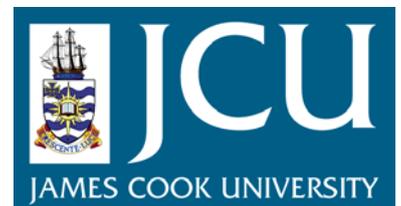# JCU ePrints

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PART 1

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THE RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

Plate 1: The east coast of northern Cape York Peninsula - a sentient landscape.

Chapter 1

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This thesis aims to describe the shared heritage of northern Cape York Peninsula by documenting the cross-cultural history of the area, through a community- based archaeological project. As a community-based research project it is essential that the outcome be of direct benefit and relevance to the communities concerned. To ensure this I have, together with the relevant communities, identified significant aspects of the cultural landscape. I then present relevant historical and oral information to facilitate their interpretation and discuss relevant long-term management issues. This thesis then is both the "*Stori blo Meinlan*"[1] and a framework for heritage management in northern Cape York.

The work presented in this thesis will overlap with work undertaken by others in northern Cape York in that:

a) It covers a geographical area already studied in part although not in its entirety by anthropologists (see McConnell 1932, 1936, 1939; Thomson 1934, 1956; Chase 1980; Taylor 1984; Sutton 1978; Martin 1981, 1993, 1997; Greer and Fuary 1987, 1993); by archaeologists (see Cribb 1986a, 1986b, 1996; Moore 1965; Greer 1995); by historians (see Hall 1987, Stevens 1980, Mullins 1982) and others.

b) Although I did not set out to implement Greer's (1995) community based approach to archaeological research (the field work and research for this thesis was in the main undertaken between 1987 and 1992, that is prior to the completion of Greer's work), it is clear that such an approach has been followed. The approach adopted is largely due to the nature of

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[1] Literally translated means 'the story belonging to the mainland'. Spelt after the fashion of Cape York Creole. People often refer to themselves as a 'mainlan' man or woman and this can be despite a genealogy, which is essentially Islander. For many purposes people identify by their resident communities and the recent history of those communities.

the project, which of course required working closely with communities and individuals over several years to gain the understanding of local indigenous cosmology, views and aspirations. The outcomes of the research serve to endorse the principles of the community based approach as defined by Greer (1995: 222).

This work differs from other archaeological and heritage work in the area in that

a) It takes a cultural landscape approach whereas most other heritage research (particularly historic heritage) has dealt with places in isolation;

b) It is place based, whereas a lot of other work has concentrated on historical narrative without linkage to sites and landscape;

c) It seeks to understand and present the indigenous voice in terms of both the impact of these places and the events that occurred at them and the community responses to those impacts which have shaped the history of the area;

d) It seeks to present management recommendations which are consistent with community concerns and aspirations and which will protect those heritage elements of greatest significance to the communities involved in their long-term care and management;

e) It presents a shared heritage that can provide insights for Australians and others into both the historic past and contemporary indigenous communities.

1.2 The Story as a Cross-Cultural Interpretation Instrument:

Given the above aims, this thesis becomes an attempt at cross-cultural interpretation on a broad scale. Usually when the term 'cross- cultural interpretation' is used in heritage literature, it is in relation to the interpretation of individual archaeological sites or art works. In this thesis I am interpreting the cultural landscape of northern Cape York as it relates to the recent past and identifying

key places that resident communities have identified as important to an understanding of that history. In using the term 'cultural landscape' I am not merely referring to the collection or mapping of physical evidence of economic activity, material culture or settlement patterns. I am interested in these things as they reflect and reveal the 'sum of attitudes and perceptions of the landscape of those living in it' (Baker 1999:23).

Upitis (1988) points out that:

> When interpreting cross-cultural sites or carrying out cross-cultural interpretative programs, interpreters require sensitivity to differing cultural perspective's, an ideological commitment to working together and good liaison skills (1988:2).

Lippman (1977) suggests that three basic premises are fundamental to cross-cultural education and interpretative programs:

1. recognition of human dignity and the right of others to hold beliefs and values discrepant from one's own;

2. the achievement of attitudes towards people from other groups of: fair-mindedness, respect for feelings, and some measure of empathy and friendliness;

3. learning to accept differences with interest and pleasure, as an achievement of one's own life and understanding rather than as an assumption of inferiority on the part of the different.

