punishment and demonstrate missionary willingness to invest scarce resources to form and mark Bendigo as an "insider".\textsuperscript{36} With no knowledge of Aboriginal language, Matthews was heavily dependent on Bendigo and others to carry out the daily work of the Mission. When he was investigating a disturbance in 1907, Matthews "made all boys fall into line and questioned all closely, through Bendigo".\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Thomas Williams, diary entry for 27 March 1908.
\textsuperscript{36} Gilbert White, diary entry for 7 August 1906 and White to Roth, 16 April 1906, 06:791, Chief Protector's Correspondence, A/58855, QSA. "[Bendigo] was suffering from "swelled head" and the disgrace seems to have had an excellent effect as his conduct since has been very good".
\textsuperscript{37} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 4 November 1907.
The eagerness of the missionaries to establish a cadre of "insiders" led them to make decisions which must have been received unfavourably by the Kokobera men who had decided to live on the Mission. Amongst these decisions, the rapid elevation of Pindi to an "insider" role stands out as one that was as ill judged as it was eagerly welcomed by the missionaries. Pindi had been admitted to the Mission on 21 October 1906 by Henry Matthews and was soon being praised for his efforts: "Pindi splendid worker, gives entire satisfaction". Pindi spoke "good English" and had been a trooper in the Native Police detachment on the Palmer under Whelan's command. He was one of the troopers in Constable Murray's patrol which came under attack near Dunbar on 11 July 1896, and had received a bad spear wound in this skirmish. There is no question that he seemed a good recruit from the missionary perspective; he spoke English well, had been trained to meet white expectations in the police and filled a gap in the leadership of the Mission which had been sorely felt. From the perspective of other Aborigines, however, the presence of a former police trooper in such a position of missionary confidence can only have caused uneasy feelings given that he was implicated in some of the most violent massacres in the pre-mission period of the area.

His presence may have prompted Bob Dunbar, a Kunjen "insider" from the area patrolled by Whelan's detachment, to leave the Mission for work at Rutland Plains. Like Pindi, Bob Dunbar had quickly become a mainstay of the mission workforce, a "captain"

38 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 17 January 1907.
39 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 21 October 1906.
40 Poingdestre to Lamond, 20 July 1896, 96:09080, Highbury Station, A/41590, QSA.
41 Lofty Yam, taped interview, Kowanyama, 12 November 1987, counted Pindi amongst the perpetrators of the Mulong Lagoon outrage.
42 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 17 November 1906.
amongst the Aboriginal men during the Mission's inaugural year.\textsuperscript{43} Two years after leaving for Rutland Plains he was back at the Mission, this time as an absconder from the station, when Bowman wanted him to drive cattle to Cairns.\textsuperscript{44} By 1910 he was being prepared as a candidate for baptism.\textsuperscript{45} Back working at Rutland Plains later in 1910, he had been accused of theft by McIntyre, prompting Matthews, without further enquiry, to become involved in the accusation.\textsuperscript{46} With his abilities as a cattleman in demand, he left Matthews frustrated when he refused to go with Watham on a mustering trip to the Batavia River on 20 April 1912, a labour arrangement that Matthews had expected him to comply with. Reacting to this refusal, Matthews "installed" him and his wife Lucy at the Mission's Angeram outstation, a concession which allowed him some hope of a life less controlled by missionaries and pastoralists.\textsuperscript{47} By 1925 he was again in an "insider" role as a member of the party accompanying Constable Brown to arrest the fugitive, Simon.\textsuperscript{48}

Fortunately for the missionaries a ready pool of Christian South Sea Islanders was available from whom they were able to recruit black "insiders". At the same time as Bendigo was being disciplined, Islander Bob Ling was being praised by Gilbert White for his work at Trubanaman: "Bob Ling has been of the greatest use in building gardens, managing the whaleboat and other work".\textsuperscript{49} A year later the praise was undiminished, "Bob Ling has been working very hard and well".\textsuperscript{50} Bob Ling was succeeded in 1909 by Jack Giebo and Tom Solomon, South Sea Islanders who were formally admitted to the office of

\textsuperscript{43} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 29 May 1906.
\textsuperscript{44} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 2 December 1908.
\textsuperscript{45} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 18 April 1910.
\textsuperscript{46} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 1 July 1910.
\textsuperscript{47} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 25 April 1912.
\textsuperscript{48} Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 17 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{49} Gilbert White, diary entry for 12 April 1906.
\textsuperscript{50} Gilbert White, diary entry for 9 March 1907.
"Lay helper" for the Mission.51 Johnnie Savo, while not part of the admission service, was present at Trubanaman at least from the middle of 1910.52 These three men provided almost a generation of missionary "insider" leadership until their deaths, within a few years of each other, in the early 1920s.53 Jack Giebo, particularly, had been associated with missionary Florence Buchanan on Thursday Island after concluding work as an indentured labourer in the Queensland labour trade.54 Chaplain Frere Lane portrayed Jack Giebo in terms that disclose as much about Lane's perceptions as they do about Giebo and the role of an Islander "insider":

Jack is a Christian - not nominally but truly. He is neat in his dress and in his work. He is faithful to his superiors; and firm, but just and forbearing with his "men", as he calls the twelve married men whom he supervises at Angeram. He is not continually reporting minor difficulties and temporary misunderstandings with his "men", except perhaps in a casual way or in order to make sure that his words or methods meet with approval. He is prompt at advising headquarters or asking for help if the circumstances seem to demand it. He is not afraid to send a brief dispatch to the Superintendent, even after bedtime, saying, "Please I want you to come up quick", and Jack is at his gate to meet you with a cheerful "Good-night Mr ... I very sorry to send to you about this trouble, but", etc., etc. [emphasis is Lane's]55

Missionary perceptions were often plainly racist and certainly paternalistic, and applied to the Islander missionaries as they were to Aborigines, even if to a different extent. Lane seemed to find Jack Giebo's reference to the Aboriginal men as "men" rather than "boys" quaint, a departure from the usual missionary practice which perhaps reinforced the white missionaries' perceptions that Aborigines and Islanders were united by their black

51 Gilbert White, diary entry for 1 June 1909.
52 Gilbert White, diary entry for 7 June 1910. "John Savo’s salary will be paid for three months by the diocese of Carpentaria. At the end of that time the Superintendent must report on his conduct and advise whether it is desirable to put him on the staff".
53 The three died within a few years of each other, Tom Solomon in 1921, Jack Giebo in 1922, and Johnnie Savo in 1925.
54 Frere Lane, ABM Review, 1 March 1915, p.222.
55 Frere Lane, ABM Review, 1 March 1915, pp.222, 223.
Left to right: Tom Solomon, Bobena Solomon and child, John Savo, Jack Geibo, Lena Geibo.

The "South Sea Islanders" and their Aboriginal wives stand in front of the mission church at Trubanaman, perhaps representing their key role in the maintenance of the missionary order.

Original caption: "Native Teachers"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 June 1914, p.56)
skin as acknowledged inferiors of whites. Matthews was keen to disarm the Islanders of their firearms, particularly after Johnnie Savo accidentally wounded a mission inmate whilst cleaning his revolver, even though Matthews conceded the benefit of their hunting game for the missionaries’ table inclined him to allow them to keep their shotguns.56

Unlike the white missionaries, the Islander men became married to Aboriginal women and lived in a far closer relationship with Aborigines than the white missionaries. Jack Giebo supervised the Kunjen village at Angeram and Tom Solomon the Kokobera village at Daphne.57 They were expected to be black exemplars of Christian life and conduct by the white missionaries. On this account Matthews was perturbed to find that Tom Solomon was the "culprit" in Bobena’s pregnancy and insisted on an immediate marriage:

I am much disappointed at Tom’s conduct, for I had hoped that his engagement and marriage would have been an example to our people.58

The Islander "helpers" were caught between missionary expectation and missionary racism, a situation that exposed them to risks that the white missionaries seldom met. Eight years after their marriage, Bobena attempted to poison Tom with strychnine mixed in a bottle of jam.59

Efforts of Islanders to align themselves with the privileged status of missionaries were often frustrated. Wiffie Currington recalled Sailor Gabey, the Torres Strait Islander chaplain at the Mission from 1938 until 1943, becoming agitated on account of not receiving the sort of preferential treatment whites expected to receive at the mission Butcher Shop: "These blackfellows have got to wait, I’ve got to get my meat first."60

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56 Matthews to Howard, 7 July 1911, 11:01490, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.
58 Matthews to Howard, 7 July 1911, 11:01490, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.
59 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 August 1919.
60 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
Jack and Lena Geibo and child - probably their daughter Florence (b.1917)
This may be at their house in the Angeran outstation of Trubanaman. Jack Geibo's white suit is in the style preferred by the missionaries as a formal outfit and signifies his key role as the supervisor of the Kunjen people at Angeran.

Original caption: "Jack Geibo and family"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 15 July 1932, p.67)
The missionary classification of the Aborigines of the reserve made a clear distinction between "inmates" and "camp blacks". In fact, Gilbert White wanted this distinction marked by a physical barrier:

The station should be fenced in outside all present buildings and no native not a member of the Mission allowed in without the Supt's permission. A small building be erected outside the fence for the transaction of business with wild and camp natives, and a stock of sulas and dresses kept for outside natives who wish to visit the station compound where no unclothed natives are to be allowed. 61

His emphasis on clothing was, in addition to his obvious preference for conformity with his sense of modesty, another way of marking the boundary to the "camp" and "wild" Aborigines. In any case it does not seem to have been enthusiastically applied, probably on account of its impracticability, since six years later he was similarly insisting that nakedness be "strictly prohibited" on the mission compound. 62

There were however distinctions that Matthews observed the mission "inmates" applying amongst themselves:

There seems to be a split between boys who have come to Mission from stations and boys from camps. Major who came from a station, overheard some remarks passed by old camp boys, left Mission this morning. Mr Lane and I went over to camp as soon as possible, but he had gone hunting. Major nor Bomaninglaun did not return to camp [sic]. Boys say that they have gone with some tribe to the Magnificent. 63

Amongst the "camp blacks" the missionaries recognised certain men as "Kings" and used them as their agents when dealing with these people. The preference that the kings enjoyed in the dispensing of tobacco and other items came at the cost of acting as the missionaries' agents amongst the "camp blacks" whom the missionaries recognised were largely outside close mission control: Matthews marked the time for silence by a bell and instructed the

61 Gilbert White, diary entry for 7 August 1906.
62 Gilbert White, diary entry for 27 October 1912.
63 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 14 July 1906.
King that he was to ensure that there was no noise in the camp after 10.00 pm;\textsuperscript{64} when some small boys ran away from the Mission after being punished by Matthews, the King was told to bring them back and, when he did, was instructed by Matthews to cane the boys;\textsuperscript{65} after Kilpatrick was speared, the King was told to bring a man in from the bush when Constable Haylem arrived at the Mission to investigate the death.\textsuperscript{66} In 1913 there were at least four Kings recognised by the missionaries: Sandbeach King, Long King, King Tommy and King Billy.\textsuperscript{67} In 1907 following the death of King Weebaragwarra and in 1916 after another King's death, successors were ceremonially recognised by Matthews and presented with a white pith helmet as the badge of office.\textsuperscript{68}

Compared with Gribble's recognition of Menmuny as King of Yarrabah and the significant role Menmuny played in the life of the mission station,\textsuperscript{69} the missionaries at Trubanaman had managed only a trivialised version of the Yarrabah model. If the issue mattered sufficiently, the missionaries were as likely to dispense with their intermediaries and press the point themselves. On one such occasion, Done ordered the "camp blacks" to bring in forty loads of wood as punishment for harvesting potatoes from the mission garden without first gaining missionary permission.\textsuperscript{70}

Further away from mission control than "camp blacks", were "myall" or "wild" natives, distant tribes who visited the Mission. The missionaries were often pleased to see

\textsuperscript{64} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 1 March 1907.
\textsuperscript{65} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 17 June 1907.
\textsuperscript{66} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 1 March 1907.
\textsuperscript{67} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 8 June 1913.
\textsuperscript{68} J. Perelle, diary entry for 13 November 1907 and Henry Matthews, diary entry for 7 November 1916.
\textsuperscript{69} Ernest Gribble, \textit{Forty years with the Aborigines}, Sydney, 1930, p.77. "It was a treat to see [Menmuny] take his proper seat in Church at the daily services, resplendent in his uniform, or as with great dignity he took his place as President of the Yarrabah court".
\textsuperscript{70} John Done, diary entry for 5 July 1927.
Missionary cast-off clothing and an old hat-band signify this man as one of the Aboriginal "kings" recognised by the Mission.

Original caption: "King of the Koko-mando"

(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, Box 10, Pic.Acc.5975)
them go as their presence was destabilising to the mission organisation. These “wild blacks” were a source of concern for mission “inmates” as well. Most people fled the mission for the safety of their own country when a rumour of impending invasion from the Kokominjen reached Kowanyama in 1921. Chapman considered a 1926 visit to have been generally bad for mission discipline:

> Visiting camp people speared a number of cattle and made themselves a nuisance generally. They lent their women to the mission boys and some have contracted venereal.

The other side to this missionary concern for threatened order was the reciprocal relationships of trade and mutual benefit that existed between mission Aborigines and bush-living Aborigines. Mick Edwards, who later became a member of the Edward River Mission at Pormporaaw, was part of Thaayore groups from the northern part of the reserve who were labelled as "wild blacks" by the missionaries when they visited Kowanyama in the 1920s and 1930s. He recalled that there was a vigorous trading of tobacco by the mission Aborigines for the spears, woomeras and yam sticks made by the Thaayore, with both parties eager and impatient to obtain either tobacco or weapons. The Thaayore were told by mission Aborigines: "Next week when you make a spear again, come again". The vigorous missionary opposition to fighting at Kowanyama had included surveillance of any sign of manufacture of weapons as well as destruction of any that existed. In effect, this created a market for weapons which otherwise could have been readily produced at Kowanyama; the missionary opposition to fighting had not dulled mission Aborigines’

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71 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 24 January 1921, “Twenty two mission inmates ‘went bush’ last night, in fear of invasion by Koko Mingens. Tommy & Lawrence asked permission to go tonight, but were persuaded to remain, as their fears are quite groundless”.

72 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 9 October 1926.


74 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 28 December 1935. On one day alone, Chapman collected 45 spears, 52 fighting sticks and six shields.
A large group of the northern people the missionaries considered "wild blacks" on a visit to Mitchell River Mission. The spears in the left foreground may have been some that found their way into the hands of feuding mission Aborigines during the turbulent 1930s.


(Source: ABM Review, 1 February 1934, p.168)
desire to invoke fighting in their conflicts. Beef, from cattle speared in the bush, was also sought by mission Aborigines who acted to conceal the fact of the spearing from Campbell of Rutland Plains. Chapman invoked both the threat of removal to Palm Island and the possibility of Campbell using his revolver against the Thaayore as persuasive arguments against cattle spearing. According to Mick Edwards, this simply limited cattle spearing to the wet season when they were isolated from access by both pastoralists and missionaries. Beyond the trading relationships they had established with kin at the Mission, the Thaayore were guided in understanding the protocol involved in dealing with missionaries by mission Aboriginal, Wallaby.

In a diagrammatic form the missionary world consisted then of:

![Diagram of missionary world]

Movement across this inside/outside division occurred both ways and marked important transitions. Transitions in both directions were ones that missionaries sought to control. In this way the missionaries spoke of people being "admitted" to the Mission and at other
times declined to "take on" individuals if they did not meet mission criteria. In the aftermath of the attempted poisoning of Tommy Koolatah, Billy Flour and Bob Patterson by Shalfo owner, Billy Yetfoy, Yetfoy’s head stockman, Leonard, walked off Shalfo with his family to Kowanyama and found that Chapman was unmoved by their situation:

Leonard and family put in an appearance having absconded from Shalfo. He wanted to be taken on. I advised him to return to Shalfo and not make a convenience of the Mission. 76

At the beginning of the turbulent decade of the 1920s, Chapman had no hesitation in consigning Morgan to the "outside" after he had fought with his younger brother, Gilbert. The same punishment was dispensed to a married couple when they quarrelled:

Sent Morgan bush this morning. I will have nothing more to do with him, he is nothing more than an agitator of the worst type, continually stirring up strife among the other boys and trying to embroil the missionaries. Sergeant and Yalkie sent off. I will not allow them to again commence quarrelling and fighting as they have done in the past. 77

The "outside" had an almost legendary status for the missionaries: it was the region of the social realm beyond their control where heathen behaviours were thought to rule. Currington was circumspect about a man and a woman who had arrived from the "outside" in 1950 considering them, on that account, to be necessarily lawless:

A boy named Friday with woman named Judy arrived here 4 pm on foot for Chillago. This boy, I understand is not a Mission boy, though has visited here before, and is noted for running away and clearing off with women. 78

The missionaries acted as if Aborigines crossing over from "outside" to "inside" were in need of having a new identity constructed according to missionary values. Individuals were renamed if this better suited missionary convenience:

75 Doris Lawrence, taped interview, Kowanyama, 24 November 1987.
76 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 15 November 1919.
77 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 24 March 1920.
78 Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 12 December 1950.
Admitted two little boys tonight. One claims the name of Tommy and we named the other Willie as his native name is too long and difficult to pronounce[:]

Ongremariwilg. 79

On coming into the Mission from the station in the 1930s, Lindus, the daughter of Native and Annie was renamed Alma. 80 The assumption that certain Aborigines needed a new mission identity was not restricted to children; Bishop Stephen Davies insisted that Goggle-Eye be renamed Jack Coghlin before he officiated at Goggle-Eye’s marriage to Nellie on 1 September 1947. 81

With the passing of time, especially after the foundation of a permanent mission station at Edward River in 1939, there were few who could be said to be "wild blacks". Increasingly the "camp blacks" were integrated into the continuum of mission Aboriginal life in the three villages of the Mission. Edward River Mission provided a sufficient contrast to Mitchell River for it to be representative of the "wild" dimension of the "outside" but for most purposes the earlier missionary classifications had collapsed into various degrees of "insideness" of the mission inmates. The missionaries had not abandoned their dualistic conceptualisations, far from it. Instead they were developing a more sophisticated picture which, when projected onto the mission Aborigines, seemed to expose an inner world of dualistic struggle between atavistic and missionary forces.

The first signs of this change from the outside world of social patterns and behaviour to the personal world of the individual character occurred in Bishop Newton’s episcopate when excommunication was first introduced to degrade uncompliant Aborigines from their status as Christians back to the non-status of "heathen". His letter instructing

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79 Henry Mathews, diary entry for 1 July 1907.
80 Alma Wason, taped interview, Kowanyama, 10 March 1988.
chaplain Bert Cole to excommunicate Bernard in 1917 located Bernard’s behaviour and punishment in an eternal context of good and evil:

Matthews has written to tell me that Bernard has been guilty of adultery and I am sending you a form of excommunication to be read out in Church during the Holy Communion - after the Creed. If Bernard is on the Station he should be present. It would be well for him to stand up before you and after the excommunication has been read he should go out... It is a good thing to use this excommunication as an opportunity to make the people realise the heinousness of Sin, and the need for care to keep away from sin lest God shut them out from heaven... Of course if Matthews thinks well to inflict some other [additional] punishment he must use his own discretion as superintendent.82

Newton’s belief that God would "shut the sinner out from heaven", mirrored missionary practice of shutting transgressors out from earthly food as well as the sacrament of the Eucharist. Chapman did not mince matters when he applied the standard mixture of ecclesiastical and earthly deprivations to four men in 1916:

[They have] been deprived of their position in the Church with its attendant privileges [sic] and required to sit among the “hearers” until they are ready to publicly declare their repentance or until further notice.83

At least Bernard’s status as a baptised Christian saved him from the fate of exile to which Bunberraduberra had been condemned only five years before when he had been charged with misconduct.

The mission-bush boundary was an area within the social relations of the Mission that was skilfully exploited by both missionaries and Aborigines. Despite all the peculiarities of missionary behaviour, the Mission was a popular place for Aborigines, providing as it did food, tobacco and a focus for social relationships. Often the threat of collapsing the mission-bush boundary and withholding these valued dimensions of mission life was sufficient for the missionaries to manipulate Aboriginal behaviour. Chapman

82 Newton to Cole, 27 April 1917, folio 76, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.
83 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 August 1916.
applied the very simple logic of dispersing the mission population to the bush and depriving the whole mission community of tobacco and rations in his attempt to constrain an outbreak of fighting in 1922 and 1923 that brought the Mission to a standstill. Chapman’s reasoning was simple: “they can remain out [in the bush] until they are prepared to keep the mission rules”. The manifestation of fighting behaviour, considered by the missionaries to be one of the main symptoms of the wild tribal life, was met in the Chapman approach, by confrontation with the less convenient dimensions of that life that Aborigines had escaped by living at the Mission. Chapman was evidently confident that the mission population would want to return to the mission, finding the task of securing their own food too onerous, and having, in general, become sufficiently dependent on the mission to make any long term survival in the bush unlikely. Even in this extreme situation some of the Aborigines were exempted from these harsh measures, Chapman decided to keep "a few to do the work, five girls [sic] and eight boys [sic]" for the four days it took for the deprivation to have its intended, if only temporary, effect. He used the same strategy in 1935, "closing the store against the people":

Only certain persons drawing rations. Have stopped all work and have made the people hunt for a living.

Chapman had passed on advice about the value of "closing the store" to Currington, advice that Currington was most willing to follow to ensure Aboriginal compliance with mission rules. Currington found that merely depriving mission Aborigines of their tobacco ration was usually sufficient to ensure that public opinion would turn against whoever may

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84 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 2 October 1922.
85 Ibid.
86 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 14 March 1935.
87 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 15 March 1935.
Mission teacher, Leah Minyalk, in a pose implying sororal affection for missionary Florence Smith (probably 1929, the year of Smith’s resignation from the Mission).

(Source: Doris Downing, *The Bridle Path*, Maryborough, Victoria, 1991, p.34)
Mission store at Kowanyama in the early 1960s. By this time it had become more like retail stores in other country areas and had begun the introduction of cash rather than voucher transactions.

Original caption: "Store at MRM"

(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, ML Pic.Acc.5975, Folder 7, Box 8)
have been the focus of missionary censure. This was as close as the missionaries came to
developing a justice system that involved peer judgement. The only other hint of this was
in 1927 when Chapman wrote of "the people" deciding what punishment was to be given
to Colin; in his case it was two week's imprisonment, a significant penalty but not a signal
of departure from the unilateral rule of the superintendent. Mission administration was not
favourably disposed to implementation of the Aboriginal court provisions of the
of the central role of the superintendent in matters of law and order in his comments on the
draft of the Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act of 1965 showed how
conservative and autocratic mission administration had become. Mission concepts of
justice were so tied to punishment that David Goslett, the mission manager in 1966,
considered that the operation of an Aboriginal Court would be meaningless in Kowanyama
since it did not possess a jail. The formation of an Aboriginal court only occurred after
the demise of mission administration. Kowanyama was gazetted as a place for holding the
Magistrate's Court as late as 1974, a full seven years after the change to government
administration.

Currington was careful to insulate his "insiders" from the deprivations caused by
"closing the store", as their support was crucial. He was realistic enough to always be aware
of the relative weakness of his position in the long periods when he was the only white

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88 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 31 December 1927.
89 Trewick to Deputy Director DAIA, Thursday Island, 26 February 1965, Mitchell River Regulations, By-
laws and Jail rules, 17A-20, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
90 Matthews to Killoran, 7 September 1966, Mitchell River Police Force, 17A-21, Interim transfer R254,
QSA.
91 May to Killoran, 4 July 1974, Kowanyama Magistrate's Court, 17A.113, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
missionary, noting that there was "only one Whiteman [but] plenty of blackfellows". Currington, in fact, asserted that the strategy of "closing the store" was so effective that he had little need for a prison during the period of his superintendentship at Kowanyama in the 1940s and 1950s, although he was presumably glad one existed when he was struck by 19 year old Daniel Charlie in 1948:

The Superintendent was assaulted by Daniel Charlie and Daniel Charlie was put in jail by a number of mission boys.\(^9\)

The missionaries were keen to take every opportunity of reinforcing compliant behaviour and encouraging Aborigines to believe that their future was best served by submission. Sergeant Meekin's visit to Kowanyama in May 1924 resulted in the collection and burning of a large number of fighting spears, something that Matthews hoped would prove "that the police are friends to law abiding boys".\(^9\) Such actions seemed more likely to demonstrate that the missionaries had the coercive power of the police behind them and would not hesitate to use it for removal if they chose, scarcely a message of reassurance to any Aborigines.

Transitions across the inside/outside division become less to do with living in the Mission or apart from it and more related to the standing of Aborigines with the missionaries and Aboriginal access to missionary resources. It came to have a largely moral sense, a dimension that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Even when there was no "wildness" set apart from the Mission, missionaries seem to perceive their role as changing the imputed "wildness" within their Aboriginal inmates.

\(^92\) Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
\(^93\) Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 24 December 1948.
\(^94\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 13 May 1924.
Even though the inside and outside model of the Mission fits the social relations of the Mission well, it struggles to deal with the ultimate sanction applied against Aborigines: removal from the reserve. In a sense removal was such an engulfment by the "inside" world of the whites that it consigned Aborigines to a place where they were dead as far as social relations were concerned. Removal was a frequent occurrence at both pastoralist and missionary instigation. The first case of removal from the Mission was connected with the death of Kilpatrick, a mission Aboriginal in June 1907. Even though the two accused men, Bumblefoot and Manogoly, were acquitted on the charge of murder before the court in Normanton, they were none the less removed to Barambah where they met their deaths, Bumblefoot in 1910 and Manogoly in 1914. Pastoralists initiated removals of Grouchy and Craigie in 1908, Cookie in 1909, Splinter, Lochnagar Major, Kangaroo, Malcolm, Waterloo Tommy and Barney in 1910, as well as Snowball and Pigeon in 1911. The removal of at least thirteen men, some with the wives and children accompanying them to their exile, may have made removal seem a routine method of punishment when it was first used as a means of control by the missionaries in 1912.

95 Superintendent, Barambah to Howard, 26 June 1914, 14:1763, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, July 1913 to December 1914, A/58997, QSA.
96 Normanton Protector to Howard, 30 October 1908, 08:2892, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, July 1907 to October 1911, A/58995, QSA.
97 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 13 December 1909.
98 Normanton Protector to Howard, 8 November 1910, 10:1921, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, July 1907 to October 1911, A/58995, QSA and Henry Matthews, diary entry for 17 December 1910. See also S. L'Oste-Brown and L. Godwin, "Living under the Act": Taroom Aboriginal Reserve, 1911-1927, Brisbane, 1995, p.81, for photograph of Waterloo Tommy at Taroom.
99 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 20 June 1911. See also S. L'Oste-Brown and L. Godwin, "Living under the Act", for description of conditions at Taroom reserve, pp.102-10 for copy of Taroom death register. Both men died at Taroom, Pigeon on 2 May 1914 and Snowball on 7 June 1919.

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Following the death of his wife Lucy on 13 June 1912, Bunberraduberra became involved in an affair with a married woman which resulted in his exclusion from the Mission to the "camp" on 21 July 1912, an arrangement which gave greater opportunity for the extra-marital relationship to be developed outside missionary control. Since exile to the "camp" had proved to be an ineffective means of ensuring his conformity to mission standards of behaviour he was brought back into the Mission to appear before Chief Protector Howard on Howard’s September visit to Trubanaman. By the end of October, with Bunberraduberra still determined to take the married woman as his new wife, Matthews sought the ultimate sanction from Howard, removal.

I regret to have to report that the boy whom I had up before you on your recent visit to this mission has again misconducted himself with a married girl. It is apparently useless talking to him and for the sake of providing a sharp lesson to the others, I would respectfully ask that you have him removed from the mission. His name is Bunberraduberra.

Bunberraduberra’s exile to the government settlement at Taroom was undoubtedly a "sharp lesson" that the missionaries, like the pastoralists, were willing to use to invoke the removal powers of the Act to enforce their code of conduct.

Matthews was again willing to invoke removal in 1915, this time against Stingaree and Baluto after they had speared and seriously injured two mission women, Julia and

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100 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 13 June 1912.
101 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 21 July 1912. “Sent Bunberraduberra [sic] from Mission for misconduct with May, some time this morning”.
103 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 25 August 1912, “Boys brought Bunberraduberra in tonight”, and diary entry for 1 September 1912, "Held meeting of boys at 9.30 at which C.P.A. [Howard] spoke on misconduct".
Maria, during a fight.\textsuperscript{105} The slow progress in processing Matthews' request gave him time to reconsider this drastic action and, by October 1916, satisfied with the reformed behaviour of the two and the recovery of their victims, successfully recommended that the orders for their removal be quashed.\textsuperscript{106}

The frequency of removal seems to have brought it some degree of Aboriginal acceptance as the appropriate punishment for serious offences especially since applying traditional punishment was so vigorously opposed by the missionaries. The Kokobera man Simon fatally speared a woman on the Mission in 1917 and along with his wife Biddy was ordered for removal to Yarrabah.\textsuperscript{107} Matthews, ever sensitive to the charge that the Mission was failing in its "civilising" vocation, was keen to impress on Chief Protector Bleakley that Simon had done this outside the immediate precincts of the Mission. Moreover, his recommendation that Simon be sentenced for removal emphasised the spearing as a breach of mission order rather than as an act of homicide:

\begin{quote}
I also beg to report that a mission woman was speared by a mission man, though both were out "walkabout" at the time. I have reported the matter to the police at Normanton, and recommend the removal of the offender, as the spearing is rather in defiance of my efforts to put down this sort of thing.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

This spearing was a shocking act to other Aborigines, especially on account of the brazen way that Simon had come back into the camp with an amount of human tissue from the dead woman, his \textit{pachel} (lover), still hooked on his spear.\textsuperscript{109} Even his grandson, an

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105] Matthews to Howard, 22 May 1915, 15:2375, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, January 1915 to December 1915, A/58998, QSA; and Henry Matthews, diary entries for 19 February 1915 and 21 February 1915.
\item[106] Protector, Normanton to Howard, 9 October 1916, 16:3302, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, January 1916 to December 1916, A/58999, QSA.
\item[107] Commissioner of Police to Howard, 28 December 1917, 18:0025, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, January 1918 to December 1918, A/59001, QSA.
\item[108] Matthews to Bleakley, 31 July 1917, 17:02952, OF 46, DFSA1A.
\item[109] Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 17 March 1988.
\end{footnotes}
eyewitness to his arrest in 1925 considered Simon, "A mad old fellow". After the spearing Simon had stayed in the bush away from the police. Constable Rutledge was so confident of arresting Simon on his way back to Normanton in April 1918 that he commandeered the mission buggy and took Biddy with him, causing, as it eventuated, needless anguish to her kin on the Mission. Even though acting superintendent Bert Cole was fully supportive of the removal, "[it] may be the means of acting as a deterrent to crime", Simon eluded arrest and Rutledge returned Biddy to the Mission six days later, along with Rio and Paul who were assisting him in the search for Simon. The next month Constable Malcolm arrived at the Mission by boat, collected Paul and Rio and made his way to the Nassau River in a further attempt to arrest Simon.

Simon had a fierce reputation as a warrior, and as the traditional landowner of the area closely associated with Kowanyama was vigorous in fighting the Kunjen men who were associated with the Mission. After his brother-in-law, Rio had fatally speared the Kunjen man, Roger, on 10 October 1923, Simon fatally speared another Kunjen man, Mick, in the payback fight three months later. The means of Simon’s and Rio’s arrests after their escape from Palm Island in 1924 is a good example of the extent to which Aboriginal co-operation was able to be enlisted by white authorities on the Mission even when it was known that Simon was to face the harsh punishment of removal from the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{111} Commissioner of Police to Howard, 2 July 1918, 18:2308, Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Inwards Correspondence, January 1918 to December 1918, A/59001, QSA.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{112} Bert Cole, diary entry for 22 April 1918.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{113} Bert Cole, diary entries for 22 April 1918 and 28 April 1918.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{114} Bert Cole, diary entry for 31 May 1918.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{115} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 10 October 1923.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{116} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 20 January 1924 and Doris Lawrence, "Horses in the Sand", Kowanyama News, vol.2, no.4, September 1986, p.12.}\]
The fugitive status of Simon and Rio had been publicly declared on 20 April 1925:

J.W. Chapman read and explained Government document pardoning some escapees from Palm Island. Simon and Rio not pardoned and advised to surrender selves to police, all men in locality were present.118

In May 1925 Constable Brown, accompanied by Gilbert, a senior figure in Simon’s clan, and mission “insider” Bob Dunbar went to find him at his camp on the Magnificent.119 They were apprehensive since Simon was in the company of other kin including his nephew George, but as they approached, Simon left the camp and moved alone to Duckhole, deeper in his country. Brown persuaded George to assist him in capturing Simon and from that point George took over the operation and ensured that there was no bloodshed involved in the arrest. George convinced Brown to remain hidden while he went to lure Simon out from the bush. Using the bluff that Chapman had sent a gift of a pipe and tobacco and the promise that Chapman had blankets for him back at the Mission, George persuaded Simon, who had become lame, and needed a walking stick, to allow him to bundle up his spears and woomera so that he might more easily carry them for him back to the camp. George and Simon approached the place where Brown, Gilbert and Bob Dunbar were waiting. Simon, deprived of his spears by George’s earlier ruse, was unable to put up a fight, and crippled by his lameness unable to flee, and was duly apprehended. After being roughly handled and handcuffed, Simon was tied up for the night before being taken back to the Mission.120 The day after Simon was brought back to Kowanyama, Chapman spoke with

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117 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 18 December 1924. “Rio and Simon returned this evening having escaped from Palm Island”.
118 Stephen Davies, diary entry for 20 April 1925.
119 Joseph Chapman, diary entries for 17, 18 and 20 May 1925.
120 Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 16 December 1987. Raymond George (born 1916), a young boy at the time of Simon’s arrest, was part of Simon’s kin group camp on the Magnificent, an eye witness to the arrest.
the people of the *Kokobera* village and persuaded them to capture Rio and hand him over to Brown. This was done, again without any struggle, and both Rio and Simon were taken from the Mission on 21 May 1925, firstly to Normanton and then to Palm Island where they both died. The same sort of co-operation between mission Aborigines and police was responsible for bringing Left Hand Jack and Martin to be arrested by Constable Brown in June 1926, Brumby having been captured by Brown himself beforehand.