I would take this a step further and say that it is difficult to see how one could successfully interpret cross-cultural sites, or in this case landscapes, without having immersed yourself in each respective culture. Assuming that one adopts the principles as outlined by Lippman and Upitis above, the two most essential ingredients to cross-cultural interpretation are sufficient time and a shared language. Cross-cultural interpretation is best viewed as a *process* rather than a label or an event. The process involves identifying what are the integral points or themes in one culture and translating them into messages that can be understood by another. This process takes time to build understanding and trust and the

understanding of concepts and connections requires a common language (see also Greer 1995 regarding the importance of time and language in community–based archaeology). It is difficult to see how one could understand let alone interpret the significance of a place or landscape without first immersing oneself in the culture concerned.

1.3 The Study Area

The study area is loosely the northern part of Cape York Peninsula from Silver Plains and Coen north to the Prince of Wales Group (see Figure 1). The project does not seek to cover the study area evenly in the level of detail of research or fieldwork undertaken. This thesis therefore does not include a comprehensive database of sites and places. The focus of field work and investigation has been the area previously known as the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) Aboriginal Reserve, but much of the history and the places resulting from that history are similar throughout northern Cape York and so where opportunities presented, investigative forays were extended beyond this area. This makes sense when one considers the interconnections between the Aboriginal and Islander communities in the area. For example an account of the NPA must mention Umagico community, which in itself cannot be described or explained without reference to Lockhart River community and Port Stewart as Umagico was formed as a result of the forced removal of Aboriginal people from these places.

1.4 Research Design and Methods

Work on this thesis commenced in 1987 and flowed out of a field trip in which I had been assisting a colleague. Shelley Greer had commenced her fieldwork for her PhD in 1984 which culminated in her thesis "The Accidental Heritage: Archaeology and Identity in Northern Cape York" (Greer 1995). During this field trip I became aware of the interesting recent history of northern Cape York and was intrigued by the fragile, ephemeral and almost invisible nature of major sites attesting to this period.

Originally the project was designed as an archaeological survey with historical research to identify and assess these places and to discuss pragmatic management needs in a context of increasing pressure from relatively uncontrolled four wheel-drive (4WD) based, tourism in this area. However, as work progressed on this thesis I became increasingly interested in how these places have become inextricably woven into indigenous people's understanding of their past and are in fact integral to their identity as 'mainlanders'. In this context it became increasingly clear that there was a disjunction between the views that some white Australians had about these sites and how they should be managed, and the views of the local indigenous population. Increasingly, the inappropriateness of legislation and heritage management practices in Australia, which separate historical heritage into an essentially 'white' basket while prehistory and indigenous heritage are in the 'black' basket became apparent. This is explored further in Chapter 2 where I discuss the implicit and explicit issues involved in the interpretation of history and cultures (see also McIntyre-Tamwoy 1998).

As I studied the ways in which people interacted with the landscape and each other it became very clear that there were significant thematic threads that ran through time and place including:

- Invasion, conquest and re-alliance (*pastaim*);
- The impact of the missions – 'The Coming of the Light' (*pastaim/ bufor deiz*);
- The impact and interactions arising from WWII operations in the area (*bufor deiz*);
- The NPA Reserve and government strategies of control such as erasure of places, forced removal of people, experimental development (*bufor deiz/diskaintaim*);
- The active spirit landscape and its ability to affect the past and the present (*bipotaim/diskaintaim*).

The research was undertaken according to the principles of community-based archaeology (Greer 1995:222). This approach is discussed further in Chapter 2. As the project direction developed and was influenced over time by the communities involved, I found it necessary to be both opportunistic and selective in the fieldwork and selection of case studies. Prior to the commencement of my research I had already established a relationship with Injinoo (formerly Cowal Creek) Aboriginal community (see Figure 1). I therefore based myself in Injinoo and my investigations radiated out from there as community contacts and logistical opportunities provided.

The methods used in this research have been highly collaborative in nature. Field surveys to identify places of historic importance were undertaken with the assistance and guidance of local Aboriginal people. Fieldwork was seasonal and consisted of three, six-week field trips in each of 1987, 1988 and 1989. These field trips concentrated on the Northern Peninsula area and particularly the recording of information and the location of places associated with Jack McLaren, the Jardine and Holland families, as well as World War II sites. On several occasions in travels with community members I also visited Weipa and Lockhart River. In late 1989 I moved to Injinoo to take up a position as Ranger Training Co-ordinator with Cairns TAFE. I lived there until early 1992. This provided the opportunity to visit and become familiar with Old Mapoon, Lockhart River, Weipa, and Aurukun Aboriginal communities as well as the Kaurareg communities on Nurapai (Horn Island), Waubin (Thursday Island) and Kirriri (Hammond Island). I also travelled to Muri (Mt Adolphus Island), Albany and Possession Islands and a range of mainland areas of importance to the various communities (see Figures 2-6). The bulk of the fieldwork and interviews were carried out during this period 1987-1992 although I frequently re visit the northern Peninsula Area and have used these visits to collect and clarify information as needed.

Historical research conducted to provide the framework for interpretation of the places identified was carried out in State archives in Queensland, and New South Wales and in Commonwealth Archives (Canberra) and the Australian War Memorial. Additional research was carried out in the Office of Public Records at Kew England, relating to the colonial period and failed settlement of Somerset. Oral information has been collected from Aboriginal people in northern Cape York, which demonstrates the important connection between the indigenous landowners and the places identified. Advice, particularly in the early stages of archival research, was obtained from Army and ex-army personnel (in particular Major. Bob Hall and Bill Benton).

My work as a ranger training co-ordinator with Cairns TAFE provided the opportunity to work with and discuss heritage management issues with a range of communities that I might otherwise not have had the opportunity to visit. My familial relationships through Injinoo community also enabled me to establish a kinship relationship with key people in most communities and these people were often happy to assist me with other contacts and information.

From mid 1995 to mid 2000 I was employed as a senior manager with the New South Wales, National Parks and Wildlife Service. I was responsible for establishing and managing the Cultural Heritage Services Division and this period while causing serious inroads into the time I had available to work on this project, confirmed for me the serious consequences of the artificial divisions between firstly 'Aboriginal' and what is often called 'historic' heritage and secondly, between the management and consideration given to natural values as if isolated from cultural values in Australia.

It will be obvious that my work experiences and my close relationship to the NPA communities, particularly Injinoo, have influenced my thesis and the approach to the subject matter.

1.5 Style and Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into Parts I, II and III as well as into more conventional chapters. This is to introduce some flexibility into the document so that it might reach a wider and more diverse audience than many such academic theses. While the intention is to produce a comprehensive document, which will meet academic standards and satisfy the requirements of a PhD thesis, the Parts have been written essentially for different audiences.

Part I contains the Introduction and discussion of theoretical concepts and frameworks, which are integral to the thesis, as well as a brief overview of relevant previous research. This Part is essentially inserted to provide the framework both theoretical and logistical within which this document has been prepared. As theoretical and methodological background, this information may not be of particular interest to community readers and in order that the document is accessible to the people whose heritage it describes, this information is segregated in this Part. Chapter 4 which deals with language time and place in northern Cape York, is a transitional chapter which provides an introduction into the local story and demonstrates how theoretical concepts are applied in the local domain.

Part II, is the '*stori blo mainlan'*. This Part has been written with the communities of Northern Cape York as the primary audience but with visitors to the area and others interested in the recent history of the area also in mind. It is a synthesis of the information collected both through oral accounts, observation and archival research about the recent history of northern Cape York and the interaction between the indigenous owners, the first wave of European invaders and subsequent settlers.

The history of the area and the accounts of fieldwork are included in this Part and are introduced by a narrative from the viewpoint of the red devils and spirits who occupy the landscape (the text of these passages is red so as not to confuse it with quotations). This approach was discussed with and approved by various elders in the research area as an effective way of describing the interest that spirits have in the activities of present day events and the power that they have to influence them. This artifice is instrumental in achieving two of the primary aims of the thesis:

1.   relevance and readability for community members.
2.   communicating cross-culturally the complicated cosmology of the area which assumes the inter-relatedness of all those who have been and all those to come.

The events that the spirits and red devils recount are real, the attitudes ascribed to them are consistent with those indicated in indigenous accounts about them by Injinoo people. From time to time key stories are recounted as told by local people. These stories were recorded by myself in the field unless otherwise stated.

Part III is written with relevant heritage and land managers in mind. As well as individual heritage practitioners, this category includes the relevant Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Community Councils as well as associated groups such as Elder groups, the Cape York Land Council and community rangers. It also includes government agencies such as the Queensland Department of Environment, Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs; Australian Heritage Commission; and educational institutions involved in tour guide and/or land management courses eg Tropical North Queensland TAFE.