Peter Bendigo, the only member of the founding missionary party still at the Mission by the 1920s, was increasingly marginalised from the insider role he had been groomed for in the early years of the Mission. Embroiled in a fight with Albert, Simon and Jumbo in 1916 and with his relationship with his wife Lizzie increasingly troubled, Bendigo was back in his own country in April 1918 and considered by Bert Cole to be involved with the "troublesome" Alice River people. He was on his country when Constable Brown brought Rio and Simon as prisoners through *Dunbar* station in 1925. Bendigo had taken responsibility for Mick’s body when it had been brought back from Kowanyama to *Dunbar*, something which may have linked him to the death in Brown’s mind and resulted in his being taken with the other two prisoners to Palm Island. He escaped from Palm Island by swimming with a floating log to the mainland and made his way back to the Peninsula. In August 1920 he was living in the bush on *Koolatah* station with Tommy Koolatah and Peter Koolatah. A fugitive in 1927, he was the subject of a

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121 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 21 May 1925.
122 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 27 June 1926.
124 Bert Cole, diary entry for 8 April 1918.
125 Doris Lawrence, taped interview, Kowanyama, 24 November 1987.
126 The death of Roger and Mick, typescript, no date, (in possession of author).
widespread but unsuccessful search by Constable Schultz and was only arrested when he returned to the Mission on 20 April 1928.\textsuperscript{128} Leo, the Aboriginal police "trooper" from Normanton, took Bendigo from the Mission for arrest at Dunbar and return to Palm Island.\textsuperscript{129} The next year, having escaped for the second time, he was arrested along with Billy Mango, this time by Constable Wilson, and returned to exile.\textsuperscript{130} Ernest Gribble who had met up with Bendigo on Palm Island acknowledged with some sympathy that he had escaped from Palm Island three times, the last in 1931.\textsuperscript{131} Gribble was, in fact, far more sympathetic to Bendigo than the Kowanyama missionaries were, and fondly remembered him from 1904 and 1905:

This week on my return from Townsville, I learned that he again escaped, with four others, to the mainland. Poor Chap! - I think none the less of him for this; he is now an old man, and the call of country and children is strong, even in a blackfellow. I do hope that he will be allowed to end his days in his own land, for he has but a few years remaining to him now.\textsuperscript{132}

The "call of country and children" was indeed strong, even if patronisingly acknowledged by a whitefellow.

Henry Matthews was separated from his wife and daughter for long period in 1918, 1919 and 1920 as it was considered safer for his wife to be in Townsville during her pregnancy. During these periods he had written sensitive and loving letters to her expressing his grief in being apart from his family.\textsuperscript{133} Sadly and ironically he seems not to have shared Gribble’s sensitivity to the pain of Aboriginal people removed from their home and kin, nor when recommending them for removal considered that they might experience

\textsuperscript{128} John Done, diary entry for 25 August 1927 and Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 20 April 1928.
\textsuperscript{129} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 24 April 1928.
\textsuperscript{130} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 May 1929.
\textsuperscript{131} Ernest Gribble, ABM Review, IS May 1931, p.29.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Matthews to Matthews, 14 December 1919. Letter in possession of Mrs Margery Webb, Brisbane.
grief comparable to his own. Bendigo's experiences were no doubt fresh in Gribble's mind when he launched a stinging attack on removal in a letter to mission chaplain, James Housden on 28 May 1931. Housden had written to Gribble commending Bruce and Hector to his pastoral care on Palm Island, in a tone which treated the removals as just another part of the mission routine:

Bruce is a married man aged about 26 and Hector is single aged about 19. Their offence was continual stirring up of fights among the people, but both boys have good qualities. Both are baptised and were regular attenders at church. Bruce’s wife and family are at present remaining on the Mission. 134

Gribble launched a strongly principled response and claimed that, by initiating removal, the missions had failed abjectly. Gribble had travelled back to Palm Island on the launch with Bruce and Hector and was touched that his name meant something to them when he introduced himself: "... their faces lit up with pleasure, and they told me that they were little boys of the bush when I visited their country years ago, and that the black people there still remembered me". 135 He perhaps remembered as well the undertaking that he had made at Yanda Swamp and felt guilty and angry that his missionary successors at the Mission had apparently embraced removal with such ease:

[Removal] is not Christian and the Missions by seeking the aid of the Government to deal with their naughty folk are proclaiming that they are failing. There was a time when this was not done by any Christian Mission. I was at Yarrabah 18 years and during that time not a solitary native was exiled out of over five hundred. God knows that we had many very naughty folk but it was for such that we were there even as Christ came to call sinners and not the righteous. No doubt a Mission station can be made a "moral" and well conducted place by the elimination of the sinner. But then it ceases to be in the strictest sense of the word "Christian". 136

134 Housden to Gribble, 24 April 1931. ABM, ML MSS 4503 Add On 1822, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

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If Christian principle bore no weight in the matter of removal, the sheer inability of Palm Island to cope with the numbers of exiles sent there resulted in it being "closed against further removals of adult males", temporarily, in January 1935.137

In what became the decisive move in clearing the country to the south and west of the Mission of its bush-living Aborigines, Sergeant Roles, the Normanton Protector, made a patrol between Normanton and the Mitchell River in the dry season of 1935.138 Roles identified 44 men, women and children still living in the bush or otherwise outside white control: 16 on the Staaten River, 5 on the Mitchell River at Koolatah Crossing, and 13 on the Smithburne and Gilbert Rivers. Of these people, some were moved without much protest to the Mission or other reserves, and others like Charlie T and Bessie Wombie became fugitives in an effort to evade exile to Palm Island.

The heightened police activity in pursuit of the fugitives gave opportunities for others to be arrested to the North of the Mission. Between the inclination of the police to make arrests to justify their long and costly patrols and the general level of chaos at the Mission caused by the interest of the northern tribes, there was a new wave of arrests, removals, escapes and recaptures involving "camp black" and bush-living Kokominjen and Thaayore people. Chapman, by this time established at Pormpuraaw, clearly considered some of the removals to be a farce; certainly Palm Island was not the effective prison that Taroom and Barambah had been. Chapman recommended that Palm Island escapees Bruce, Bruno and Fitztom be allowed to stay at Edward River Mission with him, citing the success

137 Deputy Chief Protector to Protector, Gordonvale 15 January 1935, Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 156, DFSAIA.

138 Roles to Bleakley, 20 July 1935, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 156, DFSAIA.
he had experienced with other escapees, Willie Duck and Black Dog, as precedents. With Chapman's opinions differing markedly from those held by MacLeod, the authorities were disinclined to give Chapman the full sway he wanted. Bishop Stephen Davies was drawn into their difference by Chief Protector O'Leary who wanted both superintendents to hold "a uniform policy". MacLeod's advice prevailed, and the families of Bruce and Samtom were ordered for removal to Palm Island in August 1941.

Geoffrey Philip, a Kokominjen man, served as a tracker with Constables Klupfel and Sammon of the Normanton patrol between 15 June 1941 and 3 August 1941. This patrol arrested Charlie T, Billy Flower, Jack Bruno, Samtom, Tommy Fitztom and Bruce, consigning them to Palm Island, where they arrived on 9 September 1941. On Geoffrey's own account this patrol was decisive in settling the bush dwellers at Edward River Mission. Geoffrey operated quite independently of the white police for much of this time, accompanied only by Rolly, the Normanton tracker, as his "horsetailer". Armed with double-barrelled police carbines and revolvers, and equipped with a set of chains and handcuffs, the khaki-suited pair were a highly mobile and visible presence as they traversed the country from the Coleman River into Strathgordon station. Geoffrey's message to the Kokominjen and Thaayore people he encountered was simple: "The government has claimed this country", and "I just want to put you back in the Mission". Producing his

139 Chapman to Protector, Thursday Island, 9 May 1941. Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
140 O'Leary to Protector, Thursday Island, 23 June 1941. Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 156, DFSAIA.
141 O'Leary, "Order for Removal", no.49, 29 August 1941. Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
142 O'Leary to Protector, Thursday Island, 3 October 1941; and Honan to O'Leary, 20 September 1941, Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
143 Acting Superintendent, Palm Island Settlement to O'Leary, 10 September 1941, Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
144 Geoffrey Philip, taped interview, Kowanyama, 21 December 1987.
Chained Aborigines on a forced march across the Peninsula. This may be McNaught’s 1942 patrol from Coen.

(Source: Mitchell Library, Pic.Acc.3761, 11)
revolver or "bulldog" as he called it, if there was any sign of a fight, he told the bush dwellers, "Bye and bye I'll send you lot all to Palm Island", if they did not co-operate. There was no disputing the reality of this threat.

The 1941 patrol was a well organised and costly exercise, a determined attempt to implement government policy to clear the Peninsula of its bush dwellers. The cost of fares and rations alone for the police party and their prisoners was over £1 10.145 Considering that this figure did not include wages and the cost of maintaining horses, the patrol represented a significant investment of government resources at a time when the annual government subsidy for the Mission was only £900. With this sort of investment at stake, Sammon's accusation that Chapman acted to frustrate the capture of the Kokominjen escapees was very serious, especially as O'Leary had given written instruction to both Chapman and MacLeod to "render all possible assistance" to the police.146

Chapman's urgent request for the apprehension and removal of Ned on 13 June 1941 resulted in a patrol by Constable McNaught of Coen as soon as the dry season permitted travel in 1942. Ned proved very elusive and McNaught had to go to great lengths of endurance and cunning to effect his capture.147 Even though Chapman plainly stated that he was fearful for his own safety while Ned was at large, branding him "treacherous" and "murdering", McNaught recommended that Ned's removal order not be executed and that Ned be left in his own country to act as a "friend to the police". Ned found unlikely patrons in the Coen police. Sergeant Cooper considered that Ned had been "more sinned against

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145 Various documents contained in Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
146 Honan to Police Commissioner, 6 September 1941; and O'Leary to Chapman, 20 May 1941, Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.
147 McNaught to O'Leary, 9 May 1942, Chief Protector's Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA. McNaught's graphic account of Ned's arrest details tactics that include chaining up Ned's two wives, depriving Ned of sleep, and a variety of subterfuges as he was relentlessly pursued by McNaught.
Chained Aborigines, probably at Coen, line up with Aboriginal stockmen and child. Aborigines, whether prisoner or free, had much more in common than with the White Constable overseeing them all.

(Source: Mitchell Library, Pic.Acc.3761, 12)
than sinning”, in a direct refutation of Chapman’s advice.\textsuperscript{148} With such influence invoked in Ned’s defence, Chapman concurred with the plan to reduce the sentence of removal to three months’ detention at Coen and then release to his own country.\textsuperscript{149}

With only a few exceptions, the turbulent and tragic period of removal was concluded by the end of the Second World War. Several factors, including Chapman’s founding of Edward River Mission in 1939, were involved in bringing this period to an end. The increased demand for labour from the beginning of the 1940s and the presence of Currington, a vigorous supporter of labour recruitment on the Mission, as superintendent from 1944 meant that there was little incentive to remove people and thus diminish the mission workforce. With so many people dispersed amongst the stations for a large part of the year tensions were eased, even though they increased again during the wet season lay off.

Steps had been set in place for greater involvement of Aborigines in maintaining the patterns of missionary order. The events surrounding the deaths of Roger and Mick, and the removals of Simon and Rio, marked the beginning of a more systematic approach to involve Aboriginal members of the mission in the concerns of order that were so important to the missionaries. The camp leaders were set the task of bringing in any weapons and Chapman made his own inspections of the camp, confiscating the weapons he found.\textsuperscript{150} Three \textit{Kokobera} men, Jolly, Silas and King, were appointed as "policemen" and were given uniforms in 1924 to enhance their role in keeping order on the Mission.\textsuperscript{151} This formalisation of a police role built on the informal arrangements Matthews had set in place.

\textsuperscript{148} Cooper to O’Leary, 8 May 1942, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.

\textsuperscript{149} Burmester to O’Leary, 19 May 1942, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 155, DFSAIA.

\textsuperscript{150} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 11 October 1924.

\textsuperscript{151} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 12 December 1924.
His slouch hat a badge of office, Robert stands sentry-like at the door of the women missionaries' house. Robert's role as the superintendent's gardener and rouseabout extended to many areas where the policing of the missionary order was deemed essential.

Original caption: "Robert, Matron, Sister, April 1953"

(Source: Beth Pidsley's photo album, Townsville)
in 1919 to enforce missionary restrictions on movements within the village. Two "policemen" were elected by the mission Aborigines for a week at a time to "prevent indiscriminate visiting from hut to hut". Kokominjen Geoffrey Philip was performing police tracker duties for Constable Ivey of Normanton in 1934 and, along with Hector and Bruce, was commended by Chapman for his part in settling the unrest surrounding Black Dog in 1935. He played a significant role in the 1941 patrol of Klupfel and Sammon and was sent by Currington to bring George Brumby into the mission jail in 1950 after he was accused of intransigence by cattle manager Henry Butler. Geoffrey's long police association on and off the Mission was probably influential in marking police work out as the domain of the Kokominjen. At the beginning of the period of government administration when an auxiliary Aboriginal police force was formed, the members were universally Kokominjen.

There was no doubt, however, that missionary discipline was arbitrary, depending on many factors that went beyond the bald facts of the "offence". Sometimes the injuries sustained in traditional fighting seemed to satisfy the missionary desire to punish infractions of order. Stingaree, who had been saved from exile in 1916 by Matthew's change of heart, was not disciplined when he speared Jolly in a fight over Jolly's wife in 1919 in which he sustained a spear wound himself, nor when he was wounded in an "all

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152 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 6 February 1919.
154 Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 18 November 1950.
155 Norman Junior, transcript of interview, Kowanyama, 6 November 1987.
156 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 18 October 1919. "Quarrel in the camp this morning between Jolly and Stingaree, both boys received spear wounds. Stingaree interfered with Jolly's wife". (See also Taylor, Of Acts and Axes, p.291, "The Edward River notion of fair play stressed that those who initiated trials-at-arms should come away bearing equal injuries irrespective of the nature of the wrong action that triggered the combat in the first place").
in" fight near the Mission in 1921.\textsuperscript{157} Whereas the missionaries usually intervened to prevent conflicts between Aborigines being resolved by physical violence, Done not only encouraged violence but backed it up by his presence and other more usual missionary punishments:

Horace and Daniel played up with Monica. I allowed Ben [Monica’s husband] to thrash both in my presence and am cutting Horace’s tobacco down and giving both work before breakfast.\textsuperscript{158}

The most extreme punishment at Trubanaman, short of removal, for both men and women when they had become rebellious or had transgressed mission rules, was imprisonment. The relocation of the Mission to Kowanyama meant that there were no secure buildings, initially at least, since the whole mission station was constructed with palm-leaf walls and roofs. This created a problem for the missionaries who had come to depend on secure restraint as an important strategy in maintaining mission order. Matthews wrote enthusiastically to Howard in 1912 seeking permission to obtain several pairs of handcuffs "for the overcoming of the more turbulent spirits". He considered that "they have a wonderfully quietening effect".\textsuperscript{159} He had a pair of handcuffs that were brought in by "camp people" on 23 May 1910, probably the pair that Cookie, still manacled, escaped with five months earlier.\textsuperscript{160} Use of these may well have convinced him of the desirability of obtaining further pairs and using them with the Chief Protector’s permission.

It was not a big step for Matthews to see the advantage of developing a new punishment to meet the new situation at Kowanyama, chaining. Chaining was simply, as its name suggests, the securing of a prisoner to a tree or post with a chain. For a brief period

\textsuperscript{157} Edwin Tonkin, diary entry for 13 September 1921.
\textsuperscript{158} John Done, diary entry for 12 July 1927.
\textsuperscript{159} Matthews to Howard, 16 August 1912, 12:01826, Chief Protector’s Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.
\textsuperscript{160} Henry Matthews, diary entries for 13 December 1909 and 23 May 1910.
Cumjam, neck chained after he was seized by Jack Alford when he came to Lochnagar for medicine, 1894

(Source: John Oxley Library, negative 63494)
it was used for a variety of infringements of mission order that otherwise would have been considered deserving of an equal period of incarceration in the mission jail: Tommy Horseboy was put in the "leg irons" for three days after a confrontation with Chapman in 1919; Luke was chained up for a night for his part in an extra-marital affair by Matthews in the same year; Baluto was "chained up" in 1920 because Matthews considered him "not responsible for his actions". "Chaining up" had the dimension of public spectacle to it, the missionary equivalent of the European humiliation of being placed in a pillory or stocks. From the missionary perspective it was a simple and effective method of restraint, much simpler than constructing an escape-proof jail, with the added deterrent advantage of public visibility. Sergeant was chained for two days for striking his wife Yalkabilay in 1920 by Matthews who formally recorded the public nature of his punishment in the mission diary: "Released Sergeant this morning before all the people". Chaining was undoubtedly a powerful sanction for missionaries to use against Aborigines, especially in a situation like the Mission where the sight of Aboriginal prisoners chained to a tree in preparation for being marched away to exile by the police had impressed itself on the minds of all who had seen it. Used by missionaries as a punishment, it would have been evocative of these events, a punishment only one degree removed from the sentence of removal. The practice of chaining and handcuffing was so central to the Aboriginal understanding of

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161 Agnes Matthews diary entry for 3 September 1919.  
162 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 26 July 1919.  
163 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 9 January 1921. Baluto's days of missionary intervention came to end in September 1923 when he was killed by a salt-water crocodile at South Mitchell. (Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 24 September 1923.)  
164 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 5 February 1921.  
165 Brisbane Truth, 5 December 1909. The outraged reaction of the Brisbane press to the whipping and neck chaining of a young woman inmate at Mapoon in 1909 showed how seriously these sorts of punishments were regarded off the Mission.
police that these practices provided the basis for the language names for police themselves. The *Kokobera* term for police, *Markoteng*, literally meant "hands tied together", and the *Kokominjen* term *Yorpany*, "sleeping hands", terms evocative of handcuffing and chaining.

Undoubtedly the spectre of coercive missionary authority hung over many of the interactions between missionaries and Aborigines, even those that the missionaries did not imagine were coloured by the coercion described here. The missionary assumption that Aborigines had practically no sense of history blinded them to the cumulative reality of race relations that was represented in the Aboriginal conceptualisation of them as *Munpitch*. Even though the foregoing account of living under missionary domination suggests an atmosphere of rigorous oppression if not terror, Aborigines living with the *Munpitch* found ways of using *munpitch* power to advantage.

The attempt to assert *Kokobera* hegemony was one of the themes of Aboriginal response on the Mission. Undoubtedly the mission population was tribally heterogenous from the start: Trubanaman was on *Kokobera* land but in close proximity to *Kokominjen* and *Kunjen* tracts; *Kunjen* men, like Bendigo and Bob Dunbar, played leading roles in the early period of the Mission. Anthropologist, John Taylor analysed the tribal affiliation of people baptised at Trubanaman and found that 58% were *Kokobera*, 24% *Kokominjen*, and 11% *Kunjen*, with a further 7% ascribed to some other tribal affiliation.¹⁶⁶ The *Kokobera* were clearly dominant at Trubanaman, the Mission was on their country and they comprised the majority of mission converts. The move to Kowanyama, on the northern fringe of the *Kokobera* lands seems not to have changed their assertion of dominance amongst the Aboriginal groups, but the relocation meant that their assertion was challenged

¹⁶⁶ John Taylor, Of Acts and Axes, p.327.
to a greater extent than at Trubanaman. The early 1920s witnessed violent conflict between the *Kokobera* and the *Kunjen* people. The deaths by spearing of Roger in 1923 and Mick in 1924 from the *Kunjen* side and the exile of Rio and Simon in 1925 from the *Kokobera* was a dramatic conclusion to this intense phase of conflict. By the next year the focus of struggle for the *Kokobera* had started to shift from the *Kunjen* to the *Kokominjen* and their northern neighbours:

Silas [*Kokobera* leader] brought story of big mob of Kendall River [probably *Thaayore* but Kendall River was more properly *Wik Nangan*] men coming to join with camp people [*Kokominjen*] to fight number 2 [*Kokobera* village].

The imperative to maintain mission order favoured the *Kokobera* who were more aware of the limits to missionary tolerance than were the less missionised later arrivals. Skilful exploitation of missionary power was in the background of the removal of the two *Kokominjen* brothers, Bruce and Hector, to Palm Island in 1931. In 1936 the *Kokobera* were confident enough in their position of dominance to demand that they be given absolute preference for employment on the Mission’s cattle enterprise. Even though missionary solidarity and assumptions of white superiority made them blind to it, it was evident that Aborigines saw where missionary partiality lay and then sought to exploit it:

[I, Chapman] enquired into last night’s brawl, found that a lot of talk had taken place concerning both MacLeod and myself, working one off against the other. MacLeod inclined to blame Hector but [I] find Allan is perhaps the most talkative having a lot to say about MacLeod intending to shoot some others which rather annoyed them, hence a lot of back talk.

From the missionary point of view it was disturbing, but hardly surprising, that MacLeod was being claimed for the *Kokobera* side and Chapman for the *Kokominjen*. Even

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167 John Done, diary entry for 29 August 1926.
168 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 March 1936. "There was also a lot said about employment on the mission cattle business. The Koko Beras claim that they alone should be employed, hence feeling among the Koko Mingens".
169 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 March 1936.
though they did not want to be perceived as partial, the missionaries had given clear indications where they stood. As early as 1918 Chapman made a very favourable comparison of the Kokominjen with the Kokobera, and additionally had shown interest in the Kokominjen language.\(^{170}\) His missionary outreach was always to the North, towards the territory of the Kokominjen, Thaayore and Mungkan. MacLeod, on the other hand, attended the Kokobera, yiral ceremony, something that aligned him squarely with the Kokobera as far as they were concerned.\(^{171}\) It was also rumoured that he was also the target of Hector and Bruce’s intentions to spear him in 1931, something that missionary Mary Earl had taken seriously even if Chapman had dismissed it.\(^{172}\) Even Chapman’s comment that MacLeod found fault in Hector of the Kokominjen, while he blamed Allan Gilbert of the Kokobera, suggests that the Aboriginal perception of the situation accurately stated realities that the principle of missionary solidarity would not allow Chapman to admit. This was a very difficult situation from the missionary perspective, and was only resolved by the departure of both missionaries from the scene: Chapman moved to live permanently at Pormpuraaw in 1939 and MacLeod died in 1944.\(^{173}\)

Even if the Kokobera had overstated MacLeod’s intentions when they had threatened their opponents with shooting, there was no mistaking the preference shown in the appointment of mission insiders. A new cohort of Kunjen insiders emerged in Currington’s period as superintendent as did the cohort of Kokominjen police at the beginning of the government era. Even though they were Munpitch, the missionaries shared


\(^{171}\) Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 16 December 1987.

\(^{172}\) Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 30 July 1931.

\(^{173}\) Stephen Davies, day book entry for 13 May 1944. OM.AV/126/1, JOL. “A.J. MacLeod died aged 46. W. Currington to carry on as Acting Superintendent”.
the same world as the *Pakaper*, the real people of the land. Having imposed themselves into
the world of *pakaper* social relations, the missionary Munpitch were themselves drawn into
that world to a greater extent than they ever imagined.
Chapter Eight

"Making good Blackfellows": living like the Munpitch

Even though Ernest Gribble’s founding principles declared that the Mission would make Aborigines "good Blackfellows" and not force them to become like Whites, the Mission, in fact, acted entirely contrary to his assertions. From beginning to end it was concerned to form Aborigines in the likeness of the missionary Munpitch who had come to live at Trubanaman and Kowanyama. The social mores that the missionary Munpitch sought to impress upon Aborigines were usually far stricter than those of the white society from which they had come. Even after the Mission was transferred to government administration in 1967, Australian Board of Missions (ABM) Chairman, Frank Coaldrake, still considered socialisation to be a distinctive calling of the Anglican Church:

The Department is certainly making towns rapidly and magnificently but it is not far advanced in the making of townspeople. The chaplains are to be expected to play a big part in this. Before the transfer, the Department helped us to make towns, now we must help the Department make townspeople.¹

Aborigines who grew up in the mission era show a mixture of stark realism and nostalgia as they look back at their experiences, particularly at the formative role played by the church mission. Maudie Frazer, at the time chair of the Kowanyama Community Council, contrasted the mission times to contemporary circumstances when she was interviewed in 1985 for the Cook Shire Council’s, "Oral History of Cape York":

The church was very good, they brought a very strict life into our community, but it was a happy time. We couldn’t do the things that now the young people are doing. We were so happy, it was a beautiful life we had you know. This time I see


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young people I feel sad for the young people. All they think about when they turn eighteen is to drink, not thinking much about what future they are going to have in front of them.  

For Aborigines of Frazer's generation, such a reflection on the past is also a commentary on the tension of their present day experiences. Rapid change in the post-missionary era left many Aborigines with the same feeling of powerlessness over their destiny that they experienced in the face of missionary domination. This generation and the two that had preceded it had been part of a social engineering process that cut to the core of the society they had known from their ancestors. This was a process to produce "good Blackfellows" through whatever means were deemed necessary.

The missionaries systematically aimed at creating the western work ethic and getting the Aborigines to become conscious of the western concept of time throughout the day. They did this by instituting regular programs devoted to work, study, and prayer; each period marked by the ringing of the mission bell. Even the time for the night's rest fell under the same control. It was an evolving process that developed strategies which were each built on the founding principle of a new moral order. The missionary appropriation of control over marriage and child rearing needs close scrutiny to understand how these essential social functions became incorporated into this process of social engineering.

There was no mistaking the reason for the "very strict life", Frazer spoke about. The moral order the missionaries sought to impose was pre-occupied with issues of sexuality and gender relations, an order that superintendent Henry Matthews was certain mission Aborigines were intent on subverting:

> The moral condition of the blacks [sic] is not improving under our teaching. They - both sexes, are intent on sexual intercourse and are abusing the freedom which

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they enjoy under the protection of the mission, to satisfy their unclean desires. Such action, they know will bring severe punishment in camp life.\(^3\)

Even though Matthews’ certainty was infused with the well established belief in the destructive influence of the "vices of civilisation",\(^4\) he accurately recognised that the Mission had contributed to the very circumstances where Aborigines acted, to some degree, outside the restraint of tradition. Indeed, the Mission was responsible for altering social and power relationships, and had created a new social situation in which traditional censures against the sexual behaviour of which he disapproved were no longer effective in the same way. This was hardly surprising since the missionaries were active in changing many dimensions of the social reality of the Kokobera and their neighbours. The missionaries intervened extensively in the relationships between men and women. They sought to arbitrate the claims of competing suitors and dissuade preferences for new spouses in place of the ones already sanctioned by the Mission.\(^5\) Matthews often did this in a public context, presumably to seek Aboriginal input about the application of traditional Aboriginal marriage laws, or as a means to coach the wider mission community in the principles of the new Christian code, or a combination of both.\(^6\)

The founding years of the Mission were entirely masculine in their focus. An all male staff and a majority of male "inmates" ensured this was so. A full four years after the foundation of the Mission, Gilbert White lamented that opportunities had been lost due to the absence of women missionaries: "Progress has been of course hindered by inadequate

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\(^1\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 2 March 1921.


\(^3\) Henry Matthews, diary entries for 13 October 1909 and 14 May 1914.


\(^5\) Henry Matthews, diary entries for 13 October 1909 and 14 May 1914.
means and inadequate staff especially by the absence of women workers".\(^7\) Later in the same year, White was able to add Barbara Matthews and Martha Pick to the staff.\(^8\) White, a single man himself, seems to have been most cautious in the appointment of women missionaries, and considered it impossible for a single woman to serve on the Mission without a female companion.\(^9\) The choice of Matthew’s sister, Barbara, was a similarly cautious decision to protect the missionaries, all of whom were unmarried, from suggestions of immorality or impropriety.

Martha Pick took over the school teaching and Barbara Matthews the needlework and music areas, which had been undeveloped in the male dominated population. Without female missionaries, the Church had been unable to effect the socialisation of the Aboriginal women along the gender specific lines that radiated from their own cultural perspective. On 2 June 1909, a few months before the women’s arrival, the Mission’s "inmate” Aboriginal population comprised 40 males and 15 females.\(^10\) White was happy enough with their contribution on his next visit:

> I am much pleased with the progress of the Mission since my last visit and am particularly impressed with the good work done by the lady workers. They have greatly improved the whole work of the Mission.\(^11\)

Even neighbouring pastoralists shared White’s enthusiasm for the impact that the women missionaries were having. Thomas Watham of Rutland Plains visited the Mission in August 1909 and considered that the presence of the women missionaries had produced visible results: "since the ladies have been here the young girls are especially clean and well

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\(^7\) Gilbert White, diary entry for 1 June 1909.
\(^8\) Gilbert White, Bishop’s Day Book entry for 15 September 1909. OM.AV/126/1, JOL.
\(^9\) Barbara Lane, Reminiscences, typescript, no date, pp.3, 4.
\(^10\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 2 June 1909.
\(^11\) Gilbert White, diary entry for 9 June 1910.
The missionaries enjoyed recreating the pleasantries of the English outdoors even though they were far removed from that context. Here they enjoy a jaunt in the mission rowboat on the lagoon at Trubanaman. (Probably photographed in the wet season of 1913, 1914.)

*Left to right: Cyril Grant Lane, Henry Matthews, Frere Lane, Barbara Matthews.*

Original caption: "Topsy Creek at Trubanaman"

(Source: Margery Webb’s photo album, Brisbane)
mannered. Improvements have advanced greatly in the last two years". 12 Watham would not have been blind to the advantage of having a group of women, trained at mission expense, on his doorstep from whom he could recruit domestic workers.

Even though Gilbert White had taken a cautious approach, the presence of the Barbara Matthews and Martha Pick soon led to missionary romance. The first intimation that the missionary Munpitch shared a world of relationships even remotely like the Aboriginal world was the romance and subsequent marriage of Henry Matthews and Martha Pick on 14 September 1910 at Trubanaman, the day before the inquest into Frank Bowman’s death began. 13 Their marriage was not a long one on account of Martha’s illness in 1913 and subsequent death. 14 Barbara Matthews became engaged to the new chaplain, Frere Lane, in July 1913, and was married at Trubanaman on 15 July 1914. 11 The arrival of a son to the Lanes in August 1915 meant that mission Aborigines saw, for the first time, a white infant. 16 Until then, the only Munpitch they had known were adults, and mostly males at that. Henry Matthews remarried on 27 October 1915, again to a fellow missionary, Agnes (Nellie) Phillips, who had been a missionary at Trubanaman from earlier in that year. 17 The presence of married missionaries offered a better guarantee that sexual transgression might be avoided. It also exposed the Aboriginal women to a degree of missionary socialisation that was not possible under a wholly-male regime. 18

12 Thomas Watham, entry in Visitor’s Book, 5 August 1911, OM/AV/8/1, JOL.
13 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 14 September 1910.
14 Gilbert White, ABM Review, 1 November 1913, p.142.
15 Barbara Lane, Reminiscences, typescript, no date, p.16.
16 Ibid., p.18.
17 Henry Newton, Bishop’s diary entry for 27 October 1915 and Jones to Pick, 25 February 1915 (correspondence in the possession of Mrs Margery Webb, Brisbane).
The sudden embracement of marriage by the missionaries anticipated a change in the evangelisation strategy towards Aborigines. During the first five years of the Mission, adult Aboriginal men were encouraged to join the Mission as "inmates", and some of these allowed to bring their wives and families from the bush to live at the mission station. Others, who had not previously married, were the subject of missionary concern that wives be obtained for them from amongst the bush-dwellers.\textsuperscript{19} White’s census of the mission population on 7 June 1910, shows single men vastly outnumbering single women:\textsuperscript{20}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young children</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolchildren</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married men</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married women</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sort of gender balance was not typical of the experience in other North Queensland missions. Wilhelm Poland the Lutheran missionary at Elim and Hope Valley on the eastern coast of the Peninsula recalled the complete failure of his mission to entice any young men to stay, to the extent that "... our resident population, for years on end, consisted almost exclusively of the girls who had been entrusted to our care."\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Mary Quinan, \textit{ABM Review}, 1 December 1917, p.172.
\textsuperscript{20} Gilbert White, diary entry for 7 June 1910.
The marriage day of Henry Matthews and Agnes (Nellie) Phillips, 27 October 1915
Rosie and Leah, the Aboriginal flowergirls, both grew up to be mission teachers.

*Left to right, back row:* Bishop Henry Newton, Joseph Chapman, Nellie Phillips, Henry Matthews, Frere Lane.

*Front row:* Rosie (who married Sloper) and Leah Bondonally (who married Alban Minyalk).

(Source: Margery Webb’s photo album, Brisbane)
Gilbert White devised a short form of service to recognise and bless marriages "made according to native custom", and used it for seven couples on 1 June 1909. White's approach was radical by the standards of his contemporaries on other missions, since it blurred the otherwise clear distinction between Christian and traditional marriage. Francis Gsell, the Roman Catholic missionary to the Tiwi people of the Northern Territory, demonstrated the typically hostile approach of Christian missionaries to traditional marriage practices when he thundered: "She had been baptized, and she belonged to Christ. She should not remain in the hands of pagans", after discovering that a young girl had been taken from her parents to the camp of her tribal husband in accordance with traditional marriage laws. White had to face the patently obvious fact that the adult couples who had become adherents of the Mission were in stable marriage relationships. The laws of the Church only permitted Christian marriage between individuals where at least one of the parties was already baptised. White did not have the luxury of being able to wait for this stage of evangelisation to be reached; his plans required Aboriginal exemplars of missionary sanctioned social relationships right away. His radical scheme produced church-sanctioned marriages only four years after the Mission's foundation.