In Part III, Chapter 10, I attempt to summarise the land management framework operating in Cape York Peninsula, which

is influenced by competing resource use and conservation pressure. I discuss the implications for the indigenous communities who are often disempowered in this debate by assumptions that basic concepts such as biodiversity conservation and international protected area management principles are somehow synonymous with Aboriginal aspirations and that the only participative role available to people is to adopt this framework for land and conservation and become 'rangers'. I challenge the current heritage management paradigm in Australia that separates out European and Aboriginal heritage and looks at cultural heritage and natural heritage as separate and independent values in a cultural landscape where such values are inextricably interwoven. In Chapter 11, having set the framework by a discussion of conservation issues and heritage and landscape management in Northern Cape York, I re-look at the places which are indicative of the *stori blo Meinlan* and discuss their potential for interpretation and management. Chapter 12 includes a brief discussion of the role of cultural tourism in heritage management in northern Cape York.
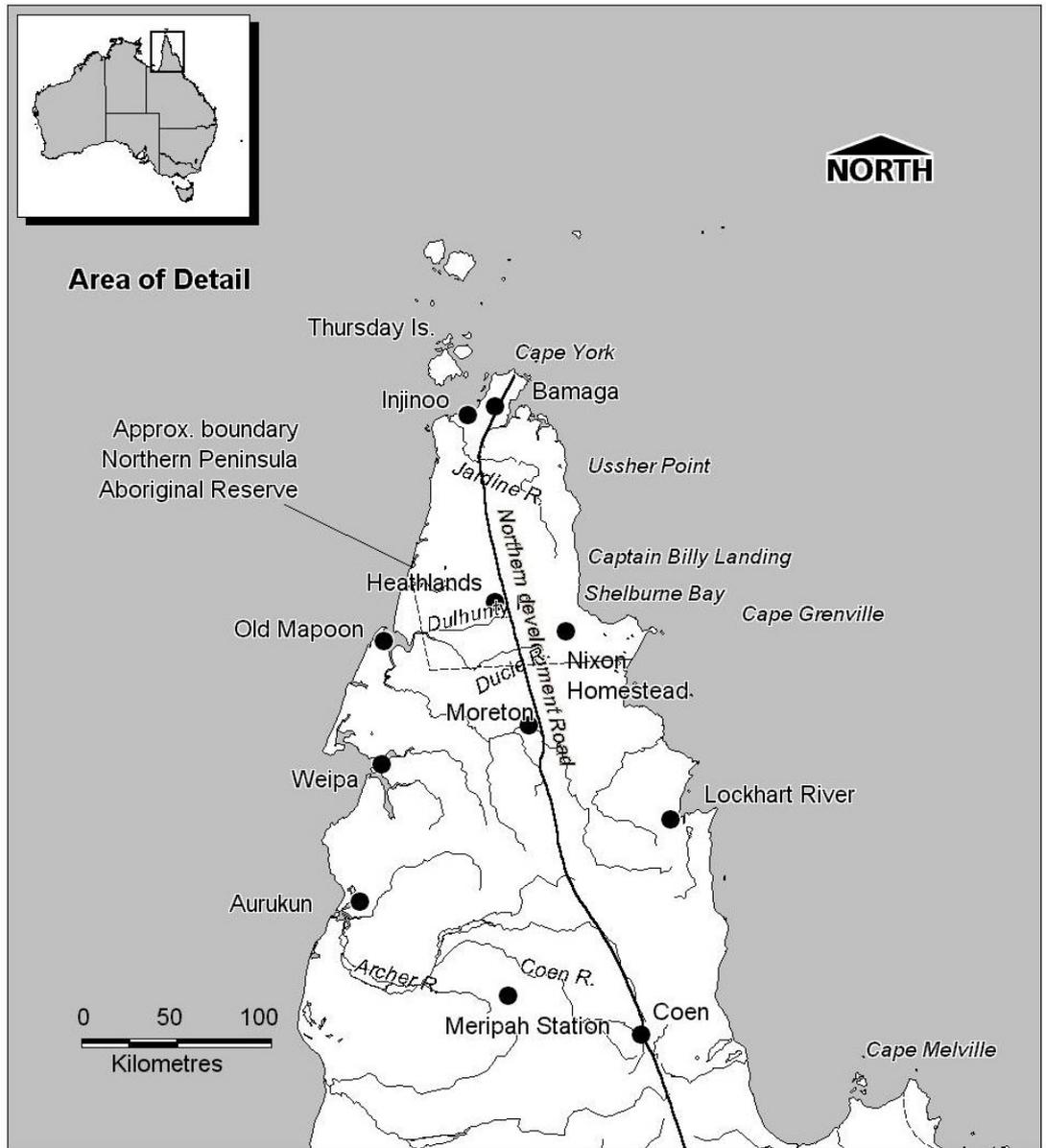
Figure 1: Map of the Study Area