Even though Gilbert White's initiative had the potential to minimise missionary interference in marriage matters, a far more disruptive approach was soon to prevail. Where the traditional marriage system of the Kokobera and their neighbours was an essential part of their land-based social identity, the patterns of marriage that were to develop under

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22 Gilbert White, diary entry for 1 June 1909.
24 John Taylor, Of Acts and Axes, PhD thesis, JCU, Townsville, p.177. Taylor found a strong preference for seeking marriage partners from neighboring rather than distant clans. "This preference operated independently of the marriage rule and came into effect when there was a choice between marrying a 'wronghead' partner close at hand or marrying a 'straight' partner from some distance away".
missionary guidance increasingly spoke of the "mission inmate" identity that allowed only a glancing recognition of the link to the land.

From 1911, the focus on married couples became the principal strategy of missionary effort. If White had been concerned about the identification and sanctioning of social exemplars, Henry Matthews seemed far more concerned about controlling the inner motivations of the Aborigines under his influence. Where White had recognised a sympathy between traditional and Christian marriage, Matthews had seen unruly passions which needed the firm hand and guiding eye of the missionaries for them to be kept in check. Christian marriage, of the kind that the missionaries now modelled, was Matthews' remedy to the "problem" of the sexuality of the Mission's "inmates":

> Our greatest task is to teach these people to exercise control over the sexual impulses, and desires. As it is I am afraid our difficulties have been increased, and we feel the necessity for increased watchfulness.25

The founding of Angeram outstation, only two kilometres upstream from Trubanaman, was the main initiative of this new approach.26 Here, the pattern of married life, modelled by the missionaries at Trubanaman, was lived out with a higher degree of autonomy than had otherwise been experienced on the Mission proper, with the duty of "watchfulness" falling to the South Sea Islander assistant, Jack Geibo. The opportunity of living at Angeram, and the comparative independence this offered, was a powerful motivation for the Aboriginal men concerned, whom Matthews described as working "far harder than they had ever worked, even under supervision, at headquarters".27 White was immensely satisfied with these developments, especially that regular work was becoming

25 Henry Matthews to Howard, 1 July 1911, 11:01490, OF 46, DFSAIA.
26 Gilbert White, ABM Review, 1 November 1911, p.132.
27 Cited by Gilbert White, ABM Review, 1 November 1911, p.132.
"the habit, the instinct of the place."\(^{28}\) White's aspirations for Aborigines were undoubtedly limited and envisaged the most adept Aborigines to be capable of filling only the lowest ranks of white society. Despite this, it is not hard to imagine the ideal of industry and family life at Angeram as the background of what he probably considered to be generous praise of Aborigines in 1927:

> In regard to their human qualities of affection, kindness, unselfishness, love of parents and children, gratitude and willingness to learn, many of them will compare not altogether unfavourably with an English agricultural labourer.\(^{29}\)

Even though Gilbert White was capable of embracing radical means to further his plans for the Mission, he seems to have been unable to transcend the English class structure which he took as the accepted and even preferable way of ordering human affairs.\(^{30}\)

The seven Christian marriages that took place in 1912 represented missionary success in finding wives for the cohort of single men who had been with the Mission from the early days. The men, ranging in age from twenty to twenty-five years, were wed to women ranging from sixteen years of age to twenty years. The average age of the women was seventeen and a half, and the men, on average, were five years older. Of the fourteen weddings solemnised in 1913, only four fitted this pattern. The other ten couples were considerably older. Their church marriages represented a development of the mission practice of sanctioning existing marriage relationships. Instead of White's "blessing" ritual which gave Christian recognition to marriages "made according to native custom", the

\(^{28}\) Gilbert White, *ABM Review*, 1 November 1911, p.132.


parties to the 1913 weddings were married in a fully canonical rite which did not distinguish between the two classes of couples.\textsuperscript{31}

The emphasis on marriage for mission Aborigines, both young and old, was reflected in the extent to which the missionaries were prepared to go to punish any deviation within these marital relationships. The first act of missionary-initiated removal of an Aboriginal from the Mitchell River reserve was as punishment for Bunberraduberra’s affair with a married woman after the death of his wife, Lucy, on 13 June 1912.\textsuperscript{32} Even though the missionaries had resented frequent pastoralist-initiated removals for alleged cattle spearing, Bunberraduberra’s removal to Taroom government settlement emphasised the lengths to which the mission administration was prepared to go in punishing any challenge to the core missionary policy on marriage. Matthews was determined to get the most out this situation. He hoped that Bunberraduberra’s sentence would be a "sharp lesson to the others" not to transgress the sanctity of Christian marriage.\textsuperscript{33} The missionaries could not, of course, punish every transgression of marital fidelity with removal to a distant settlement, but censures by temporary exclusion from the Mission or from the Christian fellowship continued to be commonplace.\textsuperscript{34} One charge of "immorality" in 1925, resulted in the man receiving a "whipping" and the woman being banned from her work as a teacher at Belburra.\textsuperscript{35} The missionaries were mentally trapped between the reality of sexual mores in the contemporary English and Australian societies of their day and their overwhelming

\textsuperscript{31} Marriage Register, Mitchell River Mission, OM/AV/11/1, JOL.

\textsuperscript{32} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 13 June 1912.

\textsuperscript{33} Matthews to Howard, 25 October 1912, 12:02301, Chief Protector of Aboriginals inwards Correspondence, OF 46, DFSAIA.

\textsuperscript{34} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 16 October 1919, (Chapman would not allow Joe back onto the mission after he had allegedly committed adultery) and Newton to Cole, 27 April 1917, folio 76, OM.AV/61/2, JOL, (for Bernard's excommunication after a charge of adultery).

\textsuperscript{35} Henry Matthews, diary entry for 7 February 1924.
When Wallaby and Ruth married on New Year's Day, 1913, they were part of a group of people whose traditionally recognised marriages were brought into missionary respectability through a canonical marriage solemnised by Chaplain Frere Lane.

Original caption: "Wallaby and wife and children"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 April 1915, p.7)
desire to create what they saw as a more moral society on the Mission. This dissonance meant that mission Aborigines were subjected to an arbitrary application of harsh censures which were often as unjust as they were hastily administered.

The missionaries had placed themselves at the centre of marriage concerns, not only as exemplars of Christian marriage, but as arbitrators of the norms to be followed. From this position they soon found areas of incongruence between missionary and traditional marriage practices and sought to resolve these in favour of the Christian patterns. Their involvement in these marriage arrangements, without an exploration of the wider context, ranged from action which merely exposed the question in hand, to community opinion, to direct intervention. Matthews was undoubtedly skilful in negotiating outcomes which seemed to him to offer the best fit of Christian marriage principles around the traditional marriage patterns of mission "inmates". In 1914, after Jack and Willie had agreed between themselves that Willie should relinquish Jessie in favour of Jack, Matthews used a public meeting to censure the breach of the missionary marriage law that Jack and Willie's agreement anticipated:

Held general meeting of married men to discuss Jack's claim to Jessie and Willie's acquiescence to same. As Jessie was legally married to Willie, Jack relinquished all claims.36

This was only an episode in a longer story of missionary involvement that commenced in September 1909 when Jessie joined the Mission:

Miss Robson accompanied girls to St Peter's Paddock and prevented a quarrel between Lucy and Jessie. These two belonged to one man. Since admission three weeks ago, Jessie has been accepted as the wife. It appears that Lucy has prior right and gave vent to her jealousy today. Upon discussion, it was decided that preference be given to Lucy and she accordingly took her place, Jessie coming into the girls' quarters.37

36 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 14 May 1914.
37 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 13 October 1909.
These three newly married couples pose awkwardly for the missionary's camera. With clothes that approximate the wedding dress of whites, one woman stands with arms folded rather than model the linked-arm postures of the other couples.

Original caption: "Wedding Couples"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 12 June 1916, p.57)
The missionaries were genuinely puzzled that there could be such a vigorous flare up of conflict between Lucy and Jessie, mislabelling it as "jealousy". They then observed Jessie, "soon after her arrival, instructing her rival's eldest daughter in some new dances". They did not understand that Lucy's child related to both of her father's wives as mother, and that the conflicts between the two women did not cut across the relationship between Jessie and Lucy's daughter. The two were, in Aboriginal kinship terms, "mother" of the girl. Nor did they consider that what they opposed in 1914, the dissolution of Jessie's marriage, was the same thing, in Aboriginal eyes, as they had forcibly compelled when Jessie was consigned to the "girl's quarters" in favour of Lucy in 1909. The approach of these Munpitch to marriage must have seemed very strange indeed to the Pakaper. They neither acted consistently, nor demonstrated much understanding of the fundamentals of marriage and kinship as these were understood by Aborigines.

Matthews again used direct intervention and community censure to deal with another triangular relationship, this time involving Piper, Mary and Paul in the latter half of 1916. Piper and Mary had eloped to Lochnagar on 19 September 1916. Matthews travelled to Lochnagar to bring them both back to Trubanaman on 9 October and followed this by calling public meetings on 22 and 28 January 1917. The second meeting finished with Mary agreeing to marry Paul, a marriage which duly took place on 25 July 1917. At the first public meeting Matthews was successful in gaining the agreement of the mission community that Aboriginal marriage laws prevailed against Mary's desire to marry Piper:

Held meeting this evening to discuss matters re Paul and Mary. Latter will not have Paul and wants Piper. Meeting unanimous that she can't have Piper.

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34 Missionary Notes, 22 March 1910, p.42.
39 John Taylor, op.cit., p.132.
40 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 22 January 1917.
Even though elements of Aboriginal marriage law were selectively affirmed by the missionaries, some of the most obvious Pakaper principles of marriage were not recognised by these Munpitch. The principle of a man marrying his deceased brother’s widow was of this order.41 This was what Aborigines expected of Susie after Donald Bondonally, her husband, died in 1924. At that time two of Donald’s brothers, Bert and Zingle, were unmarried and preferred, according to Aboriginal law, as husbands for Susie who was expected to marry one of her brothers-in-law. Chaplain John Done’s entry in the mission diary, in August 1926, told the story succinctly:

Jimmy and others trying to force Susie to marry Bert or Zingle. [I] told Susie [that] church would not allow her to marry her husband’s brother. She says she does not want either.42

Done correctly stated the marriage laws of the Anglican Church. "Brother’s wife" was listed in the Book of Common Prayer as one of the thirty categories of relationship where marriage was prohibited. What was conventional and decent in the Pakaper way of marriage was outlawed, according to the Munpitch law. Missionaries were unconcerned about classificatory relationships and looked only at biological descent and affiliation. They saw the social world of Aborigines through very different eyes from the Aborigines themselves. While the missionaries had no difficulty endorsing the marriage of a widow to her husband’s classificatory brother they saw a complete obstacle in such a union with the husband’s consanguinal brother, whereas in Aboriginal terms the two men stood in an identical relationship with the dead husband. In a situation virtually identical, from the Pakaper perspective, to the Susie Donald case, Matthews found no problem with the

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41 Taylor, op.cit., p.129. "When a man died, it was usually expected that one or other of his brothers would marry the deceased’s widow/s and assume responsibility for the rearing of his children”.

42 John Done, diary entry for 4 August 1926.
proposals to deal with Lena Geibo’s widowhood in the traditional way. The classificatory relationship of brother between Jack Geibo and Bob Dunbar did not figure in his reckoning: "A deputation of Lena’s brothers approached me with the view to further her marriage with Bob Dunbar. All parties agreeable." 43

Aborigines recognised that missionary power could be employed to achieve outcomes in marriage matters where both systems were in agreement. Chapman was obviously used in this way when there was a breach of Aboriginal marriage practice:

The boys brought in for an interview a man from the camp who is guilty of incest having taken his daughter to wife. Have decided to take the girl away from him. She wishes to marry a man in the Kunjen village. 44

Here, the woman in question was most likely to have been in a classificatory relationship of daughter to the man. This was as much an incestuous relationship, according to Aboriginal marriage law, as it would be if she were the man’s daughter by biological descent. Such relationships are described as "wrong-head" in Aboriginal English in contrast to the preferred "straight-head" marriages between cross-cousins. 45

Missionary intervention in consensual sexual relations was often direct and apparently initiated without any enquiry into traditional views on the matter or regard for what they might have been:

May reported that Luke had lent her to Joe for immoral purposes last night. Joe admitted misdemeanor. Gave he [sic] and Luke thrashing, and stopped tobacco. They have also to sit alone in church till such time as they express penitence. 46

43 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 10 December 1923.
44 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 5 January 1929.
45 Taylor, op.cit., p.112. "A man contracted a ‘straight’ marriage when he married a MBD [mother’s brother’s daughter] or someone classified with her; a woman contracted a ‘straight’ marriage when she married FZS [father’s sister’s son] or someone classified with him".
46 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 30 December 1912.
Anthropologist Lauriston Sharp observed that such "trading" of women was practised amongst the Kokominjen people with whom he lived in the 1930s. In a 1916 discipline case, very similar to the ménage à trois involving May, Luke and Joe, Bishop Henry Newton observed: "this seems to be a custom" and reported that the woman involved "had not objected". Anthropologist John Taylor was more specific about the traditional basis for an incident of the kind that involved May, Luke and Joe:

A certain degree of variety in sexual partners within the marriage bond was permitted, or at least condoned, in both husband and wife. Thus a man might allow his wife to have a dalliance with a sojournning "younger brother" of the husband, if she was so minded.

What was different was May's use of missionary power to confront the male control over her sexuality that was supported by traditional cultural norms. Even though she had complied with these expectations, she was willing to bring the practice to missionary attention, knowing that punishment for her husband and his brother would result. The missionary opposition to men 'giving' their wife to another, must have seemed inconsistent to Aborigines or, if not inconsistent, at least confusing. In another context, missionary opposition to polygamy, the missionaries encouraged the permanent "gift" of a woman to another man if the donor already had more than one wife. Nancy Dick recalled that both Chapman and Currington were adamant about this, ordering that men with more than one wife be brought to their office where they were told: "You can't have two wives, ... you must marry one, keep one. ... That's not right".

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48 Henry Newton, [diary entry for Bishop's visit, 6-13 September 1916].
49 John Taylor, op.cit., p.145.
50 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 22 December 1914. "Admitted little boy today, also a woman who has been given to Jack by a man who has two wives".
Missionaries at Mitchell River, in common with their contemporaries on other Aboriginal missions, sought to eliminate the practice of older men marrying young women and replace it with same-age marriages.\footnote{Barbara Henson, \textit{A Straight-out Man}, Melbourne, 1992, p.138.} Joseph Chapman, according to Sharp's field-notes, was clear about this when Sharp interviewed him on the subject in 1933:

Old men used to grab off young girls in marriage. Virtual monopoly. Young men allowed access to older women. Mission girls put stop to this (with support of Mission vs practice); they insisted on marrying young men.\footnote{Lauriston Sharp, Field Notes 33, II/3, informant: Chapman. AIATSIS Canberra, Ms 685.}

The very fact that May told the missionary about Luke's arrangement with Joe supports Chapman's contention that some women actively used the Mission and its missionaries to change elements of their own culture that they had come to find uncongenial. This was not surprising. The introduction of a sedentary life based around the Mission had drastically changed some very basic elements of traditional life which upheld the tradition. The changes due to the mission economy, with its changed land use and social patterns, shifted the balance of gender relations in favour of the sort of initiative women were apparently showing. The traditional marriage arrangements meant that, in a marriage, a woman was isolated from her own kin and surrounded by husband's kin. John Taylor makes this important point very clearly:

During their married lives, a mother and her daughter were less likely to be in contact than a mother and her sons. Sons tended to marry women of their mother's clan and this ensured that they would often be in the same bands exploiting the same tracts. A daughter, on the other hand, typically married a man from a clan different from that of her parents and there could be little overlap in the range of tracts that mother and daughter exploited in the course of the seasonal round.\footnote{John Taylor, \textit{op.cit.}, p.163.}

Life on the Mission dramatically shifted this balance and meant that a mother and her daughter could continue a very close association, especially if their husbands were away.
working on the cattle stations. This change alone, from living a traditional life in the bush to that of a village dweller, offered the potential for an unprecedented realignment of gender and kin relations. A woman, rather than being isolated without close kin, was now potentially in the closer presence of her own family and kin. Undoubtedly this gave her greater confidence were she to be in a disagreement with her husband and his kin. It also gave her greater potential independence. When the influence of missionary power was added to this situation, the dynamics of change became enormous. Lauriston Sharp’s famous essay, "Steel Axes for Stone-age Australians", forcefully developed this point as he focussed on the steel axe as a metaphor of the social impact of missionary-introduced change:

By winning the favor of the mission staff, a woman might be given a steel axe. This was clearly intended to be hers. The situation was quite different from that involved in borrowing an axe from a male relative, with the result that a woman called such an axe "my" steel axe, a possessive form she never used for a stone axe. Furthermore, young men or even boys might also obtain steel axes directly from the mission. A result was that older men no longer had a complete monopoly of all the axes in the bush community. Indeed, an old man might have only a stone axe, while his wives and sons had steel axes which they considered their own and which he might even desire to borrow. All this led to a revolutionary confusion of sex, age, and kinship roles, with a major gain in independence and loss of subordination on the part of those able now to acquire steel axes when they had been unable to possess stone axes before.55

Moreover, missionaries tended to view changes of this order as a desirable outcome of their action, even if many of the specific dimensions were unintended. They saw themselves as the means of liberating Aborigines from a tyranny of tradition that was usually more imagined than understood. There seems to have been a particular satisfaction, on the part of missionaries, when their actions were received with equanimity. They delighted in anything capable of being interpreted as gratitude. The Lutheran missionary,

55 Sharp, Steel Axes, pp.83, 84.
Albrecht, directly confronted the traditional marriage laws in Central Australia and understood that he had the support and even appreciation of the women when he did so. After one such confrontation: "... he particularly noticed that a large group of women came to say goodbye. It must have been the first time, he thought, that anybody had spoken up for them". Bishop Henry Newton was clear in his understanding that "Christianity has raised the status of woman", and sought to represent this in the social relations on the Mission, in 1916, by making the men wait in Church so that the women might leave first.

It did not take long for the news about what was going on at the Mission to reach bush-dwelling Aborigines and for them to experience the all-embracing implications of the missionaries' desire to make "good blackfellows". Mary Quinan, a missionary from Trubanaman, found that the Kokominjen prevented her having any access to the young women, when she visited their camp on Magnificent Creek in 1917:

The tribes will not allow us to see their girls, they dread our drawing them into the Mission, as girls are very scarce amongst these tribes, and they want to keep them for the bush - that is what we hear on every side. It is quite a pity. On the Mission we have a larger number of boys who ought to have their own homes, but there are no girls for them. [Quinan’s emphasis]

Quinan understood that the Mission was effectively in competition with the bush dwellers for the women whose presence would enhance either Mission or bush communities and whose absence would ensure decline of one or the other.

Mary Quinan’s presence in the bush camp was evidence of the missionary strategy of using the women missionaries to recruit Aboriginal women to the Mission. It was also part of a strategy to attract support for the Mission from Church members. Quinan’s short

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56 Barbara Henson, *op.cit.*, p.139.
57 Henry Newton, diary entry for Bishop’s visit, 6-13 September 1916.
Aboriginal Mission Girls.

As soon as "dying race" notions were abandoned the missionaries were eager to depict the fecundity of mission Aborigines. Plump babies and youthful mothers hinted that the Aboriginal race had a future on the Mission.

Original caption: "Aboriginal Mission Girls"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 November 1938, p.206)
article, "Suffer the little children", in the *ABM Review*, painted a picture of a pathetic Aboriginal mother in such a bush camp for whom the Mission was hope and salvation:

Poor black mother - she loves her piccaninny, but does not know how to ease her pain. She has learnt one English word, "Mis-si-on", and she knows that it means "help", and her heart keeps saying "Mis-si-on, Mis-si-on", all the time. At last she rises, lifts her child gently on to her shoulders and tramps through miles and miles of bush until she reaches the Mission Station, where she lays her in the arms of a missionary, who knows that the loving Lord Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me".59

Quinan was confident that the Mission would prevail in this competition, even if it was to be through dire necessity rather than the free choice of the women concerned.

The relocation of the Mission's head station from Trubanaman to Kowanyama in 1918 offered the missionaries an opportunity to re-invent the Mission and further insulate it from uncontrolled contact with the district's pastoralists. Such a goal required a new level of effort to construct the buildings and cultivate the gardens that were needed at the new site. To accomplish this the single men, under the combined leadership of Joseph Chapman and Jack Geibo, were set to these tasks. The pattern of semi-autonomous villages for married people that had been centred on Trubanaman did not survive the transfer of the mission site to Kowanyama. It had always been inefficient to operate the different settlements around Trubanaman even though it had proven to be an arrangement that better suited the married couples who had taken up life in this way. The new site at Kowanyama gave a chance for the missionaries to seek efficiencies in the operation of the Mission and tighter control over the lives of its "inmates". Even the domestic arrangements of the married people were brought under the sort of institutional control that had been reserved for single people at Trubanaman:

59 Mary Quinan, *ABM Review*, 1 January 1918, p.186.
Arranged with married people to have a common kitchen, so that they will have three regular meals a day, instead of eating their whole issue at one meal.\(^6\)

The apparent confidence that the missionaries, and Matthews in particular, displayed in ordering the affairs of the Aboriginal "inmates" concealed tensions which had arisen on account of the intervention of the missionaries in most areas of life on the Mission. Even though Matthews had become skilled in exploiting the Aboriginal law when it suited him and opposing its implementation when it didn’t, the consequences of this approach to the marriage of Maudie erupted into violent conflict that left two men dead and two more deported to Palm Island.

Maudie’s matrimonial future had been the subject of missionary intervention in 1917 when Matthews organised a public meeting at the time of Bishop Henry Newton’s visit:

A meeting was held, Bishop presiding to discuss marriage of Maudie to Johnathan. Decided that the engagement between Maudie and Paddy is over. Maudie at present does not want to marry Johnathan. Decided to let the matter rest for six months. Johnathan, in the meantime to be admitted as a mission inmate.\(^6\)

Working back from the later records of the missionaries, Maudie’s age at the time of this meeting was about 14 years. The next mention of Maudie’s matrimonial future occurred in 1920 when Maudie, along with Pansie, approached Matthews and indicated a desire to be married. Matthews simply noted his concurrence: "arrangements for this will be made later".\(^6\) Roger, Maudie’s intended, had been working at Koolatah in 1919, earning £7, a not inconsiderable amount, for his efforts over the dry season.\(^6\) He had been accompanied at Koolatah by Paddy, Maudie’s suitor in 1917. The two men were most likely

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\(^6\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 15 January 1922.
\(^6\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 10 September 1917.
\(^6\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 15 February 1920.
\(^6\) Henry Matthews, diary entry for 1 October 1919.
classificatory, if not consanguinal, brothers. Both men were back at the Mission for the wet season, from November 1919.64

As soon as the marriage plans for Maudie and Roger received Matthews’ consent, Roger commenced the construction of a palm leaf house in June 1920 in preparation for the marriage ceremony which duly followed in the next month: "Roger was baptised this morning and married to Maudie this afternoon... Roger and Maudie take up their married life tonight in their fine new house".65 At the time of their marriage Roger was aged 30 years and Maudie 17 years.66 What seemed a model arrangement in the missionary scheme of marriage started to lose its exemplary character when Matthews discovered that Maudie had been involved in an extra-marital affair in October 1920, only three months after the wedding.67 Roger, shamed by the events, left the Mission, but was back at work at Kowanyama within a fortnight.68 The restoration of marital harmony continued through 1921, the year in which both Roger and Maudie were confirmed in the Church of England.69 During this time Maudie was employed to work at the Matthews’ home, a task that became increasingly important during Mrs Matthews illness in January 1922.70

Despite their apparent integration into the missionary scheme of things, tensions were brewing between Roger and Maudie on account of Maudie’s work in the Matthews’ house.71 Roger became jealous of his wife and resented her working in such close proximity

64 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 17 November 1919.
65 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 July 1920.
66 Marriage register entry for 11 July 1920.
67 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 October 1920.
68 Henry Matthews, diary entries for 12 October 1920 and 21 October 1920.
69 Confirmation Register, entries for 15 May 1921.
70 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 January 1922. "Mrs Matthews still in bed. Maudie made bread and cooked an excellent dinner".
71 May Smiler, interview, Kowanyama, 1 August 1987.
to the *Munpitch* and became physically abusive. Roger’s beating of Maudie was met with opposition from her family. It did not take long for the whole mission community to become aligned on either the side of Roger and his *Kunjjen* kin or Maudie and her *Kokobera* kin. This spiralling tension led to a fight on 10 October 1923 when Roger was speared by Maudie’s uncle, Rio. Roger died the next day from his injuries.

Matthews had Roger’s house pulled down on 5 December 1923 in a concession to the funeral customs which, in the life in the bush, called for the camp of a deceased person to be abandoned. In this case the custom had been adapted to mission life by removing the house from the people’s presence. Traditional responses to Roger’s death were not restricted to the Mission. His *Kunjjen* kin who lived on the *Dunbar* reaches of the Mitchell River travelled down to the Mission during January 1924 to avenge Roger’s death and challenged Rio and the *Kokobera*. In a fight on 20 January, Rio and one of the *Kunjjen* avengers, Mickey, received spear wounds. In such a "trial-at-arms", this outcome would usually have been sufficient to settle matters, the avengers usually expecting to suffer some injury. Consequently the *Kunjjen* did not seek Rio’s death. This was not the end of the matter, however, as Mickey died of his wounds two weeks later.

The whole affair had cost the *Kunjjen* dearly, two of their number had been killed and *Kokobera* hegemony on the Mission had been strengthened. Even so, tensions had not been reduced, fighting continued and another man, probably *Kokobera*, was wounded a

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72 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 10 October 1923.
73 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 11 October 1923.
74 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 5 December 1923.
75 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 20 January 1924.
77 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 2 February 1924.
week after Mickey’s death. If the fortune of battle had gone against the Kunjen, the law of the Munpitch fell heavily on the Kokobera. Rio and his brother in law Simon, who had speared Mickey, were charged under Queensland law and removed to Palm Island, the government settlement north-east of Townsville that was used as a penal station more than other government reserves. Maudie herself died at the age of twenty-seven years on 27 May 1928. In less than five years the small mission community had suffered, through death or banishment, the loss of the five adults most centrally involved in these events.

This long episode of missionary intrusion into the marriage concerns of mission Aborigines had exacted a terrible cost. The episode had also taken its toll on the missionary scheme to rebuild the Mission at Kowanyama along more efficient lines. Initially, at least, they had constructed a single village. These new living arrangements may have been responsible for the heightened tensions that erupted in the inter-tribal fighting described. By 1926 separate "villages" for each main tribal group had arisen within earshot of each other, more at the initiative of the Aborigines than the missionaries for whom even this arrangement of closely clustered tribal groups around the mission station was burdensome when it came to the missionaries exercising "supervision".

Despite the personal cost to Aborigines, the missionaries continually put forward new exemplars of Christian marriage from amongst the younger people on the Mission. Earlier in the year that Maudie died, a feast and holiday from the mission routine was observed to celebrate the marriage of Alban and Leah: "A general holiday, the wedding day of Alban and Leah. Much dancing and merry making among the people".

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78 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 February 1924.
79 Bill Rosser, *This is Palm Island*, Canberra, 1978, p.2.
81 [Joseph Chapman], diary entry for 29 February 1928.
Alban Minyalk and Leah Bondonally on their wedding day, 29 February 1928. Chosen by the missionaries as exemplars of marriage, this marriage between a Kokominjen man and a Kokobera woman was also a model of the new village life the missionaries hoped for that would mean the end of "tribal" division and conflict.

(Source: *ABM Review*, 15 November 1928, p.154)
disruptions to the missionary order through domestic quarrels in the early period of their marriage, Alban and Leah continued as exemplars of the missionary pattern of marriage. Leah worked as mission school teacher for thirty-five years and is credited by Aborigines and missionaries alike as a harmoniser of Aboriginal and missionary beliefs. The missionaries needed such exemplars and harmonisers and were prepared to display unusual tolerance to produce them. They were the "good blackfellows" that the missionary order demanded.

To the missionaries' credit, they were consistent in resisting the pressure of government and higher church officials when it came to requests for the Mission to provide women as wives to men in distant places. Chief Protector, John Bleakley was a willing servant of the interests of Shadforth, the owner of Abingdon Downs, when he wrote to the Mission in 1913 seeking wives for Shadforth's Aboriginal workers. Given that this was a period when the Mission was struggling to find wives for its single men, pragmatism was as influential as principle in declining Bleakley's request. A similar move by Bleakley to recruit Mitchell River women as wives for Mapoon men in 1936 was successfully opposed by Chapman, despite Bishop Stephen Davies' enthusiasm and support. This was a significant victory for Chapman. Mapoon was the designated mission for "half-castes" on Cape York Peninsula and other missions had been compliant with Bleakley's request. Even though Davies had arranged for five Lockhart River, "half caste" women to be

82 Coralie and Leslie Rees, Coasts of Cape York, Sydney, 1960, p.216.
83 Lane to Deputy Chief Protector, 13 August 1913, OF 46, DFSAIA.
84 See Mary Quinan, ABM Review, 1 December 1917, p.172.
85 File memorandum, 8 May 1936, 36:1888, "Missions, Mapoon, Transfers marriageable girls, LRM". OF 83, DFSAIA.
Leah Minyalk and Cora Barr, both teachers at the mission school at the time. Cora was one of the "half-caste" women targeted for "transfer" to Mapoon in 1936 to meet the demand for wives by the men of that place. As well as sentiment, Joseph Chapman's intervention was undoubtedly founded on the fear of losing key members of the mission.

Original caption: "Leah and Cora"

(Source: ABM Review, 20 October 1932, p.123)
"transferred" to Mapoon, Chapman's lack of co-operation prevailed. May Smiler, one of
the young "half caste" Mitchell River women who had been targeted for "transfer",
gratefully remembered the tone of Chapman's response: "Oh, leave them with their
families, they're happy here". 87

Bleakley, the dominant figure in Aboriginal affairs in Queensland in the period
before the Second World War, was in no doubt that "caste", the degree of biological descent
from European and Aboriginal ancestors, was a proper basis for formulating public policy
towards Aborigines. 88 His attempt to intervene in the lives of people like May Smiler was
consistent with his view that the so-called "half-castes" should marry within their caste or
marry "full blood" Aborigines rather than become absorbed into white society:

> It is kinder in my mind to encourage them to breed back to pure blood type than
to create artificial conditions to force them into a society where their outcast
condition is bound to prove a barrier to their happiness. 89

Faced with the choice of control by the eugenic policies of Bleakley and the
government administration or the sometimes sentimental paternalism of missionaries like
Chapman, it is not hard to understand that the latter is remembered with affection and
appreciation at Kowanyama. May Smiler, (then May Wright) a survivor of the 1936 attempt
to transfer "half-castes" to Mapoon had already survived an encounter with Bleakley's
policies in 1932. Bleakley had granted administrative approval for Ernest De Satge, 90 a
mixed-race Aboriginal from the Urundangie district to marry her. 91 From Bleakley's

87 May Smiler, interview, Bundaberg, 1 September 1996.
88 Richard Broome, Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White dominance, 1788-1994, 1994, St
Leonards, 1994, p.160. Bleakley's status as a leading administrator of Aborigines ensured that his ideas
were influential in the development of policies across northern Australia.
89 Bleakley, Circular Memorandum, 10 October 1934, 34:4772, OF 83, DFSAIA.
90 For background to Ernest De Satge see Bill Rosser, Dreamtime Nightmares, Canberra, 1985, pp.7-10 and
for a biography of his niece, Ruby De Satge, pp.11-64.
91 Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, Register of Marriages 1908-1936, A/58981, QSA.
perspective, this was an ideal marriage, both parties were the children of men from respected pastoralist families; in addition De Satge had the financial means to support himself and his bride.

For Chapman, the matter was entirely different. His suspicion that De Satge had fathered a child to another mission woman left him in grave doubt as to the moral suitability of the man for one of his charges. When De Satge arrived at the Mission expecting to marry May, he was confronted by a missionary regime that considered May ought to be able to make a free choice in the matter and Chapman's opinion that he was not a fit character to marry one of the Mission's women. Chapman was in no mood to entertain him at the Mission or attempt to sway May's decision when she equivocated about the marriage: "As May could not make up her mind to marry De Satge I told him he could not [sic] longer remain in the reserve".92 Contrary to the accepted wisdom of government policy and the declared intentions of a figure as influential as Bleakley, Chapman had ensured that the missionary commitment to freely-given consent in marriage prevailed. An arranged marriage by Bleakley was as inimical to that principle as was marriage arranged in accordance with tribal custom against the free will of the woman involved. Missionaries believed they knew best.

The increased mobility of Aborigines after the Second World War made some of the assumptions of the Bleakley era untenable but the disruption of Aboriginal society in northern Queensland still meant that not all men were able to find suitable marriage partners in their own towns or communities. The fact of missionary control over women of a marriageable age was not lost on the men who looked to the Mission as the source of

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92 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 September 1932.
a potential bride. Even though he probably would not have seen his action in these terms, Chaplain Eric Wingfield used this control as a means of coercion in missionary proselytism. He wasted no time in inducting two "half caste" Normanton men into the religious regime of the Mission when they arrived by air in September 1949: "Interviewed wife-seeker and his friend and arranged to give them daily instruction in preparation for baptism". The freely made choice of women to marry had effectively been elevated to a higher order than the sort of conscientious decision that might ordinarily be expected of one seeking baptism in the Christian church. Mitchell River's particular expression of missionary paternalism had consistently seen that its women were not a population resource to be shared lightly or even shared at all. The advantages of missionary success in the earlier competition between the Mission and the bush dwelling Aborigines was not going to be squandered on suitors from other places without their worthiness, according to missionary perceptions, first being established. A willingness to submit to baptism would not harm the suitor's cause.

There is little doubt that the missionaries acted on the principle that the sexuality of the mission inmates needed to be controlled and only expressed within the context of mission-sanctioned marriages. The implications of this policy were far reaching and intruded into the family life of mission Aborigines at many levels. The regulation of marriage and consensual sexual relations represented, though, only one dimension of the program to "make good Blackfellows". Equally far-reaching intrusion came in the form of the Mission's appropriation of the nurture and socialisation of Aboriginal children.

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93 Eric Wingfield, diary entry for 16 September 1949.
Along with the desire to control marriages, the desire to influence children through education, moral teaching and socialisation was foremost in the intentions of the missionaries from the Mission's foundation. The extent of this intention's translation into practice was, however, contingent upon access to Aboriginal children. The effectiveness of the practice, in the missionary mind at least, was dependent upon the exclusion of other influences, especially traditional ones. The mission subscribed to what it called a "rising generation" theory of progress:

The remoulding of character is gradual not magical. ... The "rising generation" are worthy of all the love and training one can bestow.  

The "love and training" to which superintendent, Bert Cole, referred, more often expressed itself in paternalism and rigid discipline than in warm familial relationships, even though both qualities are represented in the recollections of former mission Aborigines. Superintendent Henry Matthews looked to the establishment of Kowanyama in 1918 to provide him with the conditions whereby the children could come more completely under missionary control and influence. In effect he described the determined attack on Aboriginal culture this mission, and most others, pursued:

Since opening the new industrial centre at Mangont [Kowanyama], all of the older people have been sent there, leaving only the children and one or two married couples here [at Trubanaman]. It is very important to separate the children from the old people, and under the present conditions it is possible to do this and I am confident the results will be very far reaching.  

The missionaries had grown more confident in appropriating a parental role towards mission children. Gilbert White had raised the priority of schooling in 1913 after seeing that it had suffered neglect: "The future of the mission and the people depends largely on the

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94 Bert Cole, visitors book, May-July 1911, OM.AV1811, JOL.
95 Elsie Roughsey, Tales of the Old and the New, Melbourne, 1984, p.23. (For a Mornington Island perspective on this dual character.)
96 Diary entry for 2 September 1918.
Original captions: "Cultivated nature"
These photographs were pasted next to each other in a missionary photograph album. The child photographed in the mission garden seems tranquil whilst the same child, naked and up to her knees in water, appears agitated and distressed on the right. Just as the missionaries had planted gardens in inhospitable soil they were determined to lead Aborigines along a path of similar transformation.
(Source: ABM Collection, Mitchell Library, Box 8, Folder 6)
school work and I trust that work will be at once recommenced and kept going steadily". 97 Chaplain Frere Lane had taken this instruction to heart when he prevented parents Piper and Kitty from taking their seven year old elder daughter with them when they left the Mission in 1916: "Piper ... took Kitty and Gracie and wanted to take Chrissie - but I said, 'No, leave her here at school', then Kitty tried and I said the same to her. So they departed." 98 Lane’s action represented a terrible intrusion into the life of Piper and Kitty’s family but was sanctioned by law in the principal Act under which the lives of Aborigines were controlled, The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897. Vast discretion lay with the officials of the institutions recognised under the Act which envisaged "providing for the care, custody, and education of the children of aboriginals [sic]", 99 as within the scope of government regulation.

By 1919 missionary opposition to parental responsibility had grown, as had their confidence in ordering mission Aborigines to do what they wanted:

During evening girl taken away from Mission by parents. Wallaby sets out to bring back children taken away. 100

Even if the missionaries had started out with an educational purpose in 1913, their strategies had become focussed on the social dimensions surrounding the children’s lives and, by 1921, seemed particularly concerned to exercise control over female sexuality: "Put door on school and barred windows so that the building will serve as school and dormitory for girls." 101

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97 Gilbert White, diary entry for 14 July 1913.
98 Frere Lane, diary entry for 12 August 1916.
99 The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897, sec.31, para.6.
100 Bert Cole, diary entries for 15 and 16 January 1919.
101 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 8 April 1921.
Mission policy was becoming overwhelmed by the preoccupation to "make good blackfellows" through the regulation of Aboriginal sexuality and the destruction of Aboriginal culture. Chapman, so disgusted by the behaviour of some of the single men under his control, even ordered that Church worship be abandoned in 1922 as a response to immorality:

Seven boys ... guilty of adultery with a camp girl ... Owing to the low standard of morality among the people have decided not to have the regular church services but to have intercessions instead. 102

Chapman, no admirer of the Kokobera, condemned them in 1925 as the embodiment of all that the Mission needed to change:

A good deal of immorality has taken place among these people. Some of the men have been in the habit of selling their wives to station men both black and white. 103

Chrissie, the subject of Frere Lane's tussle with Piper and Kitty, was again at the centre of a decisive point in the development of mission policy, this time, aged fifteen, in 1924:

Miss Smith reports misconduct of Chrissie - this after two warnings. The girl left her room, passed Miss Smith’s bed, and into the boys’ dormitory and got into Bruno’s net and awakened him. Have decided to remove all boys of the age of puberty from the school. 104

It was inescapable that missionary policy had contributed, in large measure, to the crisis in control that confronted the missionaries. Their response was to tighten their control over single women and girls, and, in an effort to ensure maximum physical separation of males and females, to allow the single men and boys to live a more normal life with their families in the village. Chrissie, at least from the age of seven, had been under the control of the missionary regime and subject to all of the influences the missionaries cared to apply. It had been the missionaries’ choice, not hers or her family’s, to deprive her of a normal

102 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 19 September 1922.
103 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 16 January 1925.
104 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 25 May 1924.
socialisation. Now, as a fifteen year old, she was being depicted as a brazen temptress from whose predations the pubescent males needed protection. Her situation, from the missionary perspective, was only redeemable by stricter control until she could enter a mission-sanctioned marriage. This duly followed in 1925, before she had reached the age of sixteen.\textsuperscript{105}

Chapman moved the boys from Belburra to Kowanyama in 1928, but had no success in curbing the trysts that were, by this time, commonplace.\textsuperscript{106} By 1929 Lawton, the Chaplain, complained to Chapman that twelve dormitory "girls" had been found to have been in regular contact with their lovers.\textsuperscript{107} Belburra, the school and dormitory settlement, was itself abandoned at the beginning of the wet season in December 1930 in favour of combining all of the Mission's operations on the Kowanyama site.\textsuperscript{108} The retrenchment of the women missionaries in November 1931\textsuperscript{109} only compounded the problems for implementing the dormitory regime which had become a farce by 1933:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Last night three girls left the dormitory by lifting two flooring boards with a stick. [9 June 1933]
  \item Found that certain girls had removed the nails from flooring in the dormitory. [28 June 1933, Eight girls listed]
  \item Closed store against people until enquiry was made into yesterday's happenings. The girls concerned were also locked up. "Bush School" finished this morning. [29 June 1933]\textsuperscript{110}
\end{itemize}

Even though Chapman struggled to reassert his control and used his favoured "last resort" punishment of "closing the store against the people", the Mission had to face the facts that

\textsuperscript{105} Copy of Mitchell River Marriage Register, OM AV/11/1, JOL.
\textsuperscript{106} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 30 October 1928, "Eleven school boys have taken up their abode at Kowanyama for a time. Miss Smith finds the strain too much".
\textsuperscript{107} Joseph Chapman, 25 January 1929, "Mr Lawton reported trouble at Belburra. The girls have been leaving the dormitory at night and meeting the single boys".
\textsuperscript{108} Alick MacLeod, diary entry for 1 December 1930.
\textsuperscript{109} Joseph Chapman, 27 November 1931, "Owing to reduced grant, Miss Earl and Mrs Stephens have been recalled".
\textsuperscript{110} Joseph Chapman, diary entries for 9, 28 and 29 June 1933.
things could not continue as they had before the retrenchment of the women missionaries. Something had to yield in what was becoming an increasingly futile struggle. Soon after the events of 1933, Chapman decided to face the inevitable. All children were allowed to resume life with their families. At least, for a time, the relentless drive of the missionaries to change Aboriginal cultural values in this way slowed down. Such a slowing may simply have been the only sensible alternative on account of the impasse that had been reached in Chapman’s attempts to operate the dormitory without women missionaries. Alternatively, the problems with the dormitory in the early 1930s may have provided Chapman with the ammunition he needed to deviate from diocesan policy, in much the same way as he had found a way around Bleakley’s policy on "half-caste" marriages. This was certainly the clear inference to be drawn from the views he represented, much later in life, when he was interviewed on the subject by the anthropologist, Donald Crim:

Chapman has maintained that he was opposed to the enforced confinement of the adolescent girls from the outset, and that it was only the commitment of higher church officials to the program that compelled him to implement it for so many years.111

There is no doubt that when Chapman had a free hand to found and run the Edward River Mission he did not institute dormitories, but his assertions to Crim, more than twenty years after the events described here, are difficult to reconcile with his decision to reinstate the dormitory regime in 1936 after it had lapsed for three years. His comments at that time were stark, in their presumption of missionary superiority, as he rejected something that was normal in most human societies, children living with their parents, as a "failed experiment":

This missionary depiction of "Christian Aboriginal girls" in 1933, emphasising a modest and demure appearance, was in stark contrast to the ongoing battle Joseph Chapman was waging, in that year, to preserve a semblance of missionary order in the mission dormitory.

Original caption: "Christian Aboriginal girls"

(Source: ABM Review, 1 February 1933, p.170)
Brought in all the village boys and girls of school age to live as dormitory children, the village experiment not being a success. There are now 69 dormitory inmates.  

Whatever may have been Chapman’s private reservations about dormitories his re-assertion of the dormitory policy in 1936 set the pattern, described by Ruth Wall in 1949, that would endure for the rest of the mission period:

Thirty-five girls live in the dormitory. The boys come here for meals, but sleep at home. After the children begin school they come to the dormitory, and their parents have no more responsibility for them. In the school there are sixty-three pupils at present.

A clear implication of missionary rhetoric was that the Aboriginal parents had little interest in exercising parental responsibility. The facts were quite the opposite and left the Aboriginal teaching assistants at the school and dormitory bearing the brunt of parental frustration:

If that little girl or boy goes back and carries on, tells them [parents] that so and so woman was growling at me in the school or if they hit them, [the children] go back and tell them and the parents go straight away to see that teacher.

Most conflict of this kind seems to have been mediated through the Aborigines who worked closely with the missionaries. The Aboriginal intermediaries were skilful in dealing with many of these issues, and often succeeded in shielding the missionaries from the rising tide of anger, but often at great personal cost to the intermediary. These policies that pushed parents to the margins in their own children’s upbringing resulted in such a level of frustration and resentment that direct confrontation with the missionaries could not be avoided. Parents, horrified with the privations their children were suffering in the dormitory, made a deputation to superintendent Wiffie Currington about threats by the

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12 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 7 July 1936.
14 Nancy Dick, taped interview, 29 May 1988, Kowanyama.
dormitory matron, Minnie Butcher, to reduce the already meagre food ration as a punishment against the children under her control.

Parents were further outraged when Butcher implemented a policy of fitting out the dormitory girls in "rompers", suits of clothes that provided very little covering of the upper body. These Aboriginal parents, with nearly fifty years of mission-taught modesty as their pattern, precipitated a crisis that needed diocesan intervention when Butcher insisted that all the "girls", right up to those in their mid-teens, wear this same outfit. A show of armed force by the fathers of the dormitory girls sufficiently alarmed Currington that he petitioned Bishop John Hudson to dismiss Butcher. Faced with such an impasse, Hudson reversed his previous support for Butcher's approach and agreed to her dismissal. The delegation had intended to throw spears over Butcher's house and told Currington they wanted to drag Butcher from her house and fit her out in a pair of the controversial "rompers". Personal morality and bodily modesty, the "stock in trade" of the missionary, were appropriated in the Aboriginal struggle against missionary domination.

The description of the development of missionary policy needs to be tested against the lived experience of women who entered the dormitory as children and emerged as brides, to gauge their perspectives of this intrusion into the family relationships of Aborigines in the name of "making good Blackfellows". Alma Native was one such woman who spent most of her childhood in the dormitory and graduated from it to become a

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115 Minnie Butcher was dormitory matron from 1952.

116 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, 15 September 1984, Kowanyama.

117 Hudson considered the practice of Aurukun Mission, where women wore no clothing above the waist, superior to the practices on the Anglican missions: "I wish they dressed like that at our missions, it's more sensible, much more hygienic, much more wholesome". Coralie and Leslie Rees, Coasts of Cape York, Sydney, 1960, p.173.

118 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, 15 September 1984, Kowanyama.
Matron, Minnie Butcher, and mission teacher, Beth Mussett, with Betty, Florence, June and Lois. Mussett's own caption expressed an ill-found optimism that the "romper" conflict would be resolved in its proponents’ favour. "These rompers have been disapproved by the superintendent, but as they offer a solution to wet frocks and torn frocks, they may be restored as the uniform to be worn in the Dormitory grounds. MRM 1953".

(Source: Beth Pidsley’s photo album, Townsville)
teacher to another generation of its "inmates". Her reflections on this time are helpful in understanding the powerful role this experience has played in the lives of many of the older adults at Kowanyama today. Alma, the daughter of Native and Lucy, was brought into the mission, as a six year old, from Rutland Plains in 1937, just after Chapman reinstituted the dormitory system.\textsuperscript{119} Even though she was known on the station as Lindus, she was renamed Alma by the missionaries and placed into the girl’s dormitory. Speaking Munkan, the tongue of her maternal grandmother, she was confronted with an alien linguistic environment whose harshness was only broken by the comforting words of some older kin. The acquisition of her parents’ Kunjen language only came later when she was allowed out hunting with them on Sundays. Alma’s experience reveals the array of controls and punishments that were so common in the dormitory that she accepted them as "normal". Salt was forced on the tongues of girls who used English obscenities in a refinement of the 1920s regime when this was used to curb the use of Aboriginal language.\textsuperscript{120} Other punishments were just as degrading. The shaving of a girl’s head and forced wearing of a dress made from rough hessian bag were standard punishments for anything counting as significant breaches of dormitory regulation.\textsuperscript{121} The harsh control that adults had experienced at the hands of both pastoralists and missionaries was applied to a new generation through the dormitory system. From a very early age women were the focus of unequal attention from the social engineers in a way that their male siblings were often able to avoid.

\textsuperscript{119} Alma Wason, taped interview, Kowanyama, 10 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{120} May Smiler, interview, Bundaberg, 1 September 1996.
\textsuperscript{121} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 25 February 1933, Two girls charged with "misconduct" were "put into bag dresses" by Chapman.
After the War, Alma Native along with eight other dormitory girls, decided that they would "go bush" to escape the dormitory life. The attractions of hunting took the nine girls to Fishhole and then back to Belburra. Martin, Billy and Mark were sent to look for the runaways who were brought back to the dormitory. The nine girls were given a "hiding", had their hair cropped to the skin, fitted up with a bag dress and put in the cells for a night. The hair cutting and wearing a bag dress for a week were counted as the hardest punishments to endure as they brought shame and public disgrace. "So the others can know that person is a disobedient person. ... Anybody used to make trouble in the dormitory - go straight back to the bag dress".

Nancy Dick remembered that girls lived in fear of being caught with boys and were told while being punished, "If you make trouble again, you'll wear the bag dress all your life". It was not only the missionary punishment that they faced, as often as not they were also confronted by their parents who, summoned by the dormitory matron, were shamed and angered by the reports of a daughter’s behaviour. These parents, deprived of their usual role, were easily drafted as enforcers of the missionary regime. Many of them had lived through this experience themselves and had accepted the missionary mores as their own. Their own adult lives were shaped by the constraints of mission discipline and routine; they were no strangers to missionary interference in areas that they might properly consider their own concern. These parents were in the difficult situation of wanting to have a role in their daughters’ upbringing but were generally only welcome to become formally involved when there was trouble and they were needed to force home the fact there was no escape from mission discipline.

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Compared to the physical and psychological constraint to which girls were subjected, their male peers enjoyed relative freedom. This arrangement seemed plainly unfair to the girls themselves, especially as they perceived the males to be the initiators of the trysts which led to the unequal punishment of the female partner. A marriage sanctioned by the missionaries was the only way out of the confinement of the dormitory, as Alma recalled being told: "You girls must [be] married before you leave the dormitory". Mission policy seemed intent on socialising women into a perception of themselves as flawed seductresses even when their own actions were beyond any reproach. When the pregnancy of a dormitory girl was discovered in 1950, all the dormitory girls shared the punishment of absolute imprisonment for three weeks. The dormitory had become a microcosm of the Mission with its general punishment of "closing the store against the people" finding its dormitory parallel in all the dormitory "inmates" sharing the punishment and shame of any individual lapse. Such collective punishment was intended to involve the whole group so as to there would be no recurrence of the transgression. It was also a powerfully coercive invitation to internalise the values and mores of the missionaries and thus avoid future punishment. Despite her experience of the harsh dormitory environment, Alma went on to be an Assistant Teacher in the mission school proving the effectiveness of the dormitory system in socialising this young woman into a role that was important for the perpetuation of the missionary scheme of things.

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123 Ibid.
124 Alma Wason, interview, Kowanyama, 10 March 1988.
125 Diary entry for 21 January 1950.
During the post-war years when the labour of adults from the Mission was in high demand by the district's cattle stations, the dormitory girls were deployed for essential labour around the Mission. Herbert Norton, chaplain in 1948, criticised the way that the girls were being used as a labour pool for the arduous task of maintaining the aircraft landing ground. Norton made a direct challenge to the authority of superintendent Currington when he recorded his criticisms in the mission diary, where Currington was sure to read them, whilst Currington was away from the Mission:

Are these unmarried young women being taught native or British handicrafts? I have seen little of their handiwork except in keeping the 'drome free of grass etc.\textsuperscript{126}

Upon Currington's return nine days later, Norton's challenge was emphatically answered in what otherwise seems like a routine comment in the same diary: "Dormitory girls working on drome and doing a good job".\textsuperscript{127} The level of control that the Mission exercised over its young girls and unmarried women had become so embedded in the ethos of the Mission that the criticisms of a newcomer like Norton could be easily dismissed as the misguided idealism of a neophyte. A frank and public evaluation of the sort of policies in place at Mitchell River Mission had to wait until 1997 when the report of the \textit{National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families} was published.\textsuperscript{128} Even though the children of Mitchell River Mission remained physically within their community they experienced the full brunt of the policies of separation that the Inquiry examined. Henry Matthews' prediction in 1918 that the policies

\textsuperscript{126} Herbert Norton, diary entry for 13 May 1948.

\textsuperscript{127} Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 22 May 1948.

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families}, Sydney, 1997.
of separation would be "very far reaching" was accurate but for diametrically opposed reasons from those that guided Matthews’ thinking at the time.

By the time the dormitory system at Mitchell River Mission was abandoned in the late 1950s, several generations had been socialised apart from their families. Different strands of the missionary strategy were woven together in the strange mixture of pragmatism and principle which had come to characterise the mission administration. Despite the principled assertion that women should be free to choose who they married, missionary control over marriage had been strengthened after Chapman’s reassertion of the pivotal role of the dormitory in 1936. Over the next twenty years, marriage, and at an early age, was the only way out of the dormitory for most women. If the social conditions that the missionaries had constructed were used innovatively by women up to the 1920s to reshape gender power relations, it came at a high price in loss of individual liberty and family relations once the missionaries decided to make girls and young women the focus of their specific attention in this experiment of control and re-socialisation.

In light of this it is instructive to re-visit Maudie Frazer’s comment that opened this discussion since it sets the events analysed here into both a retrospective context and a juxtaposition with the present day:

The church was very good, they brought a very strict life into our community, but it was a happy time. We couldn’t do the things that now the young people are doing. We were so happy, it was a beautiful life we had you know. This time I see young people I feel sad for the young people. All they think about when they turn eighteen is to drink, not thinking much about what future they are going to have in front of them.129

Her comments are not unusual, and show that the modern world is no less demanding in its way than was the mission regime. Nor would it be extraordinary to hear community

elders at Kowanyama advocate the re-institution of the dormitory system as they contemplate the issues that face their community more than ninety years after their ancestors were first gathered together to learn to be made into "good Blackfellows". Over thirty years of life as a former mission has left the people of Kowanyama with fonder memories for much of what happened under the aegis of the Mission than an analysis of the Mission's life might otherwise suggest. If "goodness" can be measured by generosity and forgiveness towards the excesses of the Mission, then the people of Kowanyama are "good" indeed.

130 For public reporting of the situation in contemporary Kowanyama see Tony Koch, "The moment the laughter died", *Courier Mail*, 31 October 1998, pp.1, 6. Koch reported that Police Department statistics indicated that a woman in Kowanyama was 25 times more likely to be raped than in the rest of Queensland.
Chapter Nine

Pathangany made us all: religion and traditional belief

The missionaries at Mitchell River Mission did little to study or even define the religious domain of the Kokobera and their neighbours. Instead of a positive study of the kind undertaken by Ernest Worms,¹ a Catholic missionary in the Kimberleys, the Mitchell River missionaries operated within a more limited scope. Theirs was a via negativa which drew a large boundary around the beliefs and behaviours which seemed to them inimical to the Christian religion, what they considered to be "superstition". Nor did the missionaries seem to be guided by theories and principles of mission that went beyond attempts at "civilising" Aborigines on the way to their becoming "Christian citizens". Although they were regular correspondents to the journal of the Australian Board of Missions, there is little evidence that their missionary practice, their "civilising" task, was influenced by the new ideas about mission work published alongside their own letters and articles. The ABM Review presented significant challenges to conventional missionary thinking: reporting on the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in its August edition of 1910,² featuring an interview with David Unaipon in 1912,³ and advocating the missionary church should be made of "black nets and black floats" i.e. thoroughly indigenous, in 1919.⁴ Furthermore the pioneering work of Roland Allen (Missionary Methods, St Paul's or Ours, first published

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³ "Is The Australian Aboriginal a "Degraded Creature"?, an interview with one of them", *ABM Review*, 1 January 1912, pp. 174, 175.
⁴ "Black Nets and Black Floats, the ideal of a Native Church", *ABM Review*, 7 November 1919, pp. 124, 125.
1912) which rejected the central role of foreign missionaries was summarised in an article in 1922.⁵

We have seen ample evidence of the dual, *Mumpitch* character of the missionaries, something that Kenelm Burridge labels, in more general terms, "Christian contrariness". Burridge's study of the cross-cultural transmission of Christianity across many time periods and different cultural contexts led him to conclude that there is an inherent tension within the Christian message itself which explains the "contrariness" of the missionary in the interaction with different cultures. He identifies two qualities, "Affirmative" and "Devotional", to describe the complementary but dialectical relationship between the human and spiritual dimensions of Christian faith.⁶

There is a sense, easily recognised in the words of the founding missionaries themselves, that evangelisation proceeded from a fundamental affirmation of the good that was in Aboriginal society. Ernest Gribble's affirmations⁷ that hunting, ceremony, and traditional access to land would continue under the missionary regime were instances of the "Affirmative" quality of the cross-cultural communication of Christianity.⁸ Gribble's Yanda Swamp speech also emphasised the claim of the transcendent God who called for a moral response by all who encountered the Christian message. This is Burridge's "Devotional" relation of the dialectic.⁹ If Burridge is correct in his analysis, both relations will be evident

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⁵ "Spontaneous Expansion in the Mission Field", *ABM Review*, 7 May 1922, pp.41, 42.
⁷ These are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
⁸ Burridge, *In the Way*, p.61, "The 'Affirmative' ... are all those features that flow from an affirmation of the world: engagement in culture and the social order with the determination to make relations and relationships more appropriate and felicitous in relation to the metaculture."
⁹ *Ibid.*, "The 'Devotional', then refers to a dedicated regard for the Godhead, the mystery of God's love, the sacred events that reveal the nature of that love, devotion to Jesus Christ, the *logos*, the word made flesh; to asceticism, sacrifice, transcending the Ego, surrendering to God's will, the spiritual life; to prayer and moral disciplines in which are secreted the moral exemplar, detachment from status and worldly causes, the search for union with the divine."
even at times when one emphasis seems to predominate over the apparent weakness of the other. Nor would it be surprising that the inherent dialectical relationship of Christianity within a culture would be seen and experienced differently by missionary and native Christian, and that this perspective could change and even become reversed over time.

In this light, to the missionary, culture can be understood as that part of the human experience that is either affirmed by Christianity or needs to be surrendered in response to its claims. The tendency for the "Affirmative" to be overcome by the "Devotional" is evident in the approach of the Mitchell River missionaries characterised in this 1914 survey of missions:

[At Mitchell River Mission] the great majority of the natives are quite wild and have never come in contact with whites, but many of them have already abandoned their nomadic life, and adopted one of steady work consecrated by Christian worship.10

There is little question that the missionaries were keen to understand their own efforts as a positive contribution to the welfare of the Aborigines they influenced. The material improvements in housing, health care, education and food production, as limited and slow in coming as they were, had their spiritual parallel in the adoption of Christian worship and doctrine. In this way they did not consider that their work was in conflict with essential Aboriginal identity. The changes they advocated were conceived by them, and represented to Aborigines, as welcome affirmations of the good in pre-Christian Aboriginal society. To the missionaries the "superstition" and "vice" they saw in Aboriginal society was falling under the steamroller of Christian doctrine and morality, leaving Aboriginal society both more truly "good" and, despite its losses, "complete" after this encounter. Henry Matthews described revolutionary changes that had been introduced by the Mission to the way

Aborigines lived but still portrayed the influence of Christianity as essentially "Affirmative":

The once wild, nomad hearts are learning the meaning of self-discipline. Beautiful fruits, too, are taking the place of the old heathen vices. Lust is giving way to love. Women are no longer chattels but the helpmates and companions of the men. Yet the natives are not being made into white men. Christianization, not Europeanization, is the missionaries' aim. They still hunt ... still dance ... but heathen rites have yielded place at the great moments of their lives to Christian sacraments. Things morally wrong are, of course, forbidden.\(^{11}\)

Despite the missionaries' protests, the establishment of the Mission represented a major assault on the integrity of the land based society of the Kokobera, Kokominjen and Kunjen. The constraining of these "nomad hearts" to the settled life was far more significant than these missionaries imagined. Even at times when Christian piety and the social order it demanded cut at the heart of cultural practice, the missionaries looked for the signs that they were part of an "Affirmative" mission. The fact that Aborigines still hunted traditional foods and danced "cultural" dances continued to be reassuring signs to the missionaries that Aboriginal culture and identity had not been damaged by their teaching and missionary order. Despite these protests, the missionaries were generally unable to cross the cultural divide that straddled the gap between Christianity and what they considered "superstition".

The "Devotional" emphasis of the Christian gospel was translated by the missionaries into an ordering of life on the Mission which reflected the strict Christian morality they considered inseparable from this gospel. Importantly, this was not the only influence at work. Anthropologist Veronica Strang recorded accounts in the 1990s at Kowanyama that demonstrated the action of Burridge's "Affirmative" principle of Christianity within Aboriginal culture and identity. Strang identified monotheistic, eschatological and biblical dimensions in the telling of traditional creation and

\(^{11}\) Henry Matthews quoted in Pitts, \emph{ibid.}, p.115.
"Dreamtime" stories. Even accounting for the fact that one of her principal informants of these things was Alma Wason, a significant church leader of whom more will be said later, Strang’s perceptions are in accord with a broad range of oral accounts I was able to collect some five years before Strang but many years after the formal conclusion of the mission era. Looking at the origins of their social and cultural identity, some Kowanyama Aborigines at least, see Christian meaning and symbolism as an entirely integrated part of what it means for them to be who they are. It is difficult to say when or how this sense first occurred, indeed this is one horizon of the present discussion.

If the missionaries were reluctant to admit the traditional world of the creator figures of the Aboriginal cosmos into dialogue with their understanding of Christian beliefs, it seems to have happened, and at a significant level, for Aborigines. Nor should this be surprising. Even though Aborigines were sometimes depicted as mere recipients of formal catechetical instruction by the missionaires, this was obviously a very distorted conception of the reality. The appropriation of the Kokobera creation figure Pathangany as the name for God the Father, and Samuel Zingle’s confident assertion that titles this chapter, "Pathangany made us all", stands in stark contrast to the missionary fear of "superstition".

Donald Shearman, ABM Chairman in 1972, in a tone of official despair at the end of the mission period, declared the Mission to have been an ineffective means of evangelisation: "... there are only a few who have any real commitment to Jesus Christ and of these some appear to have retained some of their old beliefs." Shearman went further and claimed that, "the Gospel Story has been syncretised with one of the popular myths".

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The Mitchell River missionaries were keen to depict cultural activities as an affirmation that their project was about "Christianization not Europeanization". These school boys, painted after the style of the men "play dance", i.e. perform the "shake-a-leg" style of the recreational, not ritual, dance of the villages.

Original caption: "School boys dancing"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 15 June 1932, p.51)
Shearman considered that nearly seventy years of missionary work had still not communicated the Christian Gospel to the Aborigines at Mitchell River, and implied that the methods used had been so "Affirmative" of Aboriginal culture and identity that there was little evidence of "Devotional" Christianity. His response was to advocate a new emphasis on bible translation and evangelisation in the vernacular. This, despite the decline in functional use of vernacular languages after such a long period of emphasising English language.¹⁴

The "syncretism" that Shearman declared triumphant, related to the Pathangany creator brothers, whose creative travels were the subject of the Kokobera, Warengvmélngnen song cycle. Samuel Zingle recounted part of this story in 1988:

*When those two fellows travelled around ...*

*those two Pathangany boys,*

*they came from a long way, and kept travelling around.*

*They created the world.*

*They put one tree there ... and sang paten,*¹⁵

*sang paten all around here, and came to a different place,*

*then they followed the sea and reckoned it was all water.*

*The big fellow said to the young brother, "We've got to block this sea and make land",*

*they built up islands first.*

*That young fellow sang paten ... that big fellow sang too.*

*They made this Australian land,*

*so they put their hands together while they kept singing that paten ...*

*they reckon that their arms stretched and stretched,*

*the young fellow from this bottom side and the big brother from the top side,*

*their arms were stretched and they felt their hands meeting together ...*

*and that big brother said, "That's you my little brother?"*

*"Yes that's me."*

*So they heaped that dirt, put it up high so we'll have this place dry, Australia.*

*They blocked the sea then, singing that paten.*

¹⁴ Bruce Sommer and James Marsh, "Vernacular and English: Language comprehension by some North Queensland Aborigines." *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol.11, No.2, February 1969, pp.48-57. The authors concluded, "That the languages are all in decline is beyond doubt. While the school-age children were not surveyed at all, it has come to the authors' attention that few now leave school with any useful heritage of vernacular comprehension." (p.53)

¹⁵ "Paten" refers to the songs of the song cycles itself that were, in turn, believed to be imitative of the songs sung by the ancestor figures. See also, Paul Black and Grace Koch, "Koko-Bera Island style music", *Aboriginal History*, vol.7 nos 1,2, 1983.
That big brother came back and met his brother ...
and now the sea won't come up.\textsuperscript{16}

The authenticity of the story as told was undoubtedly self-evident to the teller, but its telling to a Munpitch researcher seemed to necessitate an explanation, through analogy, of its authority. Maureen Zingle put her husband's story in the same category as the type of knowledge that Munpitch seemed to accept without question: "This story is the same way, in Kokobera, as white people make the history book." For Samuel Zingle the authority of the story seemed affirmed by similarities with stories in the Bible: "Its half like [in the Bible] when God made everything. ... When Moses made the water part, its nearly the same story as those two fellows you see.. They [the two brothers] hit the water with a ynggar\textsuperscript{17} string. Its half in the Bible too. [When the Bible is read in Church] I think back to what my grandfather and aunty used to tell."\textsuperscript{18} Veronica Strang recorded a Kunjen, two brothers story, in which the brothers and their stopping of a flood were linked, in like manner, with Noah.\textsuperscript{19} What Shearman considered an unfortunate example of incomplete evangelisation was recounted by Aborigines without any embarrassment as to its orthodoxy. Peter Michael thought that the two brothers were "God the Father and God the Son" and was in no doubt that the creative works of the brothers was universal: "They put all different languages, tribes, ... right through, around this world, they gave White man English in Europe, all kinds: Chinaman, Japanese, Italian, American."\textsuperscript{20}

John and Gillian Kaines, missionaries at Kowanyama in the early 1960s, recognised the paradox of their situation as it related to culture. By their time at the Mission: "You

\textsuperscript{16} Samuel Zingle, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{17} Yok Ynggar is a coastal fig tree that has fibrous bark than can be made into a robust type of string.
\textsuperscript{18} Samuel and Maureen Zingle, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988.
\textsuperscript{19} Strang, Uncommon Ground, p.262.
\textsuperscript{20} Peter Michael, taped interview, Kowanyama, 12 November 1987.
never heard anything about culture", nor was there a need to learn any of the Aboriginal languages as it was "easy to communicate in English". They had a clear understanding that the missionary’s task was one of converting Aborigines to a "European way of thinking" but considered that the changes advocated were "only superficially accepted". Despite their self-confessed ignorance of cultural matters, they freely speculated about the linkages between the cultural practices they observed and paganism, even considering that the wailing and mourning rituals at the time of death were somehow tied up in some sort of "fertility rites". Consequently, even at the end of the Mission period, culture, if it was to enter the missionary domain at all, was perceived as a dark threat and a symbol of the persistence of the "once wild, nomad hearts" that had not fully succumbed to missionary civilising.

A mere five years after the mission was transferred to government control, Shearman’s successor as ABM Chairman, John Munro, lamented lost missionary opportunities amongst Aborigines. Munro represented a new era of ABM administration, one which offered a promise of at last being able to engage theologically in the questions of mission rather than merely remaining bogged down in the practical side of running missions:

I, personally, think it sad indeed that a people whose indigenous cultic practices contained so much which would have adapted easily to a healthy sacramentalism, eg. the Churinga, the topography’s identification with the dream-time, the totemistic elements in the social order, etc., should for the most part have come to know the cultic side of Christianity in only one of many ways. But all that is a story of lost chances. 22

22 John Munro "A minute to members of the Missionary and Ecumenical Affairs Council", 26 November 1973. ABM Chairman’s Correspondence, series 22, box 6, folder 31, ABM, Sydney.