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL INFLUENCES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I summarise the theoretical and professional work experiences that have influenced the approach I have taken in the field and for archival research as well as the presentation of this thesis. As suggested by the emphasis on interpretation and place, this thesis is more about *heritage* than archaeology. However, the identification and management of heritage may be approached from a number of directions and I have an archaeological perspective based on my training and experience in this field. Of particular relevance are the emerging discourses regarding the archaeology of shared histories, the nature and description of cultural landscapes and the maturing field of heritage management and the issue of social value.

The concepts expressed in this thesis are grounded within some of the post processual schools of archaeological thought. The post-processual movement acknowledges that 'material culture is ... actively and meaningfully produced and ...the individual actors culture and history are central' (Hodder 1985:1). If one is interested in the interrelationship between people and their physical and spiritual landscape, then conventional processual archaeology will not provide the answers. According to Gibbs (1995) contextual archaeology on the other hand '…attempts to understand not only the functional uses of artefacts and associated behaviours, but also how past human groups actively manipulated the symbolic properties of their material culture and how this could contribute to cultural change over a greater or lesser period of time' (Gibbs 1995:17)*.* Trigger (1989:377) refers to this as a humanistic

approach which reinforces the view that it is reasonable to employ a direct historical approach and to use non-archaeological sources of data, such as oral traditions, historical linguistics, and comparative ethnography, in order to produce a more rounded picture of cultures and to rule out alternative explanations that archaeological data alone might not be able to exclude.

I have deliberately not referred to this thesis as being one grounded in 'Historical Archaeology'. Whether or not this term has any real meaning in Australia is discussed later in this chapter. At this point though, it is sufficient to say that work carried out by so-called 'historical archaeologists' in Australia does not really provide any useful models for how to approach heritage management or archaeological work in an Aboriginal landscape. Historical archaeology tends rather to be the archaeology of colonisation with the focus on the colonialists rather than the colonised (Egloff 1994). For example in a paper entitled 'Man's Impact on a riverscape: The Hawkesbury Nepean', 'man' refers to the colonists and environmental and cultural 'impact' on the natural environment is seen as commencing with the advent of the colonists (Jack 1984: 58). This is in clear contrast to the reality, which is that Aboriginal people had a long history of impact on the river up to and during the contact period (see Rosen 1995). There are numerous other examples of work carried out by 'historical archaeological' consultants which fail to even consider the indigenous perspective. Generally, there is an emphasis on material culture and the finer points of technology rather than on people and relationships between them. In answering the question 'What are the skills appropriate to historical archaeological consultants?' Pearson and Temple (1984:232) listed the following.

> As a basic requirement they must be familiar with:
>
> ▪ The history of non- Aboriginal occupation of Australia including detailed knowledge of the area in which they are working;
>
> ▪ Historical research i.e. the location of archival collections and their use and interpretation of this material;

- The range of artefacts from historic sites;

- Building styles, methods and materials;

- A range of industrial processes and aspects of technology appropriate to the understanding and assessment of the historical landscape and historic places;

- The techniques of excavation of historic sites

(Pearson & Temple 1984: 232).

Although the paper referred to is rather dated, in practice this is still the recipe followed by many consultants in the field. It reflects their expertise and is evidenced by their reports. Although the language of regulatory authorities has begun to change practice is lagging and by ignoring the requirement for social significance documentation and assessments the authorities (such as the NSW Heritage Office) collaborate with the objectification of heritage and the general de-peopling of history. An important step being undertaken by the Heritage Council of NSW over the last 2 years (this is 1999-2000) and in part enabled by amendments to the NSW Heritage Act has been to push via the compulsory endorsement process, for a consideration of indigenous heritage values in the Conservation Management Plans prepared for places of State significance. It will be interesting to see what impact this might have on the industry over time.

Where Aboriginal people are considered by historical archaeologists it is usually peripherally and/or as the phenomenon of so called 'culture contact' (for an overview of research areas of historical archaeologists in Australia see Paterson and Wilson 2000: 81-89). This is fundamentally different to my approach, which has been to subsume this contact within a longer-range view of the dynamic history and culture of the indigenous communities. In doing this, events and consequences of colonisation are still dramatically apparent but have been put into perspective against a long established 'prehistory' and a vigorous surviving contemporary history. The study of places and events of the period can be

analysed in terms of a long-term view of culture including evidence for previous responses to changing environments and can be viewed in terms of continuity and change rather than loss and impact.