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The lost chances appear in some unexpected places in the life of the Mission. Adrian Matthews, the son of superintendent Henry Matthews, recalled an event from early in the 1920s:

I do recall one day as a child on the Mission, one of our men brought Mother a pigeon he had caught and killed. Mother was in the process of cooking it. During that, one of Pop’s men was ill - "the bone had been pointed at him", so Pop got a small bone from the pot and put it in his mouth. It was dark by then so with a hurricane lamp [he] went with his man to the victim’s hut - on [the] dirt floor he knelt down and asked the sick man where the bone had entered. He was really quite sick. Pop was shown the spot so then he put his mouth open on the spot and began to suck very purposefully, after a little while he sat back on his heels, [and] slowly drew out the small bone from the pigeon. He held it up clearly so the sick man could see it. The patient was well and recovered the next day. 23

Such entry into the conceptual world of the sick Aboriginal man demonstrated Matthews’ compassion and desire to do whatever he could to make a difference to the illness that had been ascribed to the effects of sorcery. There is no evidence to suggest that Matthews believed an actual bone had been supernaturally propelled into the sick man’s body nor that he had anything other than the clear intention of deceiving the man into a belief that he had removed a bone that had been in his body, yet, from the perspective of the Aboriginal witnesses to this “healing”, he could only have been construed as subscribing to their beliefs in this regard. 24 Undoubtedly such Munpitch were perceived as complex beings, disclosing a "supernatural" power when it suited them or protesting that this was all "superstition" when it didn’t.

Complex too, was the missionary approach to church membership and maintaining that membership in good standing. Christian initiation through baptism was a primary aim of the missionaries. The pattern had been set with the baptism of the Aboriginal mission

23 Adrian Matthews, personal communication, Gold Coast, Queensland, 24 December 1990.
24 Adrian Matthews’ account of this incident bears very close similarity with an account of traditional healing recorded in 1988, see Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 17 March 1988.
helpers, Peter Bendigo and John Grady, in 1904. Ernest Gribble’s account of this event emphasised the liminal symbolism of baptism and is worth repeating here:

One day in the presence of about two hundred natives, Bendigo and Grady were baptised in the lagoon [Yeremundo]. They had been prepared at Yarrabah for Holy Baptism. On the opposite side of the lagoon to our camp the natives with the two candidates for baptism stood with their spears. Palgrave and I entered the water and the boys met us in the middle and were made members of the Church.25

The first baptism at Trubanaman took place in April 1906 and involved the young, mixed-race boy, Warrie, whom Gribble had taken from Dunbar station. A second baptism in June of the same year took place for Jessie, the daughter of John and Rhoda Grady.26 The biggest focus was, however, on the baptism of adults who had been encouraged to become mission "inmates". By the time of Bishop Henry Newton’s first visit to Trubanaman in October 1915, there was a large number of people who had undergone a lengthy period of instruction for baptism. Even though they had been under instruction for two years, Newton was not optimistic that they had grasped much of the "intellectual" side of Christianity and counted "moral fitness" to be the real test of readiness for baptism.27 Archbishop Donaldson, the senior bishop in Queensland, visited the Mission in 1906 and 1917 and disclosed, after his second visit, his limited expectations for the Mission’s "inmates": "The child races, even our aboriginals [sic], will respond - are responding - whenever we have the patience and perseverance to wait for them".28 Chaplain Bert Cole elaborated on the supposed deficits in baptismal candidates in the same year as Donaldson’s second visit:

At the afternoon service I baptized 9 women and 11 men. They were all anxious for baptism and [were] inmates of the mission and had received a good amount of instruction. We cannot expect much from any of them as far as mental capacity goes and although they may fail miserably in head knowledge still their request

25 Ernest Gribble, A Despised Race, Sydney, 1933, p.64.
26 MRM Baptism register, OM.AV/10/1, JOL.
27 Henry Newton, diary entry for 31 October 1915.
28 St. Clair Donaldson, ABM Review, 1 October 1917, p.133.
for baptism and their general good behaviour and obedience to mission discipline encourage the idea that they are worthy of the sacrament. 29

The assessment that Aborigines were inherently unable to grasp Christianity at an intellectual level carried with it a correspondingly elevated expectation that "good behaviour and obedience to mission discipline" were the only true indicators of Christian conversion. "Worthiness" and "moral fitness", hallmarks of "Devotional" Christianity, were difficult states for Aborigines to reach as the criteria measuring supposed progress were highly subjective and dependent on the perceptions of the individual missionaries. Such "worthiness" was quickly stripped away if there was any transgression of the missionary moral code. 30 Even though baptism into the Christian faith and inclusion in the liturgical life of the Mission were fundamental objectives, the episcopate of Bishop Henry Newton from 1915 to 1922 witnessed the frequent use of ecclesiastical sanctions as a response to infringements of the missionary moral order. Even if the missionary assessment of intellectual capacity and general expectation were set at an insultingly low level, the standard of morality and adherence to church discipline was so high that it would have astonished most ordinary Anglicans in Australia or England.

The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, which provided the canonical basis for ecclesiastical sanction, instructed the priest to challenge the notorious behaviour of any member of their flock and to "repel" from the Holy Communion any who maintained "malice and hatred". 31 Rarely applied against white Anglicans, Newton exemplified the approach to making the missions the place for Christianity to be lived out

29 Bert Cole, diary entry for 7 October 1917.
30 See chapter 8, "Making good Blackfellows", for a detailed exploration of morality on the Mission.
31 Preamble of "The order of the administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion", Book of Common Prayer, p.287.
in its strictest form, by using excommunication, the withdrawal of the communicant status of a Church member, as a common punishment applied to Aborigines and Islanders in his diocese. Newton explained his reasons when Bernard was excommunicated for the period between 27 April 1917 and Christmas Day 1917: "It is a good thing to use this excommunication as an opportunity to make the people realize the heinousness of Sin, and the need for care to keep away from sin lest God shut them out of heaven". The notice of Bernard’s excommunication still reads as a stark condemnation:

Because Bernard of Trubanaman has been guilty of adultery and has sinned against God and brought disgrace upon the church, I Henry, Bishop of Carpentaria, forbid the said Bernard coming to the Holy Communion until Christmas Day 1917. If he is really sorry and wants to come back then he may come. And I tell all the Christians at Trubanaman to pray for Bernard that he may be really sorry for his sin and to ask God to make them brave and strong to keep away from sin themselves.

This notice is to be read out in Church and if Bernard is present he must at once go out of Church.

One woman was excommunicated and four men "degraded to the heathen's seat in church", a lesser canonical sentence, for lapses in their conduct two months after Bernard’s excommunication had been declared. Adherence to the missionary order was usually the accepted meaning of "worthiness" and consequently a "worthy heathen" was sometimes more to be preferred than an "unworthy Christian". Chapman’s words concerning the death and burial of Gilbert express genuine admiration and affection for the old man who, though unbaptised and occupying the "heathen’s seat" at Church, had been a pillar of the missionary social order:

Burial of Gilbert snr at 10 am. Camp people came to the service, the church being crowded, many having to remain outside. The deceased was one of the oldest

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32 Bishop’s Day Book, 1901 - 1952, OM.AV/126/1, JOL.
35 Newton to Cole, 27 April 1917, folio 76, Bishop’s Outward Correspondence, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.
34 Newton to Cole, 27 April 1917, folio 75, Bishop’s Outward Correspondence, OM.AV/61/2, JOL.
35 Bert Cole, diary entry for 10 June 1917.
natives of this part and remembered the first coming of the white man. He had always been a loyal friend to the mission. He never learned to speak English and was a most regular attendant at the Church services.36

Much depended on the judgement of the missionary. Chapman was, at the time of Gilbert’s death, effectively the chaplain as well as the superintendent, since Henry Matthews had left in the previous month and the replacement chaplain was still a few months off arriving. Each chaplain seems to have made his own interpretation of the canons of the Church and the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer. Chapman was willing to exercise a latitude at the time of Gilbert’s death that Chaplain Herbert Norton twenty years later rejected. Norton noted the death of Long King, a leading man of the Kokominjen, in the mission diary and was at pains to keep the funeral of this old “heathen” out of the Church:

Notice brought that Long King had died, not in No 2 village, but in the weekend river bank camp. Funeral at 3.45 pm NOT from the Church. [Norton’s emphasis]37

Important life events became times when the baptismal status of a person determined their inclusion or exclusion in the rites of passage of the missionary order. Two weddings took place at the Mission on 17 January 1949 under very different conditions:

Banjo and Biddy Jenny were married at 10 am by the Superintendent in the Superintendent’s office as Banjo was not baptized ... at 3.30 Roy and Alma Native were married by Rev Norton. Native dancing during the evening.38

There is no doubt that this was no mere local arrangement. Bishop Stephen Davies supported this approach and had sought authority from the Queensland Government, in 1947, for superintendent Currington to become a marriage celebrant so that marriages between non-Christians could be performed on the Mission but not as religious

36 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 4 August 1924.
37 Herbert Norton, diary entry for 26 July 1948.
38 Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 17 January 1949.
solemnisations. In 1914 Henry Matthews boasted that, "... heathen rites have yielded place at the great moments of their lives to Christian sacraments." More than thirty years later these same sacraments were still not universally accessible even though they had come to be so central to the social relationships and ordering of life on the Mission.

Baptism, in the early years of the Mission, and Confirmation, once infant baptism was established as the norm, were the means of distinguishing the fully missionised Aborigines from those who were simply adherents of the Mission. As a result, a tentative hierarchy of progression into the lower ranks of the missionaries’ Christian experience developed. Matthews had seven men, Tommy, Lawrence, Amos, Alban, Clive, Zingle and Barney, fitted out with surplices, to signify their status as choir members, when they sang at worship services in 1920. Don, Pindi, Bernard and Tommy Horseboy gave addresses at church services in the same year in what seems to have been a concerted drive by Matthews to promote a male leadership in the Christian worship on the Mission. Like most Anglicans at this time he does not seem to have conceived that church leadership might be exercised by women. Admittedly the cohort of young men to whom he looked for leadership had dominated the early years of the Mission. They were the group under the closest missionary tutelage and, by the 1920s, had lived much of their adult life as Christians. Matthews was also bound by the apparently unchanging tradition of the Church that only men could become ordained ministers or even have a leading role in worship. He was not to know that the events of the Second World War, which were to claim his own life

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40 Henry Matthews quoted in Pitts, The Australian Aboriginal, p.115.
41 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 20 June 1920.
would also see the ordination of a Chinese woman, Florence Tim Oi Li, as a deacon in Hong Kong in 1941 and as a priest in Zhaoqing in 1944, the first time a woman had been ordained in any part of the Anglican Church. 43

By 1923, Matthews’ emphasis was on applying the literacy skills of his emerging leaders to their participation in worship, something that he was obviously keen on recognising as a breakthrough: “Alban read the lesson at Matins, the first Aboriginal to do so in the history of this mission.” 44 This was followed the next day by even more involvement: “Aidan read the service to 3rd collect at Matins and Evensong and Alban read second lesson at Evensong.” 45 The brothers Aidan and Alban were following in the steps of their mother Rebecca who led prayers in the Church in 1922 during a period when Chapman was too ill to take any part and Matthews was away from the Mission. 46 The fact that a woman had already accomplished, a year earlier, precisely what Matthews considered to have been an historic achievement did not figure in Matthews’ understanding of mission history. Ironically, Zingle, Barney, and Clive, three of the foundation members of the choir, were excommunicated in 1929, demonstrating the difficulty Aborigines experienced remaining in favour with the missionaries. 47

The possibility of Mitchell River Mission having ordained ministers from amongst its own members received a boost when two Papuan deacons, Aidan Uwedo and Stephen Maiorot, 48 accompanied ABM Chairman John Needham on a visit to the Mission in 1925.

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44 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 10 November 1923.
45 Henry Matthews, diary entry for 11 November 1923.
46 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 11 September 1922.
47 E. Lawton, Register of Services, entry for 3 February 1929.
William McFarlane, the Priest-Director of the Torres Strait Mission and a member of
Needham’s party, stated the obvious fact that what had indeed been normative for the
Christian Church throughout the centuries, an indigenous ministry, was within the grasp
of the mission: "... is it not what one should expect and look for?" Even the photograph
recording the visit of the two Papuans contained the implicit answer to McFarlane’s
question. Leah Bondonolly, by this time a well established mission teacher, was
photographed with the deacons. She was well qualified in terms of literacy, Christian
knowledge and motivation to provide the sort of recognised Christian leadership that
McFarlane knew was needed. Gender and race posed a double impediment in the
missionary mind for the opportunity to be developed to the extent possible. It would take
more than sixty years for the Church to ordain an Aboriginal member of the Kowanyama
community, when in 1987 a Kunjen woman, Nancy Dick, became a deacon. Even so, Leah
was remembered as a formative influence by her students and younger family members and
as the only Aboriginal who led prayers in the mission school. Winifred Coglin explained
that when children looked at the night sky and asked, "Has that star got [a] boss?", Leah
would answer "Yeah, higher than you and me. Big boss." Her answers, in simple terms
like this, impressed a Christian piety on several generations of enquirers.

The emphasis of any particular chaplain or superintendent was undoubtedly
significant in whether the plans of an earlier administration would be developed or
frustrated. Chaplains were inevitably located somewhere in the spectrum of what Anglicans

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51 Winifred Coglin, taped interview, Kowanyama, 6 August 1987.
Leah Minyalk (left) with the two Papuan Deacons, Aidan Uwedo and Stephen Maiorot and another Melanesian woman, possibly the wife of one of the deacons.

Original caption: "Leah & PNG deacons"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 12 April 1925, p.10)
call "churchmanship". At the extremes of this spectrum were practices and sentiments that identify the Anglican Church as either entirely a product of the Reformation or as essentially continuous with Catholicism. Bishop Henry Newton was unequivocally of the Catholic party, but the first consciously catholic chaplain was James Housden, who was appointed as Chaplain in 1930. Until Housden’s time the service of Matins (or Morning Prayer) was the standard worship on the Mission. By its nature it was somewhat more inclusive than the Holy Communion service which Housden raised to central prominence in the life of the Mission. Authorised lay people were capable of leading the service of Matins whereas only a priest or bishop could preside at the Holy Communion. Only baptised and confirmed Christians could partake of the consecrated communion elements whilst the more general prayers and proclamation of Matins permitted greater inclusion.

This change of liturgical emphasis alone meant the frustration of the leadership plans that Matthews had set in place in the 1920s. The trend towards the Catholic end of the churchmanship spectrum would mark the remainder of the life of the Mission. Under Housden’s guidance Alban and Aidan were prepared as altar servers. In ten years these brothers had gone from being leaders of worship in their own right, during Matthews’ time, to the decidedly junior role of altar server to Housden, a role otherwise filled in white

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52 William McFarlane, "The Church in Northern Australia", The Living Church, 14 May 1927, vol.LXXVII, no.2. "All the bishops have been of what is generally termed "good" Churchmanship, and, especially of late years there has been a gradual increase in ceremonial and the accessories connected therewith. This may be said of the whole diocese practically, in which the tone is decidedly Catholic."
54 Wetherell, Reluctant Mission, pp.71, 76.
57 James Housden, Register of Services, entries for 18 October 1931 and 5 June 1932.
After the retrenchment of the female missionaries at the end of 1931, the Mission’s staff was reduced to MacLeod, Chapman and Housden. All put on their best formalities for the official photograph of the Bishop’s visit.

*Left to right:* Alec MacLeod, Joseph Chapman, Bishop Stephen Davies, Chaplain James Housden, The Reverend E.P. Stalley (Rector of Normanton)

Taken on Bishop’s visit to Mitchell River Mission, 27-31 May 1932.

Original caption: "At the Mitchell River Mission"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 20 October 1932, p.121)
congregations by youths aged twelve or thirteen. Matthews’ experiment in constructing a credible scale of progression from baptism to the adult leadership of the Christian community had come to an abrupt halt. The first generation of missionised Aborigines were left only with the consolation that they were part of a "child race" and worthy only of the missionaries’ patience and forbearance. Fortunately for them the increasing demands of labour from the cattle industry would mean that their lives would not hinge solely on the Mission even if the missionary hegemony there remained unchanged.58

Perhaps this failure to take the aspirations of Aboriginal Christians seriously was linked to an increase in missionary scrutiny of customary initiation ceremonies during the 1930s. The focus of this concern, and a source of vigorous participation by Aborigines, was the Yiral ceremony of the Kokobera, held every two or three years. Yiral or "Bora", as it is still more commonly called, remains shrouded in secrecy for modern Aborigines at Kowanyama. Modern people know that sites associated with the Bora are permanently off-limits to the uninitiated. Perhaps the uniqueness of Yiral in comparison with the other initiation ceremonies, at least for the purpose of this discussion, was its association with the southern area towards Normanton.59 The south was the direction of the greatest disruptions to Aboriginal society through pastoral and mining expansion and, as Tony Swain60 has described, was where a widespread movement of "Bora" ceremonies developed in response to colonisation.61

58 See chapter 6, "The practice of protection", for a full account of the involvement of mission Aborigines in the pastoral industry.
59 Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 16 December 1987. The Yiral song cycle was said to "start" from a place called Kodjelu, near Inkerman station.
60 For an introduction to Swain’s approach see Tony Swain, "On "understanding" Australian Aboriginal religion." The young Australian scholar lecture series, No.6, Bedford Park, South Australia, 1985.
Swain proposes that these "Bora" ceremonies aimed at restructuring the relationship between whites and Aborigines "to produce a Lawful[sic], balanced and equal dualism which could thus, in the face of time, endure."\textsuperscript{62} Swain describes a culturally dynamic situation in which the ceremonial life of Aborigines was in contemporary dialogue with their social circumstances. Anthropologist, Veronica Strang, identified this trend in contemporary Aboriginal culture at Kowanyama:

Aboriginal cosmology is adaptive. While beliefs and values may shift more slowly than events and external circumstances, they are constantly being redefined and reconstructed to deal with changes in the social and physical environment.\textsuperscript{63}

Of the social circumstances of Mitchell River Aborigines in the 1930s, colonisation and its effects were at the forefront of concern. If it is accepted that whites had been conceived of in the dualistic category of \textit{Munpitch}, the implications for the Mission that \textit{Yiral} was concerned with things "belong \textit{Munpitch}" is most significant.\textsuperscript{64} Scholarly accounts of \textit{Yiral} are limited to the field notes anthropologist Lauriston Sharp made during the early 1930s. A small number of initiates who participated, in 1934, in the final \textit{Yiral} were alive at the time of my fieldwork but stood one or two generations removed from the long deceased custodians of the \textit{Yiral} songs and ritual whom Sharp interviewed. The single public acknowledgement of \textit{Yiral} in modern Kowanyama is the recognition of \textit{pathemenainy} or "poison places" which are believed to cause injury and possibly death to people who trespass upon them.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.} p.136. Swain’s use of capital "L" in "Lawful" emphasises Aboriginal Law.
\textsuperscript{63} Strang, \textit{Uncommon Ground}, p.263.
\textsuperscript{64} Lauriston Sharp, Field notes, entry 35-1-81-8, Manuscript 685, AIATSIS, Canberra.
\textsuperscript{65} Patrick Eric, taped interview, 10 April 1987, Kowanyama.
Swain uses Baiami, the culture figure of the Kamilaroi people of New South Wales, to illustrate his perspective that the "bora" ceremonies were the means of integrating the dual realities of White colonisation and the Aboriginal Law:

*Bora* designs thus brought what I have categorised as the origin of unLawfulness, immorality and "evil" in Aboriginal thought [whatever it was] within the confines of a new, broader Law. Baiami had introduced both Aboriginal and White culture and hence both were by definition Lawful. The aim of these ceremonies was not to naively return to a pristine pre-colonial life by destroying Whites, but to maintain Aboriginal identity within the cosmos by demarcating its place within post-colonial society. In brief, it aimed to define invasion as a morally controllable act.66

If, in fact, Yiral was a means of relating the presence and behaviour of the Munpitch to the moral world of Aboriginal Law, it would be a tragic irony that the profound significance this had for the theological dimension of the missionary purpose passed entirely unappreciated by the missionaries. Even though the Munpitch were ontologically different from the Pakaper, the Bora, thus understood, located and legitimated them cosmologically and affirmed that the future of the Pakaper was inevitably intertwined with the Munpitch, however different they were and however at odds their mutual interests might seem. It raises the very real possibility that the Aboriginal "inmates" of the Mission were more prepared to face the radical implications of equality contained in the Christian gospel than were their missionaries.67

Chapman was set in his opposition to the Bora in 1925: "People have a desire to attend bush school which is unchristian. [I] had to deal severely with them. Michael rather rebellious."68 There is little doubt that Chapman was so embroiled in the inter-tribal rivalries, that his judgement was greatly influenced by his affinity with the Kokominjen and

66 Swain, *A place for strangers*, pp.143, 144.
67 See Galatians 3:28, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."
68 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 24 February 1925.
other northern groups. While critical of the Kokobera and Yiral, he personally attended the 1929 ceremonies of the Kokominjen, and received lavish praise in the pages of the ABM Review for the confidence to which this testified:

The Superintendent has been able to get into very intimate touch with the visiting natives [from north of the Mitchell and Edward Rivers] in their initiation ceremonies, which they have been carrying on during their stay. He was able to see the whole thing from the beginning, and was granted privileges rarely accorded a white man; it is a very serious thing from the native standpoint for these ceremonies to be revealed to the women and others, however, and consequently their confidence had to be honoured. But the knowledge gained should prove of very great value in connection with the spiritual work of the mission, and in approaching the people at the right angle. There is scope for great development of the work here, if the Australian Church would only rise to the wonderful possibilities and provide the necessary means.69

This personal involvement softened his usual approach to the priority of work and mission routine. He even allowed a half day holiday so that the mission Aborigines could attend the closing of this ceremony.70 One of Chapman's fellow missionaries, Dundas Simpson, attended the 1929 Yiral71, and was regarded by Aborigines as a pathervketang, an initiated man. Maudie Koolatah remembered Aborigines commenting: "Oh, here's that Bora man coming", as they saw Simpson coming towards them.72 But such approaches "at the right angle" were only fleeting and inconsistent.

Harry Rowan, on a brief visit from his post at Lockhart River Mission in 1931, weighed into the Mitchell River Bora controversy at a crucial time:

A deputation of big men of the Bora came and said they wished to kill all the old fashion of Native rights and get British law in all forms. This I think will be a very good thing and bring a lot more peace and goodwill on the place if they are helped in their resolution.73

69 ABM Review, 15 December 1929, p.166.
70 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 18 July 1929.
71 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 31 July 1929.
72 Maudie Koolatah, taped interview, 27 March 1988, Kowanyama.
73 Harry Rowan, diary entry for 27 March 1931.
Rowan was undoubtedly keen to help stiffen this resolve and had five of the senior men of the Bora make their mark alongside their name in the Mission diary as evidence of their agreement with the proposition that: "We the undersigned have given up our old Bora of our own free will".\(^7^4\) Harry Rowan, as founding missionary at Lockhart River Mission,\(^7^5\) took an approach to Christian evangelisation at Lockhart River that has been characterised by David Thompson as a "replacement method" whereby the new beliefs took the place of the old ways.\(^7^6\) In the Mitchell River Mission context, "British law" was Rowan's replacement answer to "all the old fashion of Native rights", a long way from the "right angle" advocated in the *ABM Review* article.

In contrast to Dundas Simpson's individual response in 1929, the Mission as an institution seems to have been on an inexorable path that meant opposition to *Yiral* and inevitably, its destruction. Harry Rowan had only briefly been part of the Mitchell River scene but had managed to come away with an outcome that he was very pleased about. Further crucial decisions followed only three days after Rowan had ensured that Mark, Willie, Silas, Luke and Mark scratched their mark of assent in the Mission diary. Alec MacLeod weighed into the issue by reprimanding a fellow missionary, the dormitory matron, Miss Single, for insinuating herself into the *Yiral* ceremonies: "Matron ordered to go and change into female dress as she attended native dance dressed up as a Man."

Since the hidden parts of the *Yiral* ceremonies were only open to men, Single's decision to dress as a man was probably the only way for her to witness these events. Doubtless, through her daily contact with the dormitory children, she would have been

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74 Harry Rowan, diary entry for 27 March 1931.
aware of the taboos against a woman attending. What is puzzling is why MacLeod would take such an exception to Single’s behaviour, especially if he shared Rowan’s belief that "British law in all forms" was now to prevail. It is of course difficult to know whether MacLeod was simply concerned with her action as a breach of missionary propriety or as a breach of the sanctity of the ceremony itself. MacLeod’s concern for the latter may well have been well informed since he is remembered to have gone to the Yiral camp and to have taken photographs contrary to the wishes of the old men who were the ceremony’s custodians, thus arousing their antagonism. He may have been acutely aware of the offence that the discovery of Single’s presence would have provoked and been far less confident than Rowan about the commitment of the Yiral leaders to voluntarily abandon their "Native rights", especially recourse to violence as a punishment for the transgression of customary prohibitions. It was MacLeod who would have to live with the consequences of the whole affair not Rowan. As it was, the 1931 Yiral was not to be the last of these ceremonies in contradiction of what Rowan had confidently expected.

The Bora ceremony of 1934, thirty years after the foundation of the Mission, first came to Chapman’s attention in February when the leading Aboriginal men met to make plans. By July Yiral was underway and Chapman could only record the plaintive observation, "people all occupied with Bora ceremony". Chapman had the last word when he prevented the people from going "walkabout" at the conclusion of the Bora "as the beans

78 Whether it was because of the hostility aroused by this transgression or through unrelated reasoning, MacLeod’s death was ultimately attributed by Aborigines to the potency of the dust from the bora ground which was believed to have started a malignant cancer on MacLeod’s face. (Raymond George, taped interview, Kowanyama, 16 December 1987.)
79 Joseph Chapman, diary entries for 10 February 1934 and 14 July 1934.
had to be harvested". At one level the missionaries opposed the Bora because it competed for the time and interest of the mission community with the routines of food production as well as the general work regime that had been developed to make the mission an "industrious" place. At another level it represented a belief system that was a competitor with the church worship that could only be fully entered by baptism.

Chapman lumped together Yiral, sorcery and spear fighting as part of the "wave of evil" he denounced in 1936. He had every reason to expect that a Yiral ceremony would be staged that year as two years had passed since Yiral's last took place in 1934. Much of what proceeded that year is consistent with the Mission's attempts to frustrate these plans. Chapman made a lengthy accusation of the Kokobera, linking alleged murders with leaders of the Yiral:

Had another meeting of Koko Beras in reference to certain murders which had been committed by them some years ago and which had been concealed. [It] Proceed[s] that they had murdered Daisy's father and that Dr Dick had murdered Bernard's mother. Those murders were committed over Trubanaman way and by boys who were mission inmates but they had never been reported to the mission authorities. In 1918 the same people headed by Tommy Horseboy went to the Nassau to murder Charlie Nassau, having cleared out from Kowanyama. Circumstances prevented them from committing the murder. The known murders by these people over a period of years being Kilpatrick, "Daisy's father", Bernard's mother, Stingaree, Brother of Possum, Rodger, Mickie and a sister of Parrot. The murders were confined to a section of the tribe of whom Bondanolly, Dr Dick, Sambo, Tommy Horseboy, Luke, Bernard, Sergeant [and], Major being among the prominent ones now living who had a hand in many troubles. These same people although pretending to be loyal to the mission have caused a lot of trouble being particularly hostile towards myself and hence on more than one occasion acted with violence towards me. They are especially hostile towards the Koko Mingens. Their allies are certain Kunjuns.

Many of these allegations were plainly preposterous, several of the deaths Chapman listed were the result of spear fights that had embroiled the whole community. It was taking

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80 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 23 July 1934.
81 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 18 March 1936.
82 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 15 March 1936.
it to extremes to characterise them as premeditated murder as the previous lengthy
discussions of Roger and Mick's deaths illustrate.\textsuperscript{83} He disclosed a significant part of his
own agenda when he charged the Kokobera elders of feigned loyalty to the Mission and
personal antagonism and violence towards himself. Chapman had thrown the whole of the
Mission's coercive influence into his struggle with the Kokobera.\textsuperscript{84} Undoubtedly the
occurrence of Yirral provided an opportunity for animosity between its Aboriginal
participants to be resolved by open conflict. Indeed the settling of grudges was a necessary
preliminary to the intensely interdependent participation in a ceremony of this scale.\textsuperscript{85}
Chapman appears to have been so personally involved in the old scores he recounted, that
his judgement erred in slating home every manner of fault to the Kokobera. Chapman was
persistent. On the next day he had linked the accusations with the closely held secrets of
the Bora:

\begin{quote}
Had another interview with the Koko Beras this morning in reference to Alice's
disappearance and upon certain bora ceremonies. They are a most untruthful
crowd.\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

Despite his slander of the Kokobera, he was evidently successful in finding out
more details of Yirral since he noted the day after: "Bernard trying to find out who told me

\textsuperscript{83} See chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{84} There was no questioning Chapman's loyalty to his friends which was as determined as his opposition
to his (and their) enemies. The fighting to which Chapman's accusation of the Kokobera referred had seen
Roger and Mick of the Kunjen die in spearfights had also resulted in the Kokobera Rio and Simon
transported to Palm Island. The Kokominjen, supported by Chapman, their patron, seemed poised to move
into the ascendency of inter-tribal politics of the Mission. Chapman, however, had his eyes set on the
heartland of the Kokominjen, to the north of the Mitchell River mouth and took many of the Kokominjen
leaders with him when he established the Edward River Mission in 1939. Such was the relationship with
this missionary that, when he retired back to Kowanyama in 1957, the Edward River Kokominjen began
an en masse relocation to Kowanyama. See, John Taylor, Of Acts and Axes, PhD thesis, JCU, Townsville,
\textsuperscript{85} See A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, Sydney, 1938, pp.161, 162, for the general pattern of such
dispute resolution.
\textsuperscript{86} Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 16 March 1936.
about bora business." Such intense scrutiny and personal opposition from Chapman was sufficient for the ceremony planned for 1936 to be abandoned. What Rowan had claimed to have negotiated in 1931, the abandonment of Yiral, was finally achieved by Chapman in 1936, leaving the initiates of 1934 as the last to experience it. The "Devotional" dialectic of Christianity had prevailed. Whether this was through the appeal of Rowan to the "higher" and transcendent order of "British law" or through Chapman's appeal to morality is less important than the fact that the steamroller of missionary Christianity rolled inevitably onwards. Another "right angle" had been destroyed.

Even while the missionaries were engaged in a determined struggle with the leaders of the Bora ceremonies, it suited their propaganda purposes to treat the issue in a most "Affirmative" way in the missionary press. The ABM Review report on Mitchell River in its December 1933 edition reasserted Ernest Gribble's 1905 proposition that making "good blackfellows" was the real task of the Mission. The assertion that the "Bora" was taking place under "mission approbation" is hard to reconcile with the attitudes and behaviours of the missionaries examined so far:

Tribal ceremonies have been in full swing, two "Boras" being joined in by the tribes. These ceremonies mean a great deal in the life of the native, and help him maintain a definite interest in the tribe as well as dignifying his own position. It is not always realised that it is not the aim of the missionary to make the native into a white man, but to make him a good blackfellow, and this is one of the reasons why the "Bora" goes on under mission approbation.

If Tony Swain is right about the intention of the "Bora" ceremonies to restructure the relationship between whites and Aborigines and if this principle can be applied to Yiral, it seems that a significant opportunity of cross-cultural encounter at a theological level was

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87 Joseph Chapman, diary entry for 17 March 1936.
89 ABM Review, 1 December 1933, p.144.
lost in the 1930s. The Warengvméngen song cycle provides a link between what modern Aborigines at Kowanyama believe and what their ancestors may have been attempting to do through Yiral until this door was closed in 1936. Modern informants identify the Pathangany brothers of Warengvméngen with the God of Christianity. The Warengvméngen song cycle has an internal reference to the brothers hearing the Kokobera singing Yiral in the south and then deciding against going towards that direction. Might this not be understood as a metaphor of the experience of the 1930s, when Yiral, an integrating ritual locating the Munpitch within the moral order of the Pakaper, was exposed to the God of the Christians but rejected? Its passing into history may have been the most significant but least understood "lost opportunity" of engagement between the religious worlds of Aborigine and missionary. Certainly other initiation ceremonies fell under the same steamroller of missionary Christianity, leaving the Mission apparently "cultureless" on this criterion by the 1950s. The fact that the pathemenainy or "poison places" associated with Yiral remain respected even after the passing of more than sixty years says something very different about the cultural resilience of the Kokobera and other modern residents of Kowanyama.

The appointment of Sailor Gabey, a priest from the Torres Strait Island of Mer, as the chaplain at Mitchell River in 1938 presented a fresh opportunity for the moral world of Aboriginal Law to meet the world of Christian faith. His appointment represented a significant change from the ten Munpitch priests who had preceded him. Gabey, ordained a deacon in 1924 and a priest in 1931, had already experienced the work of a chaplain on

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91 Strang, Uncommon Ground, p.28.
92 See John and Gillian Kaines, taped interview, Thursday Island, 12 August 1987.
the east-coast Aboriginal mission, Lockhart River, from 1931 to 1933. Gabey was a first generation Christian among the Miriam people who had been evangelised in 1871, and himself only the third Torres Strait Islander to be ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood in the Anglican Church.93

From the perspective of a present dominated by rapid cultural change, Sailor Gabey’s period as chaplain was remembered as a golden age by Sam Zingle, even though coercion was evidently a major factor in ensuring successful church attendance:

All go to church morning and afternoon, blind chelarliy and wangana.94 never stay away... the school kid never used to miss out, used to go every time, if we do miss out we get a hiding when we go back to school. We used to have Father Sailor Gabey... and those were good days I reckon.95

Despite serving as chaplain to the Mission for five years until his death in office, Gabey suffered from being perceived by the diocesan authorities as a temporary incumbent of the chaplain’s position. The year of his appointment saw the intertwining of patronising praise and racism in this review of Gabey’s ministry:

The Rev. Sailor Gabey, one of our native priests, is still carrying on the spiritual work of the Mitchell pending the appointment of a new permanent chaplain, and by all reports is acquitting himself very creditably in a difficult post. ... By all indications a steady advance is being made in every department of the activities of the mission, excepting, of course, the chaplain-teacher’s work, which it would be foolish to assume could be done as well by a native priest as by a well-educated and devoted white priest such as we pray earnestly will soon come forward. And what a happy post it might be for a priest fired with the love of souls and a devotion to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. The present juncture offers an extraordinarily favourable opportunity for a priest, who by his fitness for such a service would have good hopes of success, to come forward and dedicate to this splendid mission at least a decade of the best years of his ministerial life.96

94 Chelarliy and Wangana are the Kokobera words for old women and old men respectively.
96 ABM Review, 1 November 1938, p.205.
Sailor Gabey’s grave at Kowanyama cemetery.

Even if "priest" was mis-spelled, a newer generation have refreshed his grave with paint and flowers.
Diocesan authorities apparently had no conscience in sacrificing Gabey’s reputation in their unashamed appeal to vanity in the effort to recruit a "white priest" to Mitchell River. There was, in any case, with the intervention of World War Two, no prospect of recruiting a "white priest" to the Mission. Gabey died in 1943 with a period of five year’s service as chaplain of the mission, the longest period of tenure in this role throughout the whole of the mission period. Life on the Mission itself offered no respite for him from the attitudes of white missionary superiority, leaving Gabey with a daily struggle against the routines of mission life which served to institutionalise his subordinate status. 97

Even though he never seems to have been accepted as an equal by his white, missionary co-workers, Gabey was having an impact on the Mission beyond that of his predecessors. Gabey’s time as chaplain is remembered as a vigorous period of innovation in church worship, with the introduction of Aboriginal language in hymns. He had grown up singing hymns in his Miriam language, and appreciated better than the white missionaries the value of the vernacular in Christian worship. Undoubtedly Gabey was seen as culturally affirmative in sponsoring the composition, amongst others, of the hymn, *Pathangany Papingsyrr*, (*Pathangany is our Father*) to the tune of the Torres Strait Islander hymn, *Napusari*. This open identification in church worship of a central cultural symbol of the Kokobera with the God and Father of Jesus Christ represented a major shift from the era which had preceded it. More than twenty years before, Joseph Chapman was aware of beliefs which formed the basis of this association, but seemed only to see these things

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97 Wiffie Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987. Currington recalled Gabey striving to distance himself from being treated on the same conditions as Aborigines: "These blackfellows have got to wait, I've got to get my meat first." This could be seen as an attempt to assert his equality with the white mission staff and an acceptance, in part, of their value system.
through the lens of missionary superiority, focused by an almost complete ignorance of the
people he lived amongst for so long:

[Aborigines at the Mission] have no religious beliefs, as far as I can understand,
but they believe in a being called "fard-tung-gi-an", who they say made
everything, and lives beyond the sky in a place called "Cunee-lee", which means
"the place on top". Their ideas are rather vague as to where the departed go, but
they believe the good ones go to a place of plenty, while the evil ones are
punished by having bad food to eat.98

As well as his influence in embracing the vernacular in mission worship, Gabey was
remembered for advocating better training opportunities for the people of the Mission to
equip them for leadership, along missionary lines, in their own community.99 It was,
however, in his entry into the world of traditional healing, that Gabey encountered hostility
from Aboriginal traditional healers. Henry Matthews’ excursion into this area, when he
pretended to remove a sorcery bone from a sick man, seems to have been an isolated
instance; but for Gabey, more familiar with these things from his own culture, this was a
central part of his role as a priest.100 Even though this might have appeared unorthodox or
exotic to white missionaries, the integration of traditional healing and Christianity is well
attested elsewhere as anthropologist, Janice Read, has shown in Arnhem Land.101

Superintendent Wiffie Currington, who had grown up on Thursday Island, and more able
to understand these things, recalled Sailor Gabey offering to heal him when he was
suffering from kidney stones by "sucking" the stones out from his body. Moreover Gabey
asked Currington not to speak about the offer to the bishop as "he wouldn’t understand".102

99 Mrs Alma Wason, interview, Kowanyama, 10 March 1988.
100 See, Dave Passi, "From Pagan to Christian Priesthood", in Garry Trompf (Ed.), *The Gospel is not
101 Janice Read, *Sorcerers and Healing Spirits: Continuity and Change in an Aboriginal Medical System*,
Canberra, 1983, pp.64, 65.
102 Currington, taped interview, Normanton, 7 July 1987.
Gabey seems to have been unsure of the acceptance of his Islander, Christian beliefs and tentative about what might happen were the bishop to discover him practising them. He undoubtedly knew very well the tightrope that native Christians walked under the piercing gaze of missionary scrutiny.

Sailor Gabey’s death became understood in a way which invites further consideration. It is a commentary about the meeting of the moral world of Aboriginal Law and the missionary order. His adopted nephew, James Gibo, who spent the last hours of Gabey’s life in prayer with him, was sure that his uncle’s death was caused through the sorcery of one of Gabey’s adversaries, Old Dinghy. In this light Gibo sadly concluded, "that evil thing was more stronger than God’s help". Others reported that Gabey’s death was a result of infringing the sanctity of a place associated with the Kokominjen Welthn initiation ceremony when he was digging for worms to use as fishing bait. On this explanation, even though Gabey owned to his infringement, none of the traditional custodians of Welthn came forward to apply the efficacious antidote to the harmful effects of transgression, their own underarm smell. In this and many other ways, Gabey is represented as an abandoned man, cut off from the help of his Christian God and estranged from the ministrations of those Aborigines who were believed to have the power to help him and misunderstood and unappreciated by the Munpitch missionaries.

Aborigines were vigorous in their efforts to incorporate the realities of a world in which whites had such a prominent place with the moral order of the Aboriginal law and the natural world around them. Norman Junior was certain that a very distinct blue star

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103 For another instance of traditional supernatural power being used as a means of revenge against a missionary, see Percy Tresize, *Dream Road, A journey of discovery*, St Leonards, 1993, p.72.
105 Patrick Eric, taped interview, Kowanyama, 10 April 1987.
had seen on a droving trip was the harbinger of the death of King George of England.\textsuperscript{106}

Kenny Jimmy recounted a story that explained the death of Cecil Davidson, the head stockman on \textit{Lawn Hill} station, that is significant in that it describes the conflict of the Christian moral world of the Mission and the secular world of whites outside it. Davidson had demanded that the Aboriginal stockmen under his control muster on Good Friday. These men, mostly from Doomadgee Mission, but including Kenny Jimmy from Mitchell River, were uneasy about this and objected, "That's in our religion, we've got to stay home". Kenny Jimmy continued his account of the day:

\begin{quote}
Well he's head stockman, we couldn't put up [an] argument with him, I tried to but ... We went out to muster on Good Friday. We had a big lot of cattle too, bringing them in, doing camp drafting. Now it's the last bullock, what happened to that same head stockmen - good cattle camp, no hole, nothing. The last beast. He's trying to take him out, [a] big old bally stag. The horse tumbled with him, rolled. He broke his neck. He died right on the spot, because he never believed in Good Friday.\textsuperscript{107}
\end{quote}

The moral world of the Mission had triumphed over the secular world of the station whites, and, what is more, had been carried to that place of testing in the hearts and minds of mission Aborigines. Confronted with a competing world of at least three sets of cultural values, Kenny Jimmy and his Doomadgee companions had seen that a challenge to the sacredness of the day of Jesus' crucifixion was answered in the most direct and final way possible. In rejecting the urgent requests of those who knew better, Davidson had even isolated himself from the moral world of the cattle camp whose work was otherwise successfully completed. This was not a sentence of judgement on pastoralism as much as it was the condemnation of choosing to leave Aborigines and whites sharing the same world but without a common morality.

\textsuperscript{106} Norman Junior, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 April 1988.
\textsuperscript{107} Kenny Jimmy, taped interview, Kowanyama, 4 May 1988.
The conflict between the moral worlds of the missionary and other Munpitch was long established and fostered to an extent by the missionaries themselves, eager as they were to depict themselves as the particular benefactors of Aborigines. Even the disastrous events that surrounded the death of Frank Bowman could be understood as a contest between a pastoralist Munpitch and the moral and temporal order of the missionaries, occurring as they did when the mission population was at prayer in church on Sunday. This mismatch of moral worlds was so deeply embedded in the psyche of mission Aborigines that it emerged as a fresh question at each instance of turmoil or rapid change. At the hand-over to government administration in 1967, one of the obvious changes to Aborigines, even if it was not considered important to others, was the change of the cattle brand from MOR to MR and the government broad arrow. Sam Zingle wondered to himself the significance of this arrow which had replaced the circle on the MOR mission brand. He reflected in 1988 that he believed at the time that its three lines must represent the displacing of unity with the Church by the three pillars of the new administration: "State, community, Labor [sic] government".

The post-war period also opened a revisionist debate amongst the missionaries themselves as they searched for their location in the competing moral worlds before them. Chaplain Eric Wingfield (1949 - 1953) was in the habit of wearing a "sulu", a rectangle of calico cloth tied at the waist in the fashion of the Torres Strait Islanders and the mission school boys, and often appeared shirtless in public. When some visitors alerted Archdeacon Robertson, the ABM chairman, to Wingfield's appearance, he wrote to him and to Bishop

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108 See chapter 5.
109 Sam Zingle, taped interview, Kowanyama, 13 March 1988. His reference to "Labor" is problematic. By 1967 Labor had been out of power in Queensland for ten years. The member for Tablelands in the state parliament, Eddie Wallis-Smith was, however, a Labor representative.
Archdeacon Robertson, the ABM Chairman who faulted the "tropical" dress standards of Eric Wingfield.

Original caption: "Archdeacon C.S. Robertson"

(Source: *ABM Review*, 1 May 1949, p.66)
John Hudson in complaint. Wingfield’s response to the charge opened up a critique of missionary methods to which the Church at large had no coherent answer:

I suppose it becomes a clergyman to be more conservative in attire than others, but I am a missionary as well, and I must think first of what effect my actions will have on the Aborigines of this mission. I am concerned about the whole of their outlook and their social life and habits as well as their eternal salvation, and one of the things I wish to combat is the superstition that there is something sacrosanct about European customs, as distinct from Christian morality. Again and again I have heard the complaint, most recently from Sister Chapman, that these people are absurdly and even unhygienically over-dressed. They cling, not to the customs of their fathers, but to those of a past generation of missionaries. ¹¹⁰

The question for the Mission during the entire post-war period was the one that Wingfield neatly summarised in his 1953 resignation letter to the Bishop: "Two possible destinies lie before these people - to be absorbed into white society and become the most abased class in it, or to preserve their own separate society, with such modifications as will enable it to survive alongside and in competition with the other."¹¹¹ By this time, however, the Mission, Diocese and ABM were so heavily dependent on Mitchell River as a cattle enterprise, and committed to an effective policy of pauperising its people, that this important question was left unanswered.¹¹²

One outcome of leaving this question unresolved was the missionaries’ difficulty in seeing the Christian identity of Aborigines apart from their "inmate" status. Much of the criticism of those who wanted an approach which took seriously the social and theological claims of equality and Christian dignity for mission Aborigines was aimed at the administration of Superintendent Wiffie Currington. Following World War Two there was a new concern for colonised people of the third world and, to a lesser extent, fourth world people, the indigenous minorities now referred to as first nations. Currington was the

¹¹⁰ Wingfield to Hudson, 8 January 1953, Bishop of Carpentaria Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.
¹¹¹ Wingfield to Hudson, 10 April 1953, Bishop of Carpentaria Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.
¹¹² See Chapter 6 here, "The Practice of Protection, 1924 to 1960: Building a Missionary Pastoral Empire."
Eric Wingfield, formally attired in cassock and biretta with Bishop John
Hudson. Hudson was visiting the Mission for a service of Confirmation in
June 1953.

(Source: Beth Pidsley’s photo album, Townsville)
recipient of this burgeoning awareness. Wingfield claimed that, "the natives can scarcely stir an inch without his sanction", and considered that all of the "pastoral opportunities" for ministry fell to Currington and left him, as Chaplain, "a mere liturgical functionary". The difficulty for a critic like Wingfield was that he had much more in common with his predecessors than he thought. Like those who had gone before him Wingfield believed that mission Aborigines were in the grip of "superstition". All that had changed from one era to another was that the "superstition" was by then believed to surround outmoded missionary customs rather than traditional Aboriginal practices. Richard MacFarlane, the Diocesan Registrar, added his own weight to the criticism of Currington in his letter to ABM Chairman, Frank Coaldrae, in 1958: (previously referred to in Chapter Six)

I am certain that Mitchell River has not progressed one "iota" since the end of the War and further that it will never progress as long as the present Superintendent remains. The man is not a churchman in the proper sense of the word. He has no administrative ability. He has no foresight, no leadership, and no sense of co-operation. ...

But missionary and diocesan authorities did not intervene and left Currington to make his own decision to retire. When it came to spending the lengthy periods of time which would leave a lasting legacy, men like Currington and Chapman had an unequivocal commitment to long service that was not equalled by those who proposed a different approach.

The vast emphasis on cattle work during this time meant that the men from the Mission were away from home for much of the year leaving the church congregations back on the Mission filled predominately by women. Even the school boys, taking their cue from

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113 Wingfield to Hudson, 10 April 1955, ibid.
114 MacFarlane to Coaldrae, 27 July 1958, ABM Chairman’s correspondence: series 5, box 2, folder 9.
the adult men, left church attendance to the school girls. By the 1940s serious attrition, through death, of Matthews' first cohort of young men was being felt, Aidan died in 1937, Bernard followed in 1944, Zingle in 1945 and Pindi in 1948. Between the weakening of this generation and the demands of the cattle work, much of the early initiative amongst men had been lost. Perhaps the absence of male interest in church attendance on the Mission permitted the missionaries, for whom patriarchy was mostly an unquestioned assumption, to not even bother to structure the mission church community along regular Anglican lines. None of the structures which embedded the power of the laity, typical throughout the rest of the Anglican Church, were transplanted to the Mission. As late as 1971, several years after the transfer to government administration, Chaplain Noel Gill explained that the two Church Wardens, Kenny Jimmy and Norman Junior, were appointed to mere honorary positions without any canonical authority.

The only attempt to train anyone from Mitchell River Mission for the ordained ministry of the church was made in 1967, the year the Queensland Government took the administration of the Mission over from the Church. Thomas Bruce, at this time aged forty years, spent ten months at St Paul's College, Moa Island until the college itself was closed down. His theological studies were then abandoned. This brief blossoming of a ministry vocation in a man who had been chosen to ride buckjump horses before the Queen, had come on the back of his disappointment with his experiences after election as Council Chairman in the fledgling community democracy the church fast-tracked before the

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115 Wingfield to Hudson, 10 April 1953, ibid. "I could have a number of schoolgirls (about 10) ready for confirmation in early June. ... There would be no boys. Most of the boys do not come to church at all, and the rest come only rarely."


117 Gill to Berry, 2 September 1971, Bishop of Carpentaria Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.

118 Thomas Bruce, taped interview, Kowanyama, 8 March 1988.
government takeover. This was not a time when supportive structures could be put in place by a church in retreat from its missions. Even the coastal link plied by the mission boat had been broken, leaving Thomas and his wife very isolated on the Torres Strait Island. It seemed a desperate last gamble to salvage some sense of achievement in the face of abject failure to nurture a local leadership of the Christian Church.

This background made the ordination of Nancy Dick as a deacon in the Anglican Church at Kowanyama on 29 November 1987 even more remarkable in the life of the people of this, by then, former mission. It also provided a window into the way in which these people had blended Christian faith with their traditional worldview. Kowanyama people were conscious that this ordination was groundbreaking; it was the first time in their eighty year history as Christians that one of their number had become an ordained minister in the Anglican Church and the first occasion when an Aboriginal woman was so ordained in Australia.

Nancy Dick’s own journey to ordination started with her response to a call for commitment issued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander church members from the Weipa South Aboriginal Community when they paid a visit to Kowanyama in 1983. She completed a Women’s Studies course at Nungalinya College, Darwin, followed by a Nungalinya Certificate of Theology. These periods of study in Darwin exposed her to the Aboriginal Christian revival in Arnhem Land and gave her the opportunity to visit the Galiwin’ku community on Elcho Island where the revival had started. An essay she wrote in the course of these studies entitled "Mission and culture contact and change", is a

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In the early days Aboriginal people didn’t know about white Europeans. The Aboriginals were scared and feared the white people because they saw that their skins were different. The Aboriginal people had a strong tradition and culture. It’s very hard for white and black. The Aboriginals find it hard living by the European’s way.

When they lived by traditional ways the people had free lives. So the Aboriginals are like the plant, a pot of seed [sic]. During those times people lived in the community for years until the missionaries came. Missionaries came and taught the Aboriginals how to work, build, farming, carpentry and some many more things. The early missionaries brought the gospel message of good news to the people because they didn’t know about God. But they knew that there was a true God but yet they didn’t quite really understand.

All of those Aboriginal people didn’t speak English, they only speak languages because there wasn’t any school. Also there weren’t any religious [practices] at all in the past days. When the missionaries arrived and lived on the mission they began to build houses, a church and dormitories. It was a hard time for the Aboriginals.

The missionaries started teaching the Aboriginal to read and write when the school and church came up and were built, the missionaries began to put the children in school and dormitories. But it was a very strict [time] and hard to earn money for their families. Then the Aboriginal people became Christians and their Christianity grew more and more. The gospel and the good news were in the hearts of the Christian, or people, they began to know God and believed in Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is like the plant and the Aboriginal like the soil. We as an Aboriginal Christian could plant Jesus word in the lives of Aboriginal soil or heart or lives.126

The period between Nancy Dick’s renewed Christian commitment in 1983 and her ordination in 1987 saw a vigorous debate in the Anglican Church over the issue of the ordination of women. Church members at Kowanyama were conscious of the need to change the church laws in the Diocese of Carpentaria if Nancy Dick, the most promising candidate for ordination raised from their community, were to be ordained. Alma Luke, Kowanyama’s synod representative, gave influential speeches to the 1985 and 1986 synods of the diocese in favour of the ordination of women as deacons.127

126 Nancy Dick, Mission and culture contact and change, manuscript, no date (in possession of author).

127 The National Boomerang, November 1985, p.8. and manuscript notes of Alma Wason’s synod speech of 23 August 1986. (Alma’s name changed from Luke to Wason by marriage.)
1986 decided to permit women to be ordained as deacon, even though strong reservations on cultural grounds were expressed by leading Torres Strait Islanders. This set the stage for Nancy Dick’s ordination the following year.

At an even more significant level, as far as relationships between people at Kowanyama were concerned, traditional leaders decided to release Nancy Dick from customary restrictions which would limit her free contact with some kin with whom she was in an avoidance relationship. This happened in a ceremonial introduction to kin with whom she could not have contact on account of a recent death and with her "poison cousins", men with whom she had been in an avoidance relationship throughout her life.¹²² Even the future possibility of her needing to take on mourning responsibilities was considered: "The people told me there's no need for me to join now, just leave it". All of this was intended to "make it easy" for her to go about her ministry work which she believed would be assisted by a group of ordained people representing the tribal affiliations of Kowanyama people.¹²³

These initiatives were not a rejection of culture but a straightforward recognition of the freedom that would be needed for an Aboriginal person to minister in Kowanyama. Nancy was brought as a candidate to the ordination ceremony by her tribal grandmother, Doris Lawrence. At the presentation to the bishop, before her vesting in the white deacon’s robe, she wore a tabela, or women’s dilly bag on her head and carried a kachal or yam stick in her hand. Nancy Dick’s ordination and ministry offered the people of Kowanyama an opportunity to work through the meaning of Christianity in its "Affirmative" and "Devotional" directions from the new perspective that one of their own in the symbolically

¹²³ Ibid.
important ordained ministry offered. Sadly, this opportunity was cut short with Nancy Dick’s death, at the age of 51 years, on 30 September 1990, whilst she was attending a church conference in Papua New Guinea.124

Religion had been at the centre of the Mission’s reason for existence but, apart from its formal adherence, was often relegated to the periphery of mission life. Certainly an engagement of minds and hearts at the level of religion itself, whatever this might have meant individually for those involved, does not seem to have characterised the relationship between missionaries and Aborigines. Racial and cultural stereotypes so powerfully informed the thinking of missionaries that they had great difficulty in valuing the religious experience of Aborigines. Even the attempts to integrate the missionary Munpitch into the moral world of Aboriginal life were not welcomed by them, rather they were counted as more evidence of intransient "superstition". Undoubtedly there were those amongst both Aborigines and missionaries who fervently believed in Christianity and recognised both a common faith and common humanity in each other. Equally there were others for whom belief was less significant than the formal role of religion and its cultural structures in the life of the Mission. The succession of white, male chaplains as the custodians of official Christianity on the mission did little to engage, at a theological level, the traditional belief system of Aborigines themselves. Even the presence of a Torres Strait Islander in this role seemed to conclude with ambiguity.

The evidence from the brief period when Nancy Dick filled a central leadership role, as the missionaries had defined it, points to a vigour in the response of Aborigines to

Clergy and people attend to the presentation of Nancy Dick as a candidate for ordination under mango tree near Church of Ascension, Kowanyama, 29 November 1987.

Christianity that the missionaries did not, or perhaps would not, see.25 Even if what happened in the 1980s was an entirely new phenomenon there was a process of integration of Christian and Aboriginal identity that led to that point. Alma Wason and those who have followed Nancy Dick as church leaders at Kowanyama recognise something that is both authentic and familiar in the Christian gospel which does not compromise their Aboriginal identity. Despite their experiences of rapid social change, and memories of the worst side of mission institutionalisation, there are those who would agree with Reggie Victor: "[The] Church is the main mother to this place here, Kowanyama."26 Others remember a Christian heritage that was passed to them by Aboriginal elders in words such as these that Nancy Dick recalled, and have resolved to be part of this same process themselves:

> God been make this world, God created you and me too, God been make us. He been make everything and he big boss belong to us. "You see all these things?" old people used to say, "that all belongs to him. You and me wouldn't be in this world today, or in this place only from him, and that's why we want to bring you children up too, to come and listen [to the] good news, to come on Sunday for school, to come for prayer, sing Sunday School songs or Christian songs." That's what older people used to talk to us.127

What others had seen as "syncretism"28 or a "thin veneer"129 might be better understood as a necessary part of the process of encounter between two belief systems. Freed from the coercion of the mission era there is hope that "lost opportunities" will not be the final condition of this encounter.

125 Nancy Dick, "Newsletter from Kowanyama", March 1989. "So from this day on I thank God so much for what He has done in this community of Kowanyama. I thank God for he has now changed Kowanyama to a Christian place, people now change their lives to Jesus Christ. Many now go to church and fellowship. The church is now full."

126 Reggie Victor, taped dialogue of a church meeting at the house of Adrian and Marjorie Aidan, Kowanyama, 8 August 1987.


The Reverend Nancy Dick administering Communion to Vincent Greenwool on the day of her ordination, 29 November 1987
Chapter Ten

The Demise of Missionary Control: 1957 -1977

In the fifty years between 1910 and 1960, Mitchell River Mission was under the leadership of four men who had each served as deputy to his predecessor before appointment to the office of Superintendent. Henry Matthews, Joseph Chapman, Alick MacLeod and Wiffie Currington were the “practical men” that Gilbert White had prescribed for the Mission, untrained in administration or missiology but capable of turning their hands to the diverse tasks that were involved in running a mission station. “The man with twenty jobs”, was the way the Australian Board of Missions (ABM) journal, the ABM Review, depicted Currington in 1953.1 They were the men who had built the pastoral empire upon which diocesan prosperity was founded, and asked little from the Diocese for themselves or their people in return. Their administration ran the Mission along the conservative and paternalistic lines that had first been forged at the beginning of the century. The mission that they had shaped, and as they knew it, was to be shaken by decisions made within the Church and within Government.

At the same time as the church supporters of ABM were told that Mitchell River Mission was “a station of which the Church of England may well be proud”,2 an increasing scrutiny of Anglican missions in North Queensland during the 1950s demonstrated that an entirely different situation existed.3 The 1950s were a decade of turmoil for the Anglican

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1 ABM Review, 1 February 1953, p.22.
2 Ibid.
3 Noel Loos, “From Church to State: the Queensland Government take-over of Anglican missions in North Queensland”, Aboriginal History, vol.15, part 1, p.78.
Ferner Wilfred "Wiffie" Currington, the "man with twenty jobs" as he was described in the missionary press.

(Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, Carpentaria Personalities, Box 9, Folder 14)
missionary hierarchy as it coped with the direct challenge of the Queensland Government to its administration at Yarrabah and as it forged ahead with its own policy initiatives, primarily at Lockhart River Mission. The ripples of change from these two east-coast missions slowly but inevitably made their way west to Kowanyama. In this process, missionary perceptions of Mitchell River changed from those of pride in 1953 to shame and disgrace in 1958.

Yarrabah provided an example of the sort of public condemnation the Church was likely to face over its management of the Aboriginal missions. In 1951, Native Affairs Director, Con O’Leary, considered that at Yarrabah: “the Church’s responsibility for the future of the people whom it claims as its wards and whom it contends it caters for, falls far short of the requirements which any human being could expect”. What O’Leary called for was “a vigorous policy of administration, control and development” to be instituted by the Church. This sort of criticism cut deeply into the collective psyche of a Church which had prided itself that its missions were of humanitarian benefit to the Aborigines gathered into its care. The resources needed to reverse the situation at Yarrabah were vastly beyond anything that could be found from Anglican sources and the situation lurched from one crisis to another until the Government took over full responsibility on 1 July 1960.

Even though the vigorous response O’Leary demanded at Yarrabah would not be forthcoming, ABM was formulating the first change to practical missionary policy in North Queensland since the foundation of the missions themselves. In 1952 ABM adopted the co-

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6 *ABM Review*, 1 February 1953, p.24, and Clint to Coaldrake, 22 September 1958, ABM Chairman’s Correspondence; Series 9, Box 3, Folder 14.
7 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 7 August 1951, 51:6026, OF 69.
8 *Ibid*.
9 Loos, “From Church to State”, p.79.
Map 11: The main centres of Aboriginal population in North Queensland at the time of Cyclone Dora, 1964.
operative model as the policy initiative to best combine economic development with Christian principles.\textsuperscript{10} The balance between the two was a sensitive one for missionaries, who had often seen the poverty of the missionary vocation as a mark of the truly Christian nature of their calling. They were more than willing to see their self-chosen circumstances of poverty prescribed for the Aborigines in their charge. Bishop Ian Shevill, the diocesan bishop for Yarrabah, had seen the broader context of the government intervention at the Mission as a race “between secular materialism and the Church of God”.\textsuperscript{11} The lack of material advantages suffered by those who lived on the missions was an obvious blight on the Church; there were any number of missionaries and churchmen who would concede this in the attempt to raise more funds, but they were also, according to the religious mind, a witness to the supremacy of spiritual values over the material and the Church of God over the faithless.\textsuperscript{12}

ABM’s decision to settle on the “co-operative way” as the means of addressing the challenge of the Aboriginal missions was a fortuitous concurrence of circumstance rather than the result of a high degree of planning. Alf Clint, the driving force in the ABM initiative, had been forced by ill-health to leave the New Guinea Mission, where he had spent four years organising co-operative activity in association with James Benson.\textsuperscript{13} A Christian Socialist by conviction and practice, Clint was radical in his aspirations, and believed that co-operatives were the means to a new ordering of society along Christian

\textsuperscript{10} Loos and Keast, “The radical promise”, p.290.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Courier Mail}, 9 November 1953, p.3.
\textsuperscript{12} David Wetherell, \textit{Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891-1942}, St Lucia, Queensland, 1977, p.63. “Suffering... was part of the working out of a plan; to question the wisdom of the plan indicated a lack of trust in Providence”.
\textsuperscript{13} Kylie Tennant, “Father Clint - a tradition”, in \textit{Salute to Alf Clint: commemorating the 70th anniversary of the dedication of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin at Weston in the NSW Coalfields, 11th August 1912} (monograph, 1982, originally published in \textit{Goorialla}, Summer 1980/81, no.2), no page numbers used.

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Ian Shevill in 1952 at Kowanyama (before his election as Bishop of North Queensland). As ABM Field Officer he was responsible for the promotion of missions amongst ABM's supporters. He visited Mitchell River during the filming of the ABM film, "Children of the Wasteland".

(Source: Beth Pidsley's photo album, Townsville)

Jim Eley, the priest at Lockhart River, stands next to Alf Clint outside the Lockhart River Church. Even though Lockhart River became the most celebrated experiment in the "co-operative way", Clint proposed a revolutionary cattle scheme at Mitchell River.

(Source: Beth Pidsley's photo album, Townsville)
Clint’s High Church Anglicanism, emphasising the sovereignty of God, searched for a pattern of social organisation which would reflect this sovereignty in the whole of human life. Clint found his answer in the Co-operative Movement. The life that Clint advocated was one that required an individual response of commitment. “The Anglican Church is producing Mass priests and Mass people. The individual witness is going”, he lamented to ABM Chairman, Archdeacon Robertson.\textsuperscript{14}

On appointment as the Director of Co-operatives for ABM in 1952, Clint visited Aboriginal groups in northern New South Wales as well as in Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait. Undoubtedly an idealist and utopian, Clint found enthusiasm for his program amongst the white missionaries and Aborigines at Lockhart River, settling upon Lockhart as the place that the co-operative venture amongst Aborigines would be tested, based on the pearlshell and trochus industry.\textsuperscript{15} Even though the great experiment at Lockhart failed because of the introduction of plastics as a cheap substitute for shell products, Clint’s legacy endured in a number of smaller and less publicised projects. The Numbahging Society on the Richmond River, the Yarrabah bakery and, most significantly, the educational establishment, Tranby College in Sydney, stood amongst the Christian co-operative movement’s successes.\textsuperscript{16}

Much depended on Alf Clint personally and his capacity to surround himself with loyal followers who shared his idealism. No stranger to making enemies of those who found his ideas impracticable, Clint seriously underestimated the extent to which he was dependent on powerful and entrenched interests for his experiment to proceed. He seems

\textsuperscript{14} Clint to Robertson, 29 October 1956, Alf Clint’s Personal File, ABM, Sydney.
\textsuperscript{15} Loos and Keast, “The Radical Promise”.
\textsuperscript{16} Salute to Alf Clint, monograph, 1982 (originally published in Goortalla, Summer 1980/81, no.2).
to have believed that the co-operatives would sweep all opposition before them, reflecting as he thought, the Divine way for human social organisation:

The Co-operative way as God’s way is taking root at last... As our people understand and practice the Co-operative technique so they will understand the New Approach to Missions - a way of peace and good-will amongst all peoples. 17

In a few years Clint had gone from being considered by his detractors a harmless irrelevance in 1956, 18 to being banned from entering any Aboriginal or Islander Mission in the dioceses of North Queensland and Carpentaria in 1962. 19 Along with the decline in Clint’s personal credibility amongst Church officials, came the apparent failure of ABM’s last initiative to revitalise its mission to the Aborigines. The co-operative experiment had implications for Mitchell River which went beyond Clint’s attempts to establish a co-operative there.

After his initial visit with Archdeacon Robertson in 1953, Alf Clint planned to move on co-operative organisation at Mitchell River. He considered that agriculture as well as Aboriginal arts and crafts could be developed alongside the existing cattle operations. 20 He met Department of Native Affairs Director, Con O’Leary on this trip, and formed the impression that O’Leary was “keen and ready to help”, and discovered that he concurred with his own opinion that the agricultural side of Mitchell River should be developed. 21 His

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18 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 25 June 1956, OF 82, DFSAIA. In declining to recommend government financial support for Clint’s activities, O’Leary thought that Clint should be advised, “that the financial position at present precludes such assistance but the Department is interested in his scheme and based on its progress will re-examine the position in twelve months time. In the interval, Mr Clint may proceed with his scheme. Even if it does not benefit the aboriginal, it can do no harm”.
20 “Native Co-operative Report”, ABM Board meeting, 17-19 November 1953. ABM Chairman’s Correspondence; Series 16, Box 4, Folder 24, ABM Sydney.
21 Clint to Robertson, 9 October 1953. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; Series 14, Box 5, Folder 20, ABM Sydney.
Archdeacon Robertson receiving a typical mission farewell - the women on the left of the photograph cross their arms after exchanging pleasantries with this church dignitary, those on the right wait for their opportunity.

Original caption: "Archdeacon Robertson farewelling girls - Venus at other end, Leah 5th from right. Background is the cattle manager's saddle store, MRM, Sept. 1953"

(Source: Beth Pidsley's photo album, Townsville)
observation that O'Leary ‘knows our missions and our people’ and was “fond of the Bishop”, gave him initial grounds for optimism, but should have hinted at the possibility of an alliance between the two, this would become an obstacle to his plans at Mitchell River. O’Leary recognised from as early as 1956 that Clint was not going to be given the free hand that he had sought to organise the Carpentaria missions along co-operative lines:

It is a noteworthy fact that amongst the Church of England Missions in Queensland, Mitchell River stands out as an industrial unit with its cattle raising operations. Mr Clint is not devoting his energies to that Mission and the Bishop of Carpentaria informed the writer that he would not allow him to do so.22

Any private reservations about the co-operative scheme or the presence of opposition was not reflected in the public stance of ABM. Archdeacon Robertson identified Mitchell River as the next mission to receive the reforming benefits of the “co-operative way” in January 1954:

The natives are a happy people, and with the help of the white missionaries will, we hope, in the near future, by the help of co-operative enterprise, learn to become valuable citizens and church people.23

Robertson so readily assumed that Aborigines at Mitchell River were in a state of perpetual tutelage that he did not consider that they might have attained both of his goals already. Nor did he specify what extra demonstration of citizenship or Christianity the people of Kowanyama needed to show. After all, their sacrificial labours on mission rations produced financial wealth for the Diocese and they were pillars of the northern cattle industry. Events had gained such a momentum, however, that ABM was convinced it had discovered the key to the future, as far as Aboriginal missions were concerned. Missionary propaganda about the co-operative at Lockhart River struggled for new superlatives to describe the success of this pilot experiment in “the co-operative way”. What had counted

22 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 25 June 1956, OF 82, DFSAIA.
as “great advances” in October 1955 were described as “miracles” by July 1956. The drive with which ABM was pushing its co-operative policy was itself a departure from the previously distant and formal relationship with the missions. It was not until 1956 that ABM formally requested the diocese to give an account of its cattle operations at Mitchell River and then only as a result of pressure from the Board’s Finance Committee.

Even though Clint had been denied the opportunity to include Mitchell River in his plans he had by no means lost interest in it. His letter to ABM Chairman Frank Coaldrae from Thursday Island in September 1958 painted a tragic situation at Mitchell River:

Fr. Sutherland of Mitchell is here, been in hospital. He tells me he has a church going staff, for the first time (except his superintendent) but an independent person told me, “that if he was an Anglican he would be filled with fear about Mitchell”. I asked Sutherland & he agreed: a flare up on the part of the people could come anytime: one thing that saves it is that most of the men are away. Sutherland says, people - children die for lack of food: only one answer to the whole question is for ABM to take charge of Mission Dioceses - with ABM Bishops - such as CMS in Africa. The present set up is not good enough. No policy.

Clint had little patience for the people with the effective power on the Mission, the Bishop and Superintendent, especially since they were at best, lukewarm, about his plans. The deprived circumstances, treated as normal by old hands, were undoubtedly shocking to new and idealistic missionaries. Indeed, it was to this idealism that Clint appealed in his attempt to overthrow the old missionary order. Since the election of the Bishop of Carpentaria rested solely with the Anglican bishops of Queensland, his solution, direct control from ABM, was by no means possible to guarantee.

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24 ABM Review, 1 October 1955, p.150 and July 1956, p.106.
25 Robertson to Hudson, 18 September 1956. ABM Chairman’s correspondence, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 9, ML MSS 4503, Add On 1822, ABM Sydney.
26 Clint to Coaldrae, 22 September 1958, ABM Chairman’s Correspondence; Series 9, Box 3, Folder 14, ABM Sydney. Clint’s emphasis, (CMS, the Church Missionary Society was another Anglican missionary organisation.)
Frank Coaldrake, ABM Chairman and patron of Alf Clint's "co-operative way". Coaldrake found that O'Leary, the Native Affairs director, was a tough negotiator who exploited the weakness of Clint's planning to stifle the Mitchell River cattle co-operative.

Original caption: "Rev'd Frank Coaldrake, Dec. 1956"

(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, ML Pic.Acc.5975, Box 2, Folder 2)
Chaplain Doug Sutherland acted at Mitchell River on behalf of Clint and the Co-operative movement. In February of 1958 he had been active in arranging for Christopher Geoffrey to undertake studies at the newly formed Tranby Co-operative Training Centre in Sydney. Even in this matter he anticipated opposition from Currington: "I am pretty certain that Wiffie will not want the boy [sic] to go South, but the Bishop is aware of that and will no doubt deal with the matter himself". 27 Despite the Bishop’s assumed support for this co-operative initiative it was Hudson whom Sutherland identified as the real impediment to the inauguration of co-operative work at Mitchell River.

I am glad to say that the Bishop at last seems to agree that we should try to establish sufficient industry to give employment to our people here on the Mission, but at the moment I cannot see any chance of him agreeing to the establishment of a Co-op here. I am afraid the Diocese needs all the money it can lay its hands upon. However I am sure the day will come when there will be a Christian Community here running its own affairs. But God knows when. 28

The dream that Sutherland was grasping for envisaged the end of Aboriginal work on the cattle stations and its replacement by work wholly on the Mission. This was a dream that did not intersect with the realities of the dominant capitalist economy any better than the missionary order it stood to replace.

With the defeat of the Labor government at the 1957 State elections, the socialist credentials and Trade Union links which had served Clint well to that point suddenly became grounds for suspicion. 29 Elected with the slogan, “a new deal for the Far North”, the Country Party/Liberal Party government moved quickly to exploit the bauxite resources

27 Sutherland to Clint, 22 February 1958. ABM Chairman’s Correspondence; series 14, box 5, folder 20, ABM Sydney.
28 Ibid.
29 Warby to Hudson, 7 October 1959. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 14, box 5, folder 21, ABM Sydney. After a government ministerial visit to Lockhart Warby reported, “It became apparent as the day wore on that the Party came ashore with the idea that the Co-operative was Communist controlled. Their attitude was very cautious and Noble told Bunty that he expected to find a little Commitnern State at Lockhart! With such a state of mind it is no wonder that their attitude to our problems in the Co-op. Office was as it was”. 
in the north-west of Cape York Peninsula.\textsuperscript{30} It had become increasingly clear that
government interest in the missions, and reserves upon which they were situated, went
beyond the relatively benign desire to prompt a revitalisation of Church administration.
John Warby, the superintendent at Lockhart throughout the co-operative period, wrote to
Coaldrake in December 1957 declaring, "the rape of the Reserves is on".\textsuperscript{31} It had become
clear that the Mapoon reserve was about to be revoked to allow bauxite mining.

Initially, at least, the interest that the Anglican sponsored co-operatives had shown
in mining was valued as a "bargaining medium" in the likely negotiations between
government and the mining companies. At the same time the future was made clear, "the
mineral resources of the Islands and the Peninsula must be developed by big capital
companies"; there would be no room for small Aboriginal controlled enterprises.\textsuperscript{32} Under
pressure as he was from this change, which had radically challenged the assumption of
stability in which incremental change could be fostered on the mission reserves, Clint was
also perplexed at the actions of Bishop Hudson as they affected the future of the mission
stores. "What a man!", Clint despaired to Coaldrake, as he related Hudson's plan to hand
over the mission stores to the Island Industries Board - the government authority which
controlled trade in Torres Straits.\textsuperscript{33} The takeover of the Lockhart store by the co-operative
had been an important part of the whole plan for that place and Clint despaired that he
might be denied the same opportunity at the other missions.

\textsuperscript{30} Ross Fitzgerald, \textit{A History of Queensland from 1915 to the 1980's}, St Lucia, Queensland, 1984, p.304.
\textsuperscript{31} Warby to Coaldrake, 13 December 1957. ABM Chairman's correspondence; series 9, box 3, folder 14, ABM Sydney.
\textsuperscript{32} Clint, notes of interview with P.J. Killoran, no date but probably 1957. ABM Chairman's correspondence; series 9, box 3, folder 14, ABM Sydney.
\textsuperscript{33} Clint to Coaldrake, 9 November 1957. ABM Chairman's correspondence; series 11, box 3, folder 16, ABM Sydney.
The bubble of enthusiasm over the co-operative project at Lockhart burst in 1958 with an investigation of co-operative finances by Diocesan Secretary, Joe Imms. In so doing, an “unserviceable debt” had been disclosed, major questions about financial accountability had been raised, and the frustrated expectations of the people aired. The Lockhart co-operative was scarcely in a different financial position to the Diocese itself during periods in the 1940s and 1950s, but was expected to conform to a standard that the Diocese had often excused itself from meeting. By October 1959, Clint’s hopes for Lockhart rested with demonstrating that the whole exercise had been conducted in an accountable way: “The matter of Lockhart River returns and audit is, I believe, most important and urgent. A failure here, we leave ourselves wide open”. With Lockhart River, the show piece of the co-operative thrust left in disarray, even Clint’s supporters realised that they were left with a hollow shell. Cyril Brown, the priest at Moa Island and secretary of the Moa Island Christian Co-operative Society, pointed out the impossibility of the situation, “It is hard to rouse enthusiasm in a cause whose sole visible sign of vitality is a Notice Board locating the registered office!”

At the time when the downturn of the co-operative movement’s efforts at Lockhart gave greatest reason for depression, Clint was given the opportunity to commence co-operative organising at Mitchell River in 1959. It may have been that Clint’s detractors considered the memory of the Lockhart debacle would be a suitably sobering curb to Clint’s enthusiasm or that the diocesan authorities assessed that the Mitchell River situation had

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34 Clint to Coaldrake, 22 September 1958. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 9, box 3, folder 14, ABM Sydney.
35 Clint to Coaldrake, 14 October 1959. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 14, box 5, folder 21, ABM Sydney.
36 Brown to Williams, 14 April 1959. ABM Chairman’s correspondence, Series 12, box 4, folder 18, ABM Sydney.
Smiler Mission, one of the directors of the "Mitchell River Aboriginal Co-operative Society Limited", in 1959. Nominated to be the inaugural Chairman of the Co-operative, Smiler preferred a droving trip over Alf Clint’s promises.

(Source: Doug Sutherland’s photo album, Brisbane)
reached such an impasse that any initiative was worth an attempt. A meeting called in the schoolroom at Mitchell River on 16 November 1959, formally established the *Mitchell River Aboriginal Co-operative Society Limited*. Clint chaired the meeting which established the Society along his standard lines before proceeding to the election of seven directors. He specifically urged the meeting not to elect any people as director who would be likely to go away droving or who would want to work away on the stations. The need was for people who could devote their efforts wholeheartedly to the business of the Co-operative.

Of the three men elected, one, Smiler Mission, was a policeman and foremen of the mission work gang, the other two were the brothers Kenny and Brodie Jimmy who had come to Kowanyama as youths from the Nassau River. Brodie’s wife Valerie, the sisters Judy Brumby and Alma Luke, along with mission teacher, Leah Minyalk, made up the four women. In terms of tribal affiliation, Smiler, Judy and Alma were *Kunjen*, Brodie, Kenny and Leah, *Kokobera*, with Valerie the sole *Kokominjen* member. Even when marriage and ascending kin affiliations were taken into account, the *Kokominjen* people were under represented.

The directors chosen were all literate and considered able to “speak up” for the rights of the people and were, in a sense, representative of the generation of mission educated Aborigines whose expectations had not been met by the mission. Their choice by the people of Kowanyama demonstrated that they well understood the sort of people the missionary administration, and whites in general, would want to deal with. They had chosen a group which was, though, unrepresentative of the traditional authority structure. The co-operative scheme was as unconcerned for this dimension of Aboriginal identity and community relations as the order it sought to replace.
At the conclusion of the meeting 48 people had signed on as members of the Co-operative. A meeting of the Board of the Co-operative, comprising Clint as Supervisor and the elected Directors, followed immediately after the General Meeting to elect a Chairman. Upon calling for nominations for Chairman, Smiler Mission was nominated and, "immediately asked to be relieved as Director, as he wanted to go on a droving trip". This should have raised a doubt in Clint’s mind as to the effectiveness of his fast flowing meeting procedure in communicating the dimensions of what he was proposing, considering he had made this point, as he thought, plainly in the General Meeting. At least with the election of Thomas Bruce, in place of Smiler, the Kokominjen representation appeared more balanced.

By the next day any misgivings Clint carried from the previous night’s board meeting would have been dispelled with the knowledge that 105 people had joined the Co-operative as members, including the European missionary teacher, Sylvia Card. Wiffie Currington had been appointed Deputy Supervisor to Clint thus ensuring his participation in the venture. Clint’s perseverance had prevailed at least in establishing the Mitchell River Co-operative on paper.

The fragile state of diocesan finances precluded any new investment to make the Mitchell River Co-operative a reality; in fact the opposite was the case. The Mitchell River Cattle Account had realised £17,323 from the sale of bullocks for the year ending 30 June 1959 and of this £12,738 was declared as profit, a particularly high return made possible

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37 "Minutes of Meeting of Formation of Mitchell River Aboriginal Co-operative Society Limited held at schoolroom, Mitchell River Mission, on the 16th November, 1959, at 8 pm.", ABM Chairman’s correspondence; Series 17, box 5, folder 25, ABM Sydney.

only through the low wages paid and the minimal re-investment into the enterprise. The single largest item of expenditure from these proceeds was £3,000 to purchase a boat for Lockhart River. Lockhart was also to receive a staff house and ablution blocks for seven of the village houses at a similar total cost. From these items alone, Lockhart stood to receive nearly half of the profits from the Mitchell River cattle, all because the experiment at Lockhart had become debt ridden and an increased burden on the corporate finances of the diocese of which the Cattle Account was the significant creditor.

With the passing of a year, which saw the retirement of both Hudson and Currington, there had been no action to suggest that the Mitchell River Co-operative existed in any other way than on paper and in the paid up subscriptions of its Aboriginal members. The situation had become so glaring that Dennis Hooper-Colsey, the Acting Superintendent after Currington, forbade the distribution of the *Co-operative Newsletter*, since it contained an article about the Mitchell River Co-operative and the assurance that, “Mitchell will start business later this year. Good luck to them!” Hooper-Colsey was fearful that an unrealistic expectation was the sole result of founding the Mitchell River Co-operative. Failure would have direct consequences for field missionaries who had “to make excuses or take evasive action when schemes fail to materialize”. He reflected a new understanding that the mission Aborigines were active not passive participants in their own destiny:

... we do feel that our people are impatient for results rather than mere words and that any plans concerning the future of the mission should be discussed at all levels and in the greatest detail BEFORE the people are told about it. We do a

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39 File memo, 8 December 1959. “Kowanyama, Breeder Bulls and Cattle generally”, 17C.1, Interim Transfer R254, QSA.

40 Memorandum from Private Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 27 May 1958. OF 46, DFSAIA.

41 *Co-operative Newsletter*, vol.1, no.2, June 1960, p.2.
great dis-service both to ourselves and to our people when promises are made -
even obliquely - that are by no means certain of being kept.42

Apart from the obvious difference of approach that resulted from Alf Clint’s
personality and conviction, a fundamental difference in philosophy is revealed in Hooper-
Colsey’s comments. Most missionaries of this era had, in common with their predecessors,
practised a benevolent paternalism that seemed to them to be the proper expression of their
Christian and missionary principles. Clint’s challenge to this perception was in the extent
of his democratic ideal, which led him to place far more trust in the capacity of the
Aboriginal population of the missions to find a solution to their problems than did the
principles of missionary paternalism which saw the same people as mere beneficiaries of
the missionary program. At its most radical face, Clint’s program called for Aboriginal
control of the means of production and distribution on the reserve communities. Con
O’Leary’s critique of the Clint schema makes the basis for conservative opposition to the
co-operative movement very clear:

In every move for the advancement of a backward race, a close examination of the
psychology of that race is imperative. There is too great an inclination amongst a
section of the Australian public to imagine that the wave of a magic wand will
alter the aboriginal from his present status to an advanced member of an intelligent
community. Our civilisation, which has taken thousands of years to attain, cannot
be reached by the aboriginal in one generation.43

The very notion that Aborigines could be appointed as directors of co-operatives
and educated to carry out such an important function was entirely alien to this thinking,
“just wasting time”, according to O’Leary. Yet for Clint empowerment of the Aborigines
to control and develop their own communities was the very basis of the reforms he saw to
be so desperately needed on the Anglican missions.

42 Hooper-Colsey to Coaldrake, 15 July 1960. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 5, box 2, folder 9,
ABM Sydney.
43 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 25 June 1956, Of 82, DFSAIA.
Even though Clint took his inspiration from the New Testament and traditions of the Church, his teachings seemed novel and threatening to his Anglican contemporaries. For the missionaries and Church dignitaries who had largely accepted the wider society’s view about Aborigines and their supposed backwardness, Clint’s optimism was offensive. A thoroughgoing application of the radical egalitarianism of the co-operative movement would have been controversial enough in white Australian society of the 1950s; when it addressed the situation of Aborigines on a rigidly structured mission station, it was bound to encounter resistance. More than this, it challenged in a practical way how things were done and who exercised power. In the context of small, isolated missions, concerns about threats to mission order were the point of greater threat than any of Clint’s more philosophical opinions. From racism to male dominance, Clint’s critique cut a swathe through the status quo of the missions. He proudly announced that the Mitchell River Co-operative had been formed with women as directors.

Women were elected with men as Directors. This is a good move. If you have a look at the rules that are drawn up for co-operative societies you will see that women have the same rights as men. (Open membership regardless of colour, race, creed or sex!)

By 1960 the real situation at Lockhart had become generally known to people in diocesan and missionary circles. With Lockhart’s star rapidly setting, it had changed from being a ‘show piece’ of modern missionary philosophy to an example of what should not happen on a mission. As the gap between reality and rhetoric widened, Clint’s role and especially his penchant for promotion came under closer scrutiny. Currington’s successor, Dennis Hooper-Colsey, was cautious about the impact of Clint’s propaganda at Mitchell

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River, and highlighted his anxiety of being tainted with the smell of failure that was by 1960 associated with the co-operative movement:

The position at Lockhart is not one that any Superintendent would willingly see duplicated on another mission - in spite of the laudatory Press and Radio notices that appear from time to time.45

Interestingly enough, this same capacity for publicity and promotion had been noticed by Con O’Leary in 1956 and fed his suspicions of Clint’s motives:

From what can be observed to date from the co-operative at Lockhart River Mission and the ones which Rev. Clint intends to establish at the Edward River Mission and at St. Paul’s Mission, no particular benefit over and above that now prevailing will go to the aboriginal. They will, however, be a medium of advertising for the Church and particularly for Mr. Clint, the organiser of them.46

Even though Clint was at his most effective as a popularist organiser he was equally confident in his persuasive powers to get powerful Church and political leaders to see things his way. The Mitchell River Co-operative foundered on Clint’s confidence of his talent in the latter sphere of activism. When the popularist phase had passed after the 16 November 1959 meeting at Mitchell River, the harder task of securing control of the cattle enterprise at Mitchell River began. Clint planned to achieve this control through the Mitchell River Co-operative acquiring the legal ownership of both the Mitchell River cattle and the lease of the reserve land. This was put to Dr Noble, the Minister for Health and Home Affairs, at a meeting on 20 November 1959.47 As simple as this solution seemed it was fraught with legal difficulties. Firstly, the reserves were legally under state control, the Church bodies simply administered the reserves as missions on behalf of the Crown. Secondly, the state authorities shared none of Clint’s optimism about the desirability of

45 Hooper-Colsey to Coaldrake, 15 July 1960. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 5, box 2, folder 9, ABM Sydney.
46 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 25 June 1956, OF 82, DFSAIA.
47 O’Leary to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 8 April 1960. “Kowanyama, breeder bulls and cattle generally”, 17C.1, QSA Interim Transfer R254.
Aboriginal control over affairs on the reserves. They were by then committed to seeing the missions and reserve communities as only temporary homes for Aboriginal people before their absorption into the general community. In a letter of 18 February 1960, Clint’s greatest ally, John Warby, gave Coadrake the sad prognosis that there was little chance that these conditions would be agreed to.

Coadrake was to find the impossibility of the situation in a meeting with O’Leary on 6 April 1960. Faced with the opinion of the Crown Solicitor that the proposal was inconsistent with both law and government policy, Coadrake had no choice but to admit to O’Leary that ABM had not thought to consider the legalities of the proposal. Clint had once again cast his supporters adrift in deep water by letting his enthusiasm get the better of his judgement. He had not calculated on the resistance of the Queensland Government nor the fact that they held the legal authority for Aboriginal affairs in the State. Coadrake’s only consolation after the meeting with O’Leary was that an altered proposal would be considered if it was “more in keeping with the requirements of the Law and the Department’s policy of protection of its wards”. By 19 May 1961, Coadrake was prepared to concede defeat and withdraw the proposal which he now considered was “evidently impracticable under present Government policy in Queensland”.

Between these setbacks and Hooper-Colsey’s insistence that it was “most un-Christian, unfair and, in the long run, unco-operative to promise... any change until we are absolutely sure it can be implemented and implemented successfully”, there was little to

48 Loos, “From Church to State”, p.82.
51 Hooper-Colsey to Coadrake, 15 July 1960. ABM Chairman’s correspondence; series 5, box 2, folder 9, ABM Sydney.
be done except allow the Mitchell River Co-operative to slide into obscurity. To use Loos’ words, the principles of ‘concern and contempt’ had prevailed over the ‘radical promise’ of the co-operative movement. ABM had not only failed in a major attempt to implement policy but had shown that when it came to a clash with government policies the Church was an ineffective advocate for the rights of Aboriginal people.

The loss of the oldest and best known of the North Queensland missions, Yarrabah, from church control on 1 July 1960, was a blow to Anglican confidence. ABM’s attempt to turn this defeat into a victory was marked by the launching of a campaign for workers amongst the Aborigines on 8 July 1960, National Aborigines’ Day. Despite the desire to prove that ABM still mattered in the field of Aboriginal missions it had to declare the appeal a failure: “interest in serving the Aborigines was lacking”.

The appointment of Seering John Matthews as Bishop of Carpentaria in place of Hudson came at a crucial time for the missionary program of the diocese. Matthews, while still Dean of Rockhampton, had been involved with Coaldrake in the investigation of staffing on Mitchell River in September 1959. A missionary in India from 1933, he had lived through the turmoil leading up to Indian independence, and was considered more aware than most of the issues involved in unravelling colonial dominance. Matthews was Dean of Rockhampton before Hudson appointed him, in 1960, to what would be a brief period of office as Priest Director of the Torres Strait Mission. It was from this post that he

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was appointed bishop of the diocese by the bishops of the province of Queensland, receiving the support of Archbishop Halse of Brisbane, Bishop McCall of Rockhampton and Bishop Strong of Papua New Guinea, with only Bishop Shevill of North Queensland opposing his appointment. If Hudson had been seen as obscurantist there was every hope that Matthews would be more able to work in with ABM, perhaps more like the sort of bishop Clint had called for in 1958, an “ABM man”, who would implement ABM policy. He at least had a blueprint for the Diocese, sanctioned by Coaldrake, in the form of the report from the 1959 visitation.

The 1959 report envisaged that “the mission as a financial entity will cease to exist”. In its place Aboriginal co-operatives would be the economic heart of a “Parish Township with the usual pattern of working life, civic life and parish life”. By the time Matthews was in place as the fifth Bishop of Carpentaria, the door was already firmly closed, by O’Leary and the Government, against the development of the Mitchell River Co-operative. A key strategy in the report was an increase in the number of missionaries and a drastic improvement in missionary conditions. These missionaries were to be exemplars of the new township life envisaged to replace the Mission.

The reality was, however, that by the time of Matthews’ episcopate ABM had itself become increasingly irrelevant to the future of the Aboriginal mission communities. There was no prospect that it could bankroll the extensive development projects required on the missions and no likelihood of Clint’s hopes for the missions to become co-operative communities eventuating. The government takeover of Yarrabah signalled a fundamental change of the role that government was willing to take on the church-controlled reserves.

It was calculated to change forever the “virtually autonomous powers” that were exercised by the Church with respect to its missions.59 The three Aboriginal missions were the main bargaining point in the Diocesan Registrar’s July 1961 submission to O’Leary that the Diocese needed a total budget of over £120,000, if it was to run the Aboriginal missions at a standard comparable to the government settlements. The contribution of the Church was the smallest of the three funding sources available: even the receipts from Aged Pensions and Child Endowment, which the Church claimed on behalf of Aborigines, were greater than the Church amount. The government was still getting good value from the diocese. Even if the Aboriginal missions were assumed to consume two thirds of the diocesan budget, almost 1,200 Aboriginal people had been maintained across the three communities at a cost to state coffers of only £24 per person for the whole of the 1961/62 financial year; each at about the cost of a week’s wages for a white member of the public. On the case presented to him, O’Leary did not hesitate in doubling the State Government share of annual funding for the Diocese to £75,000.60

The Yarrabah takeover had been negotiated to preserve as much dignity for the Anglican Church as was possible given its long standing failure to deal with the situation. The Anglican Church had secured the undertaking that it alone would be responsible for the spiritual needs of the Yarrabah people. Even the religious activity of government staff employed at Yarrabah was to be, “under the direction of the Chaplain”, whose stipend would be met by the government.61 With plans advanced to build a new church it was hoped

59 Pizzey to Bjelke-Petersen, 26 May 1966. “Administration - Mitchell River, Manager”, 17A.5, interim transfer R254, QSA.
60 Innis to O’ Leary, 5 July 1961 and O’Leary to Under Secretary, Home Affairs, 20 July 1961, OF 118, DFSAIA.
61 Shevill to Noble, 28 April 1960. OF 69, DFSAIA.
that the public would perceive the changes as a new development in missionary strategy rather than for what it was, an Anglican withdrawal.

Stung by the loss of Yarrabah, the Anglican missionary initiative on the Peninsula developed a fresh urgency. Matthews travelled to England in 1961 in an attempt to recruit people to fill the missionary places that remained vacant after ABM’s failed National Aborigines’ Day campaign in 1960. Some of these, according to Matthew’s deputy, Archdeacon Lupton, came with expectations that the big improvement in missionary conditions, foreshadowed in the 1959 report, had actually taken place. They were devastated to find that accommodation was still primitive and that there were few resources to equip them for their work.\textsuperscript{62} Missionaries faced the people’s disappointment that their expectations, which had been raised by Clint’s scheme, would not be fulfilled, and the difficulty of coping with the new focus on material progress generally. Missionary burnout and high turnover, the two reasons for the 1959 visitation by Matthews and Coaldrake, were set to be just as bad under the new regime that was meant to address them.

Despite Matthew’s success in extracting more funds from both ABM and the Queensland Government, the finances available for the ambitious goals towards material progress were still far short of what was required. The search for the finances needed to build a new missionary order led Matthews to make a submission to the United Kingdom National Committee of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. The project was linked to the plan to remove the Lockhart River inmates to Mitchell River and Edward River and proposed to develop the agricultural and pastoral sides of both missions.\textsuperscript{63} Using the time-honoured language of dependency, it envisaged “the full use of the large areas of land

\textsuperscript{62} Arthur Lupton, taped interview, Coolum, 18 August 1987.

\textsuperscript{63} Loos, “From Church to State”, p.80.
available for the benefit of the Aborigines and to enable them to become self-supporting, useful members of the Australian community”. On account of the submission’s international dimension it was brought to the attention of the Federal Government’s Department of External Affairs, the Prime Minister’s Department and then to Premier Frank Nicklin. All agreed that the submission, if successful, would be an embarrassment to Australia on the international stage. Killoran recognised that access to funding of this type could mean the indefinite continuation of Church administration, a possibility he vigorously opposed. By the end of 1963 this project was totally buried, and with it any hope of reviving the missionary order.

Field missionaries throughout the 1960s hoped that they would be able to continue in their work at Kowanyama, that it would remain a Church mission, and that increased government support would be available to assist their efforts. In hindsight it is easy to see how unrealistic these expectations were, yet the expectation amongst the field missionaries at Mitchell River in the 1960s was that the future might be expected to be marked by both increased government funding and sustained Church control. They considered that only Lockhart River was likely to be transferred from church to government control. They carried out their missionary work largely unaware of the scope of the change implicit in Pat Killoran’s comment, in opposition to the Freedom from Hunger Campaign submission: “It would not be prudent for the Department to support a policy which commits the inmates of Mitchell River to mission administration indefinitely”.

64 “Diocese of Carpentaria, Agricultural and Pastoral Projects”, (no date, but 1962), OF 82, DFSAIA.
65 Lamidey to Peachey, 11 January 1963; Bunting to McAllister, 7 June 1963; Pizzey to Nicklin, 10 October 1963, OF 82, DFSAIA.
66 Killoran to Director General of Education, 17 September 1963. OF 82, DFSAIA.
67 Michael Martin, taped interview, Brisbane, 8 July 1988.
68 Killoran to Director General of Education, 17 September 1963. OF 82, DFSAIA.
Every question about the future of the Mission was radically thrown open on 3 February 1964 when both Mitchell River and Edward River were struck by Cyclone Dora. Cyclones were, of course, regular occurrences on the western Peninsula coast. Mitchell River Mission and Edward River Mission had both coped with severe blows in the past. Earlier cyclones had produced damage on a wide scale. Referring to the one that struck Edward River on 20 January 1951, Chapman commented:

All buildings except my house either blown down or badly damaged. The people homeless, gardens destroyed”. 69

Currington listed the “considerable damage” from the same cyclone at Mitchell River where most buildings were damaged to some extent, all wiring and aerials torn down and a dozen village houses “completely wrecked”. 70 Outside interest was predictably absent on that and many other occasions. Comparison of the extent of cyclone damage over the full period of the Mission’s life is difficult, but it was no surprise that every opportunity was made to exploit the extent of damage from the 1964 Cyclone Dora for fund raising purposes.

The destruction caused by Cyclone Dora provided an apparently heaven-sent opportunity to lever more financial support from the government coffers. Matthews’ immediate response to the cyclone, described as “the worst ever for the northern missions”, was to travel to Brisbane for urgent talks with both Church and government leaders. 71 The most dramatic damage was to four aluminium sheeted, prefabricated dwellings, part of Matthew’s bid to improve staff conditions, that simply disintegrated in the wind and left sheets of aluminium caught high up in the trees. Michael Langley described the demise of his impossibly hot quarters as “an act of God”. Langley went further and described that they

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69 Joseph Chapman, 20 January 1951, ERM Diary, ABi/3, QSA.
70 Wiffie Currington, diary entry for 21 January 1951.
71 Courier Mail, 6 February 1964.
The mission school when it was first built.
(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, ML Pic.Acc.5975, Box 8, Folder 7)

The school building after Cyclone Dora, February 1964
(Source: Diocese of Carpentaria Registry, Thursday Island, November 1987)
had been: "... extremely hot, cramped, glaring and jail-like in appearance!"\(^{72}\) If this irreverence seemed unbecoming of one who had lived through the "worst ever" disaster to strike the Mission, Langley was keen to correct the impression Matthews had fostered: "I feel there has been a tendency for the press and other agencies to exaggerate the damage and its effects".

The aftermath of Cyclone Dora witnessed an unprecedented public response to the suffering of the people of Mitchell River. Church members responded generously to an appeal for funds and clothing to replace personal items lost in the cyclone. Trade Unions and other public organisations wrote, urging the government to quick relief action. The government response was prompt, compared with anything the Church could have hoped to achieve from its own resources, and generous, considering the minimal resources that had been applied to Mitchell River hitherto. By April the Cabinet had approved the rebuilding of Mitchell and Edward River missions.\(^{73}\) O'Leary's deputy, Pat Killoran, who had succeeded his former mentor as Director of Native Affairs, showed all the bureaucratic precision in his negotiation of the rebuilding project which had characterised O'Leary's earlier dealings with ABM's co-operative experiment. Aware that the Yarrabah transfer had involved a cash settlement in favour of the Diocese in consideration of the material improvements already established by the Church, Killoran was careful to establish at the outset that the government investment in the rebuilding of Mitchell River was on the condition "that equity in the buildings remains with the State."\(^{74}\)

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72 Langley to Coaldrake, 30 March 1964. ABM Chairman’s correspondence, personal file - M.E. Langley, ABM Sydney.
73 Killoran to Matthews, 30 April 1964, 64:040362, OF 46, DFSAIA.
74 ibid.
An RAAF Hercules aircraft drops emergency supplies to Kowanyama in the aftermath of Cyclone Dora in 1964. This was the first time in many destructive experiences of cyclones that the outside world was concerned to intervene in the affairs of the Mission.

(Source: Diocese of Carpentaria Registry, Thursday Island, November 1987)
With such a large stake in the rebuilding program, the government was determined to ensure that there would be no unforeseen difficulties if Mitchell River followed Yarrabah into its exclusive control. The 1965 Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act gave the Minister for Education a statutory power to take control of any mission schools in which the government had ever expended state funds. Even though such a provision for forced government takeover of a church school would have been controversial if applied to the wider community it seemed entirely uncontroversial where the scholars were Aborigines.75 The Anglican Church, at least, was keen to divest itself of its missionary apparatus. Early in 1966, Matthews made representations to Education Minister, Jack Pizzey, whose portfolio included Aboriginal matters, for the State Government to assume control of its three Aboriginal missions. Cabinet approval, in principle, followed on 17 May 1966 and empowered Killoran to undertake the necessary negotiations.76 The actual takeover occurred a year later on 1 May 1967.

The negotiations that followed Cyclone Dora were far removed from the field missionaries and the Aboriginal people on the Mission. "So much seemed to be done at an administrative level", recalled Michael Martin, chaplain at Kowanyama and then Pormpuraaw during this period.77 It was not that Aborigines lacked interest in their future and in improving their material circumstances, far from it. The layers of missionary and government paternalism were so thick as to be almost impenetrable when it came to considering the voice of the people these decisions most immediately concerned. An Aboriginal ‘council’, formed in 1962 at Matthews’ request, was intended to be a ‘training’ opportunity in representative government, since it was generally expected that Aborigines

75 Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act of 1965, section 42.
76 Killoran to Under-Secretary, Health Department, 20 May 1966, 66:044168-OF40, DFS1A.
77 Michael Martin, taped interview, Brisbane, 8 July 1988. 382
The remains of the single men's quarters lie scattered in the foreground of this photograph while the old mission dormitory stands unscathed by Cyclone Dora. Michael Langley, one of the residents of the single men's quarters, gratefully described the destruction of this place as an "act of God" since it had been "... extremely hot, cramped, glaring and jail-like in appearance!". Langley also believed that the extent of damage was exaggerated by the press and ABM.

(Source: Diocese of Carpentaria Registry Office, Thursday Island, November 1987)
The remains of the house where Shirley May, the Domestic Science teacher, lived. Made from bush timber with palm-leaf walls and iron roof, it offered little resistance to the wind.
(Source: Diocese of Carpentaria Registry, Thursday Island, November 1987)

Some palm-leaf houses have survived the cyclone on the left whilst other families live under canvas near the ruins of their houses to the right.
(Source: Diocese of Carpentaria Registry, Thursday Island, November 1987)
would soon receive the vote. Interest vastly exceeded expectations; thirty-six people nominated for the seven elected positions. Even though the missionary-intended functions of the council were peace-keeping and personal counselling, the council, with Thomas Bruce as chair, quickly seized the opportunity of discussing administrative and policy issues. After only four months, the superintendent called fresh elections in the hope of getting a more compliant council. Four of the original seven were re-elected and a new chairman appointed. The council successfully agitated for higher wages on the Mission and decided the priority in which new Aboriginal houses would be allocated. Men’s and women’s community meetings were the place where matters of corporate morality, like gambling and sorcery, were discussed and provided a further forum for dissatisfaction to be aired.

The housing arrangements established after Cyclone Dora represented the most profound visible change from the palm-leaf houses of the three villages that were the standard under mission administration. In place of the palm-leaf houses, metal-clad prefabricated dwellings were constructed. Those built between 1965 and 1969 were constructed on a concrete slab, the ones after 1969 on a raised, wooden floor. Instead of the traditional pattern of three distinct villages, with houses situated at the discretion of their owners, the new town plan prescribed surveyed allotments on defined roads. Since the houses were allocated on a basis of housing need as they became available, the new township was tribally heterogenous bearing no resemblance to the tribally based

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79 Crim, op. cit., p.52, and Michael Martin, taped interview, Brisbane, 8 July 1988.
The commemorative plaque signifying the rebuilding of the Mitchell River Mission left no doubt that Cyclone Dora had destroyed the precedence of church power, not just the mission buildings.

(Source: Barry Alpher, December 1966)
distinctions of the mission villages. Frank Coaldrake visited Mitchell River and the other former missions in 1968 and commented ironically:

The Department is certainly making towns rapidly and magnificently but it is not far advanced in the making of townspeople. The chaplains are to be expected to play a big part in this. Before the transfer, the Department helped us to make towns, now we must help the Department make townspeople. 81

By 1972, a full eight years after Cyclone ‘Dora’, the rebuilding program still had not made the progress promised:

... there are still a number of families residing in sub standard tin humpies with dirt floors without adequate sanitation or electricity, while much of the unrest and fighting can be attributed to the fact that many of the new homes are grossly overcrowded and some have over twenty residents. 82

Even though the missionaries, at all levels, found it easier to make decisions on behalf of Aborigines rather than in consultation with them, the Kowanyama people were becoming increasingly aware of the arbitrary way they were being treated. The standard of educational facilities and school equipment particularly, was such a case that resulted in a protest from the men’s meeting. At a time when slates had become obsolete in most Queensland schools, the Mission children had theirs locked away so they wouldn’t be damaged and were made to write on pieces of fibro. 83 Archdeacon Arthur Lupton, recruited by Matthews to oversee the Aboriginal missions, came up against the agitation of the Mission Council for higher wages. Lupton was impressed by the people who confronted him. “They were completely loyal [to the Mission] since they could have been out on the cattle stations earning higher

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82 Burton to Killoran, 28 August 1972, 17A/22, Interim transfer R254, QSA. John Taylor makes a similar point in his detailed, comparative analysis of Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw. Taylor, op.cit.
83 Michael Martin, taped interview, Brisbane, 8 July 1988.
The new government-built houses were metal clad and built low to the ground on a concrete slab. They were set out in unimaginative straight rows without regard for the pre-cyclone arrangement of dwellings.

(Source: Mitchell Library, ABM Collection, ML Pic.Acc.5975, Box 10)
wages', but had nothing to offer them except the information that he was only earning £7 a week himself.84

The 1967 takeover signalled a new era for the Church and the people at Kowanyama. The transfer of the Mitchell River cattle to the government represented a big loss of income to the Diocese, leaving it incapable of even funding the whole of the chaplain’s stipend on the three former Aboriginal missions. The Government provided housing and a $2,500 annual subsidy for five years to ensure the continuation of a role for the Church.85 Continuing beyond the five year period, the subsidy was increased to $3,750 in 1975, before the arrangement was terminated by the Government in 1978.86 Despite cutting off the subsidy, the Government still offered that it would give preference to the Anglican Church on the former mission communities, an effective guarantee that the power of the Department would be used to frustrate any attempt of rival sects to establish themselves. Even though ABM’s involvement at Kowanyama was greatly diminished, it still struggled to fill the only ‘missionary’ position left, that of the chaplain.87 The Church struggled to discover its place in the new arrangement. A meeting of the chaplains in 1972 told a similar, discouraging story to the Bishop:

The picture at Edward River, Mitchell River and Lockhart River is of communities ruined by ‘grog’ and gambling, with frequent occasions of violence.88

Certainly, the Aboriginal court was busy with these issues, a survey of court records for the second half of 1969 revealed that gambling and alcohol related offences were by far the most frequent cases.89

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85 Killoran to Lands Commissioner, 25 November 1968, 19A/41, Lockhart River, DFSAIA.
86 Killoran to Jamieson, 8 February 1978, 19A/41, Lockhart River, DFSAIA.
87 Hawkey to Munro, no date, but December 1972, Bishop’s Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.
88 Hawkey to Shearman, 13 March 1972, Bishop’s Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.
89 Butler to Killoran, 19 December 1969, 17A/55, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breach of discipline</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunk and disorderly</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol on the reserve</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol to minors</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act of violence</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obscene language</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obstructing police</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrying weapons with intent</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resisting arrest</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breaking away from custody</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damage to Government property</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Starting bush fires</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking, entering and stealing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same year only two cases, one of rape and the other of assault, were dealt with, on account of their seriousness, apart from the Aboriginal court. By 1973, the appointment of a sergeant of the Queensland Police Force, Laurie Witham, to Kowanyama, strengthened the cause of the Aboriginal police, which by now had ten members. 90

Life under the government was little less regulated than it had been under the mission. The government manager acted with the same sort of over-arching authority that people had become used to from the mission superintendent. Shane O'Connor, the manager in 1969, had no hesitation in declaring the bullock paddock "out of bounds", as he considered it to be at risk of fire from Aborigines. He declared his intention of widening the access ban on hunting if the circumstances warranted it: "further restrictions may have to be introduced within the next few months". 91 Moreover, the same pattern of mission 'insider' leadership was soon discovered to be vital for government operations, even if Manager Ted Butler did not have a high estimation of the general labour force:

Sufficient labour is available to meet our needs, but employees generally appear to lack a pride in their activities. Mitchell River is fortunate, however, in having

In a representation of the new order of Kowanyama as a post-mission community, police lead the 1974 Easter church procession. (Sgt Laurie Witham, followed by Aboriginal policeman Francis George as the cross bearer.)

Original caption: "Participating with Aboriginal Police in Anglican Easter Service"

(Source: Queensland Police Museum, Brisbane, PM 984)
approximately 7 or 8 men who are capable of accepting responsibility for [as] gangers, and these men are invaluable to our work programmes.\textsuperscript{92}

Attempts were made by Michael Martin and David Thomson, the priests at Edward River and Lockhart River respectively, to develop a linguistic and cultural dimension to their work, but these efforts did not survive beyond the end of their tenure. ABM Chairman, John Munro, commented in 1974 after 70 years of Anglican involvement: “Some basic work remains to be done in the Diocese of Carpentaria if communication in depth is to be established by means of vernacular languages”.\textsuperscript{93} Bruce and Elaine Sommer were sponsored by the Summer Institute of Linguistics to carry out preliminary language study and Bible translation work at Kowanyama but discovered that this was not viable. As much as Bishop Eric Hawkey recognised that there was need for “a very serious re-appraisal of our missionary methods as far as Aboriginal work is concerned”, the 1970s continued to be a difficult decade for the church that had “lost its mission”.\textsuperscript{94}

Kenny Jimmy, the inaugural Chairman of the Council elected after the government takeover, discovered that the Government Manager was keen for the Council to do things the way he wanted and to decide matters according to his instructions, “You were flat out getting anything done”.\textsuperscript{95} The community quickly came to rest its expectations on the Chairman, in its eagerness to get improvements in housing, wages and rights. The Government inaugurated an Aboriginal Advisory Council on a statewide basis in 1971 with reserve council chairmen, including Kenny Jimmy, as its members.\textsuperscript{96} This experience was frustrating, “You couldn’t get a win”. The power relations at this level of government

\textsuperscript{92} Butler to Killoran, 16 September 1970, IA/55, Interim transfer R254, QSA.

\textsuperscript{93} John Munro, Chairman’s Report, ABM Board Minutes, 22-24 October 1974, vol. S, Box 20, Series M4, ABM Sydney.

\textsuperscript{94} Hawkey to Shearrman, 13 March 1972, Bishop’s Correspondence, Thursday Island Registry.

\textsuperscript{95} Kenny Jimmy, taped interview, Kowanyama, 5 May 1988.

\textsuperscript{96} Aborigines Act, 1971. Section 33 deals with the Aboriginal Advisory Council.
Sergeant Laurie Witham, the first member of the Queensland Police to be stationed at Kowanyama and Senior Sergeant Norman Junior, a Kokominjen man and leader of the Community Aboriginal Police. Photographed in 1974.
(Source: Queensland Police Museum, PM 983)
administration were as plain as they were back at Kowanyama. “We had the right to ask them [the Minister and the Director], but they had the right to make the decisions”.

Any hope that the government era would lift wages at Kowanyama to award level was destroyed by the Government’s assimilationist policies which required work on the community to be regarded as ‘training’, and that wages be kept lower than award levels as an incentive for people to leave the community to better their conditions. People at Kowanyama had been thrown on to a crazy roundabout where so much seemed to change whilst their relative disadvantage remained unaltered. The introduction of award wages for work on the cattle stations in 1968, as well as the trend towards greater mechanisation and fencing of paddocks, led to a collapse in the demand for Kowanyama labour. By the 1970s only a few people left Kowanyama to work on the stations, and then, only to those stations that were close by and still worked on open range principles. Clint’s dream for the whole of the population of Kowanyama to be involved in co-operative work on the reserve was replaced by a nightmare of unemployment, trainee jobs and deeply entrenched disadvantage.

New health and social problems developed on account of the number, design and layout of the new houses, as anthropologist, John Taylor, showed. The improvement to education was slow, Kowanyama had to wait until 1971 for the appointment of the inaugural group of six teachers from the Education Department. The Department of

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97 Hewitt to Williams, 15 May 1970, OF 30, DFSA1A.
99 Butler to Killoran, 9 March 1971, 17A/55, Interim transfer R254, QSA. “The number of men available for work is in excess of work available. The extremely heavy wet appears to be affecting station employment as very little labour has been called for. Applicable benefits are being claimed for all unemployed men and one young woman”.
101 Butler to Killoran, 16 September 1971, 17A/55, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
Aboriginal and Island Affairs had its own problems in recruiting staff to fill the increased number of positions. In December 1971, the positions of Community Overseer, Industrial Overseer, Female Liaison Officer and Nursing Sister remained vacant despite widespread advertising of the vacancies. The vastly increased government spending at Kowanyama had not paralleled any increase in Aboriginal participation. A growing population of whites filled the new positions created for teachers, nurses, office workers, tradespersons and police. The number of whites at work in Kowanyama increased from 38 in April 1971 to 50 by October 1972. In fact, the increased emphasis on qualifications had relegated many Aboriginal people from positions of responsibility to those of assistant or trainee.

The mere presence of so many Munpitch emphasised white hegemony and called for a stricter concealment of the matters considered to belong to the exclusively Pakaper domain. Donald Crim, an anthropologist at Kowanyama between October 1961 and November 1962, explained this in terms of a two class system of missionaries and Aborigines. The white spatial domain was the scene for 'onstage' behaviours by Aborigines where they sought to accommodate what they did and how they appeared to the expectations of whites. In the Aboriginal villages and during the night the 'backstage' behaviours that were otherwise moderated or suspended were enacted. Crim observed:

Fighting, drinking, gambling, erotic behaviour and the use of obscene language were reserved exclusively for backstage, and their onstage occurrence was regarded by most [Aborigines] as a serious violation of the norms, requiring the intervention of a village councillor or a policeman in order to avoid official action by the superintendent.

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102 Butler to Killoran, 14 December 1971, 17A/55, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
104 Crim, op.cit., p.46.
By 1974 the inadequacies of the housing and layout of Kowanyama were becoming apparent. Wet season rains regularly flooded streets. The residents of these houses were lucky that their houses were built above the ground, those who lived in the slab-floor houses did not fare as well. (Wet season, Christmas 1974)

(Source: Police Museum, Brisbane, PM 899)
The increased presence of *Munpitch* in Kowanyama, especially from the 1970s, the township plan and the general lack of privacy only added to the difficulty for Aborigines attempting to conform to the norms described in Crim’s analysis. I recall an older Aboriginal woman, upon hearing the rumour of a likely Federal Government takeover of the Queensland reserves in 1978, being delighted and expressing the hope that “*All the Munpitch will go away, and leave this place to the Aborigines*”\(^{105}\). The pressure involved in being “made into townspeople” was telling for many Aborigines.

The conferring of the federal franchise in [1965] and the state franchise in [1967] along with citizenship rights at the referendum in 1967 did not alter the realities of “living under the Act” on a Queensland reserve. Questions about rights and community politics generally were often linked to questions about the availability of alcohol. Wider exposure to the world of the cattle stations had shown that this was a key indicator of whether a person was a ‘protected’ Aboriginal or considered to be on the same status as everyone else. Not surprisingly, Kowanyama Aborigines who chose to drink expected, as citizens and townspeople, that they should have the same rights of access to alcohol as any other person. This was especially so since the 1965 *Aborigines’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ Affairs Act* had removed the blanket prohibition on Aborigines having alcohol, even though it retained full authority to control reserves. Others, seeing the destructive effects of alcohol abuse, advocated that it be strictly limited or even prohibited. The mission administration held to a policy of prohibition, which was usually complied with or discreetly ignored for most of the year. The wet season, when station workers were back on the Mission for their ‘spell’, was the main time when alcohol was considered to be a problem and when alcohol related

\(^{105}\) Discussion with Gracie Cecil, Kowanyama, 1978.
Mr. & Mrs. Freier

invitation to attend

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF

THE KOWANYAMA BEER CANTEEN

TO BE CONDUCTED AT KOWANYAMA

DATE OPEN 5/8/77 4 p.m.

R.S.V.P. 29/7/77

SIGNED KENNY JIMMY
COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

The opening of a beer canteen in 1977 was a direct result of the 1971 plebiscite amongst Kowanyama residents who voted 140 to 18 to proceed with sales of alcohol. Kenny Jimmy's attempts to maintain a limit on these sales led to him acquiring the nickname, "Four Can".
brawls took place. This policy was initially maintained by the government administration, with the luggage of Aboriginal passengers from Cairns searched for alcohol, which was then confiscated as a matter of routine.

During the last weekend some 15 bottles of alcohol amounting to over 5 gallons were confiscated from incoming plane passengers, main carriers being the four women who were returning from Cairns with new babies.

Kowanyama wasted no time in testing public opinion about the specific provision for the lawful sale of beer on reserves contained in the 1971 *Aborigines Act*. A plebiscite amongst community residents in May 1971 decided, by the overwhelming majority of 140 to 18, to agree that the community council should proceed with the establishment of a beer canteen. Sales were strictly limited for a period of an hour on three week nights and drinkers only permitted to purchase two cans of beer each night. Importation of alcohol into the community by individual Aborigines continued to be prohibited. Whites were exempt from this ban and by 1977 even formed their own informal drinking place, the ‘Troppo Bar’, under the house of a white carpenter.

The opening of an improved beer canteen in 1977, named the ‘Magnificent Hotel’, was a time of general communal festivity and celebration. Formal invitations were sent for staff and neighbouring community leaders to attend the opening performed by Eric Deeral, the Aboriginal member for Cook electorate in the State Parliament at the time. Even a *Kokobera* ‘pub opening’ song was written by Isaac Zingle for the occasion. The words, in translation, show the desirability of beer; honey is used as its metaphor, and the regulation involved in its consumption; the drinkers queue in separate lines of men and women:

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106 Goslett to Killoran, 18 September 1966, 17A/7, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
107 Butler to District Officer, 9 December 1969, 17A/7, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
108 “Minutes of Mitchell River Council Meeting”, 29 April 1971, 17A/22, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
109 Butler to Killoran, 4 January 1972, 17A/22, Interim transfer R254, QSA.
110 Personal observation.
Magnificent Hotel, standing open with honey,
Standing on the heaps of feathers;
We stand here in long lines,
We drink honey out of baler shells.\footnote{1}

Imposed moderation in alcohol consumption was generally agreed to by Aborigines on the principle that they were ‘trainees’ in the matter of drinking. Even though some were seasoned drinkers from their life on the stations, others had no familiarity with alcohol. Chairman Kenny Jimmy, who received the nickname, ‘\textit{Four Can\texttextquotesingle}', after he resisted council moves to increase the ration beyond four cans of beer each session, was concerned about the impact of alcohol consumption on children and felt that a ration would minimise its destructive influence.\footnote{2} A delegation of thirty women to the Council in January 1978 agreed that the onus of moderation should fall more heavily on women, twenty-nine of their number considering that women should be prohibited from drinking entirely, and all agreeing that, if not, the women’s ration should be reduced from five to four cans of beer per session.\footnote{3}

The twenty years between the heyday of the co-operative experiment and the 1970s had witnessed many changes at Kowanyama. By the end of this period there was a mere handful of buildings left from the mission era and only the mango trees left to mark the site of the former mission villages. Disappointed expectations throughout the 1960s and 1970s contrasted with the remembrance of the mission era as a time of simplicity, sobriety and order. Acquisition of the material benefits of the \textit{Munpitch} had brought whites in greater number to Kowanyama and with them greater pressure on the \textit{Pakaper} way of life. New

\footnote{1}{Paul Black and Grace Koch, "Koko-Bera Island style music", \textit{Aboriginal History}, vol.7, nos.1-2, 1983. p.168.}

\footnote{2}{Kenny Jimmy, taped interview, Kowanyama, 4 May 1988, and Jimmy to Killoran, 13 December 1973, 17A/22, Interim transfer R254, QSA.}

\footnote{3}{“Minutes of Council Manager Meeting”, 12 January 1978, 17A/22, Interim transfer R254, QSA.}
Eric Deeral MLA (centre) officially opened the "Magnificent Hotel" on 5 August 1977. Kowanyama Community Council chairman, Kenny Jimmy, stands facing him in front of the main door to the hotel. DAIA manager, Max Patton, stands to Jimmy's right, also in front of the main door. The three men facing the hotel are waiting to present a gift to Deeral. Most of the onlookers close to the events are "white staff" and Aborigines who worked in the DAIA office. Most Aborigines kept in the background of this formal occasion even though they were very interested in the establishment of the hotel.
concerns with alcohol, itself imbued with a character of attraction and risk, thoroughly consonant with the Munpitch quality, occupied the centre stage of community politics and social relationships. The dual character of the Munpitch was affirmed, not diminished, by the supplanting of the missionary Munpitch by their government cognates.
Chapter Eleven

The Horizons of History

Whatever might be said about the sixty-two year history of Mitchell River Mission, it would be inadequate without stressing the role played by Aborigines in shaping that history. Even if they were sometimes represented as the mere objects of missionary endeavour, they acted from the fact of their humanity to shape the life of the Mission. The Mission, as such, had no traditional precedent in the life of the Kokobera, Kokominjen and Kunjen people who comprised its membership. None the less, their labours and land were central to its existence. More than that, there were many Aboriginal people who adopted aspects of the values of the missionaries and conveyed them to successive generations of mission inhabitants. The history that has been described in the foregoing chapters would have been impossible without this sort of active, historical engagement.

This has not been the story of slaves, even if the Aboriginal “inmates” of the Mission were sometimes treated like this. It is instead the story of people living in a close relationship with their traditional land and with a clear consciousness of continuity with their ancestors. It has also been the story of people whose contact with whites preceded the foundation of the Mission.

It is remarkable that the response of the Kokobera, Kokominjen and Kunjen peoples to white contact also maintained a continuity over several centuries. Remarkable too that this response was primarily spiritual at first, in terms consonant with the world view of these people. By identifying them as Munpitch, Aborigines had found a way of integrating whites into their physical world whilst leaving unsolved the problem of how these same
Munpitch fitted into the Aboriginal (Pakaper) social and moral world. It seems strange at first glance to think that identifying anyone or anything in a ‘spiritual’ category could be at all effective in establishing the reality of this presence in the ‘physical’ world. Whilst the contrasts between the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘physical’ are not necessarily made in the same way in the Aboriginal scheme of things as in the modern, scientific schema there was a fundamental problem that the presence of whites posed. Tony Swain described the problem:

In the traditions of the first Australians there exists a prevailing insistence that every self has its Abiding place. One of the greatest dilemmas for such an understanding is the encounter with peoples whose place is unknown and perhaps unknowable.²

The Munpitch category explained the location of whites as a real fact of the world but also accounted for their radical dislocation from the moral and social world of the Aborigines.

These intruders were ascribed a place in the world which made some sense of their power, threat, useful artifacts and so on, but were denied a place as ‘real people’ in the same way that this applied to the self understanding of Aborigines (Pakaper can be broken into two elements, pa = people, kaper = real). Even where a much longer shared history existed between Cape York Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders there is evidence, again according to Swain, that Islanders were understood to be, “... cosmologically the ‘same’ as Aborigines, yet ontologically ‘other’”.² How much more appropriate then, to deal with whites in a similar manner?

The history of Mitchell River Mission is a story with many dimensions. The material has not suggested the operation of any single principle to the exclusion of all else. Rather, multiple factors were in operation in this history that seem, on the face of it,

² Ibid., p.84.
unrelated. It has been a story of ambiguity and paradox that has proven more amenable to a dialectical analysis than to a linear form of logic. By using the same method that was applied to the archaeology and modern reception of the Munpitch concept in Chapter 3, dialectical pairs emerge which frame what otherwise seem to be unrelated events. The Munpitch concept points to the different horizons towards which the history of the Mission developed.

From the first meeting before the time of the missionaries right through to the present day, Aborigines it seems, have jointly denoted whites and a particular category of spiritual beings in the Aboriginal cosmos as Munpitch. It has been argued here that the things attributed to the Munpitch as spiritual entities can be read as a representation of the encounter between the unfamiliar worlds of whites and Aborigines. Thus when Munpitch, as spiritual entities, are described in the dialectical relationship of “opportunity/danger” along with “knowledge from the ancestors/transformation to a new state” these relationships are also suggested as horizons of the encounter with Munpitch, as whites. This historically informed understanding laid the basis for an ambiguous relationship between Aborigines and missionaries as the relationship developed during the period of intensive coexistence on the Mission. Such an encounter with the Munpitch exposed the Pakaper to a world which had been enlarged and opened to new possibilities of enrichment as well as to new risks. This encounter would involve dual outcomes in a complex combination rather than a simple choice of one or the other.

The ancestors of the people who came to make up the Mitchell River Mission had the opportunity of developing their understanding of whites from as early as the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. These encounters are recorded in all of the conventional, factual sources used by historians; journals, diaries, letters and maps and have been treated
with varying degrees of recognition by historians. Right up until the development of the “frontier” histories of Australian race relations in the 1980s, the Aboriginal people of northern Australia were usually depicted as the last to experience white contact rather than amongst the first. The history of race relations is still too readily conceptualised as one that radiated from the British penal colony in New South Wales. Indeed, for Urry, a history of Aborigines can only begin, “with the establishment of white settlement in Australia”. However the historical process is understood, this thesis asserts that the people of the Mitchell River region were far more central to the history of these encounters than has otherwise been understood, because the history of Australia has been written from the southern cities and largely seen the Aborigines as peripheral to this story even when the historians have included the Aborigines in their analysis.

The history of the Munpitch concept has its origin in the intrusion of whites into the world of the ancestors of the people of the Mitchell River Mission. Even if, at the beginning, white mariners, explorers, pastoralists and missionaries were intruders and initiators of new experiences and social relationships, there is no evidence that an inevitable Munpitch/initiator and Pakaper/responder equivalence characterised the life of the Mission. Indeed, in some important respects, inversions of this stereotype developed. Pakaper initiative in recognising the economic value of labour, for example, defined the missionaries as conservative and reactionary as they sought to preserve the coherence of their socially-constructed pauperism of mission Aborigines.

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3 See, for example, Henry Reynolds, The Other Side of the Frontier, Townsville, 1981, and Noel Loos, Invasion and Resistance, Canberra, 1982.

Equally, the post-mission Christian spirituality of Kowanyama people shows clear signs of innovation in terms of the integration of the stories from their ancestors with the narratives of biblical Christianity. This representation of Jesus, John the Baptist and other biblical figures in the "story" of the land of the Pakaper may well be far more than a post-mission development. As early as 1916, Joseph Chapman reported the Kokobera belief about the Pathangany creator figure in terms which suggested a much earlier Kokobera innovation in response to the Christian proclamation of the missionaries. It awaits a much more comprehensive oral history approach, than has been attempted in this thesis, to construct a narrative from "inside" the experience of Kowanyama Aborigines before questions of this sort can be fully answered. What has been attempted here can only offer glimpses of this experience as it has been elucidated from oral sources and inferred from the usual documentary sources available to the historian.

What can be said, though, is that the response of Aborigines to whites of various motivations and vocations was at first primarily spiritual. Of all of these people, whether mariners, explorers, pastoralists or government officials it was only the missionaries who saw this spiritual dimension as the reason for their presence amongst the Kokobera and their neighbours at all. There is no reason to doubt that the concern shown by the founders of Mitchell River Mission was informed by their Christian humanitarianism on one hand and their desire to evangelise Aborigines with the Christian gospel on the other. The Munptich identity seems to have been located by Aborigines in the region where the world in its physical reality (cosmology) is made meaningful in terms of an understanding of

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5 See the previously cited example of the biblical story of the flood (Genesis 6 - 8) and its incorporation into the Kunjen, Antujil story cited by Veronica Strang. (Veronica Strang, Uncommon Ground, Oxford, 1997, pp.262-3.

being (ontology). Whilst recognising the risk of oversimplification, this location may be
helpful to depict diagrammatically in the intersection of the cosmological and ontological
orders:

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  Cosmological               Ontological
                        ⊗ Mumpitch ⊗

World      Being
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It is axiomatic to assume that the missionaries desired to enter the Aboriginal
ontological realm to communicate their understanding of meaning according to their
Christian confession. This is implicit in the mandate Jesus Christ had given to the apostles
and which the missionaries at Mitchell River understood themselves to have received:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make
disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have
commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
(Matthew 28: 18-20)

To this extent, the ideology of mission demanded a movement towards the ontological from
whatever starting point the missionary might be able to find. This may be developed
diagrammatically by representing this emphasis and intention in figures of unequal area:
It is ironic that the practice of mission demonstrated the reverse of this ideology. Whatever they aspired to do and however they understood their task, the missionaries spent most of their efforts operating in the cosmological world of the Pakaper and gave confusing signals in return to the opportunities of engagement in the ontological domain, the realm where identity and meaning were constructed:

The period of missionary control at Mitchell River did not witness the full resolution of the dialectical entities into a new state of affairs. A number of initiatives suggest, though, movement towards a possible resolution of the dialectical forces that frame
the horizons of the history of the Mission. The indigenisation of the Christian message and its apparent incorporation into the stories of origin of the Pakaper, discussed in detail in Chapter 9, is a case in point. Another can be found in the proposals for a Christian Co-operative movement, a missionary initiative, dealt with in Chapter 10, that promised a new relationship between the labours of the Pakaper and the economic results that followed from it. Both hint at the sort of resolution that might be anticipated by applying dialectical reasoning but neither synthesised the pairs of forces that have been discussed, in relation to the Mumpitch concept, at least not up until the missionary hegemony was replaced by government control in 1967.

Such a resolution of these forces, at least during the period 1905 to 1967, seems to have been prevented as a direct consequence of the strategy adopted on the Mission. The “civilizing” approach to mission that the missionaries adopted, so soon after the foundation of the Mission, increasingly threw them into labours for which they were poorly equipped. If Christian humanitarianism and evangelism were the founding principles of the Mission, “missionary order” rapidly became a driving force in the representation of Christianity to mission Aborigines. There were many steps involved in this development, which ranged from missionary intervention in the conflicts between Aborigines, to the development of institutional forms like dormitories, through to the comprehensive pauperisation of Aborigines even when their labours produced comparative wealth. The most significant must surely have occurred in 1912 when the missionaries crossed the line from being the defenders of Aborigines threatened by pastoralists and police with “removal” (banishment, often for life, to a far distant place) to employing this same censure in defending “missionary order”.

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A brief analysis of “removal” as part of the missionary strategy allows an insight into the complex interplay of the worlds of the Munpitch and the Pakaper and throws light on a fundamental problem for the missionary enterprise. It is reasonable to infer, from the decision to banish mission Aborigines from their land and kin, that the missionaries valued their missionary order more highly than the humanitarian and evangelical values that underpinned the foundation of the Mission. The humanitarian value was clearly compromised since it was manifestly distressing for the individuals subject to this punishment to be deprived of their relationship to land and kin. The facts were also clear that the forced relocation of Aborigines from the tropics to southern climates invariably exposed them to the real risk of death through infection or through the debilitation brought on by abject despair. The evangelical value was similarly compromised. The places of exile were usually government settlements that were largely outside of the evangelising influence of the Christian church, not mission stations.

What might be seen though of this same decision from the perspective of the Pakaper? Certainly there is every suggestion here of continuity with those aspects of earlier, frontier experience which emphasised the danger of close association with the unpredictable Munpitch. The more the world of the Pakaper was shared with these Munpitch the more their lawlessness (in terms of the Aboriginal Law) seemed demonstrated. “Removal” is a particularly powerful example of this since it attacked two key elements of this Law; that the Pakaper are who they are through an essential relationship to their land, and that they are in an essential relationship to one another. The missionaries, by resorting to “removal” as a punishment for the breach of missionary order, thus showed themselves to be “lawless” (according to the Aboriginal Law) and without the values that would include them in the ontological world of the Pakaper.
There is no evidence that an analysis of this kind was ever suggested to the missionaries or emerged from their reflection on their circumstances. There were, though, dissenting voices that “missionary order” made it difficult to hear. It speaks powerfully of the humanitarian vision of Ernest Gribble, the co-founder of the Mission, that he opposed the practice of “removal” but at the same time ministered as the chaplain at Palm Island, the notorious government settlement that was the destination for many of the “removed” Aborigines from the north. Gribble denounced the Mitchell River Mission’s use of “removal” as “unchristian” and maintained the principled stance that he had declared at the very foundation of the Mission. His words are worth quoting again to underscore this point:

[Removal] is not Christian and the Missions by seeking the aid of the Government to deal with their naughty folk are proclaiming that they are failing. There was a time when this was not done by any Christian Mission. I was at Yarrabah 18 years and during that time not a solitary native was exiled out of over five hundred. God knows that we had many very naughty folk but it was for such that we were there even as Christ came to call sinners and not the righteous. No doubt a Mission station can be made a “moral” and well conducted place by the elimination of the sinner. But then it ceases to be in the strictest sense of the word “Christian”.

To the extent that their evangelical goal required an engagement and even penetration of the ontological world of the Pakaper, decisions of this kind took them further away from achieving that aim. From his different point of view, Ernest Gribble was arguing a similar point to that already developed from the Pakaper perspective, that “removal” transgressed moral order and so further distanced those who implemented it from those who were subjected to it.

The earlier discussion, in Chapter 9, of the Pakaper’s possible attempts to open their ontological world to the Munpitch through the ceremonial life of the Yiral bora provides

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7 See also, Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in our Hearts*, St Leonards, Australia, 1998, pp.178-200, for an account of Ernest Gribble’s application of principle to events in north-western Australia.

a further example of the chance of ontological engagement being overwhelmed by "missionary order". It is, of course on the edges of this interaction that some of the most interesting insights are to be found. The simple fact that "missionary order" prevailed in this and other interactions does not do justice to the initiative and humanity of the Pakaper who had their own historical influence and subjective aspiration throughout these circumstances. A further exploration along these lines, using more anthropological and linguistic resources than has been possible here, may well prove productive as a field of future research.

The Munpitch category and a response to whites that is informed through it endures amongst the Pakaper to this day. As a working hypothesis of living with the Munpitch, it has provided the Pakaper with scope to embrace values and commodities from the Munpitch world whilst remaining apart from absolute identity with that world. A long journey has been travelled in the 94 years since the Mission was founded. Aborigines at Kowanyama are still open to the possibility that Munpitch will enter their moral and social world even if the evidence of many centuries should disincline them to this view. They otherwise maintain traditions that are continuous with, if not always identical to, the practices of their ancestors. Remarkably, some of the most forceful advocates of this dual perspective do so from the standpoint of Christian faith. That this faith has found an enduring place in the lives of some Pakaper and an awareness in all seems in little doubt in this excerpt from a prayer that Alma Wason offered at a home fellowship meeting in 1987:

_We are here to share the good news that you have given us to share. May your blessings will [sic] be upon each one of us that we may be ready to serve you and see the way to you and to follow your ways all the days of our lives._

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9 Fellowship meeting, tape recording, Kowanyama, 1 August 1987.
The horizons of history are still open to the Pakaper as they seek to find the opportunities which have accompanied their encounters with the Munpitch, even if the costs along the way have been very high indeed.
Appendix One

The Bishops of the Diocese of Carpentaria

Gilbert White 1900 - 1915
Henry Newton 1915 - 1922
Stephen H. Davies 1922 - 1949
W. John Hudson 1950 - 1960
S. John Matthews 1960 - 1968
Eric Hawkey 1968 - 1974
Hamish T. U. Jamieson 1974 - 1983
Anthony F. B. Hall-Matthews 1984 - 1996

(The Diocese of Carpentaria was absorbed into the Diocese of North Queensland in 1996)
Appendix Two

Chaplains of Mitchell River Mission

A. E. Smith 1 December 1906 - March 1907
H. Frere T. Lane 4 August 1912 - 14 September 1916
Henry Matthews 1919 - July 1924
C. W. Light 18 September 1922 (Temporary appointment)
Frank Pond November 1924 - March 1925
John J. E. Done 28 May 1926 - 17 December 1927
E. Lawton 28 November 1927 - 30 June 1930
James A. G. Housden 1930 - 1932
R. H. Lowe 3 November 1934 - 30 October 1935
Philip Seymour 26 November 1936 - 31 May 1938
Sailor Gabey 6 May 1938 - 29 August 1943
Arthur C. Flint 1946 - March 1947
Herbert A. J. R. Norton 1948 - 1950
Eric J. Wingfield 13 May 1949 - 1953
Douglas M. Sutherland 1954 - 1960
Michael W. Martin 1960 - 1966
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  Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the sale of Opium Act Amendment Act of 1928
  Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts Amendment Act of 1934
  Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939
  Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act Amendment 1946
  Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act 1965
  Aborigines Act, 1971-1979
  Community Services (Aborigines) Act, 1984

Queensland State Archives (abbreviated QSA)

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Throughout the text there are references to DFSAIA, OF (Old File) numbers. These were researched in 1992 when they were held as departmental files by the DFSAIA as the successor department to the various creating protectorates and departments concerned with the administration of Aboriginal affairs in Queensland. These records were later transferred

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Volume J, Box 11
Volume K, Box 12
Volume L, Box 13
Volume P, Box 17
Volume R, Box 19
Volume S, Box 20

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(Since I researched these records they have been transferred into the control of the Anglican Records and Archives Centre, 373 Ann Street, Brisbane. The original John Oxley Library accession numbers have been retained.)

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