2.2   The Archaeology of Shared Histories

In contrast to much of the work carried out under the banner of historical archaeology in Australia, there is a growing body of research being undertaken which focuses on indigenous and non-indigenous responses to European invasion and emphasises the complexity of these shared histories (for example Murray 1996a: 200; Harrison 2000a; Byrne 1998). The level of current research interest and activity in this area was apparent at the workshop on the 'archaeology of culture contact in Australia and beyond', held in conjunction with the Australian Archaeological Association at Mandurah in 1999 (Harrison and Paterson 2000). Similarly, for the first time the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology (ASHA) has a large component of its 2000 Conference program devoted to papers in this area.

Harrison (2000a:49) working in the southeast Kimberley has examined archaeological evidence for sites associated with the pastoral industry at Old Lamboo station. He has demonstrated that in this period of rapid change for Aboriginal people there is ample evidence of cultural continuity and innovation as people renegotiated power, authority and access to country. In effect, the interaction between Aboriginal people and settlers recreated the cultural landscape as people adjusted significant practices to a new calendar that centred on the seasonal requirements of pastoral work and incorporated new materials into traditional functions. He challenges the popular notion that this 'contact' period caused such disruption to indigenous culture that it could not recover and that it signalled the effective end of 'tradition'. Rather, Harrison maintains that the high degree of continuity of beliefs and practice and the

level of utilisation of new materials is evidence that Aboriginal culture had a long history of innovation and adaptation.

> By examining the archaeology of the contact period in isolation, we run the risk of seeing the changes that occur in post-colonial Australia as being somehow unique, and a direct product of the nature and experience of encounters between indigenous and settler Australians. Through an examination of the long term historical trajectories in the study area, it becomes apparent that the changes that occur in the post-colonial period are not unique, but mirror pre-European changes in social alliances and contacts with other surrounding indigenous groups. Changes in notions of social identity, alliance and the formation of social boundaries as well as the experience of re-interpretation of the symbols and material culture of other groups may have always been a part of the lives of the pre-colonial ancestors of the indigenous station workers of Old Lamboo (Harrison 2000a: 49-50).

This neglected area of contact or shared history is currently being addressed by a number of archaeologists (Byrne 1998; Harrison 1999, 2000a and 2000b; Baker 1999). In part the impetus for the increased attention being brought to the study of the recent past comes from calls by Aboriginal communities for archaeology to assist in the documentation of Native Title. Increasingly archaeologists are seeking new ways of interrogating the archaeological record of the recent past to assist with the documentation of Native Title rights and interests (eg. Veth 2000; Fullagar and Head 2000; McDonald 2000). Harrison points out that 'the study of post-contact material culture is one of the areas in which archaeology has the potential to make an independent contribution to Native Title in Australia' (Harrison 2000a: 50).

This work should not be confused with other studies into 'contact archaeology' which marginalise the indigenous input through assumptions that the control in the relationship between settlers and Indigenes is vested in the settlers and that indigenous people and their responses to change were dictated by settler attitudes and actions. Many studies focus on the technological and cultural *change* (which is for the most part viewed as negative, an erosion of the true culture or traditional way) rather than the continuities and adaptations in Aboriginal culture (Harrison 2000b).

Like many terms that are taken up by the broader profession and yet never clearly defined, the term 'shared history' is open to misinterpretation or ambiguity. In the context of this thesis it should not be taken to mean that Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians share the same 'understanding' of history in northern Cape York. Indeed they often did not share the same understanding of events as they unfolded. Nor am I proposing a whitewashing of historical events to arrive at a history that downplays violent or contested events. Rather the term is used to acknowledge that both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians were present and participant in events since European invasion of the region and therefore the history is the heritage of both groups. Ownership of this history brings with it a level of responsibility for its documentation, and conservation and I would add a responsibility to review the history to try and understand the understandings of the 'other'. For this reason, and because I place an emphasis on the places that attest to this history, I have tended to use the term 'shared heritage' throughout this document.

2.3 Community-Based Archaeology

The term community-based archaeology, first used by Greer (Greer & Fuary 1987) and then further defined in her PhD thesis (1995), has since been adopted widely by Australian archaeologists seeking to renegotiate relationships with communities whose sites they are investigating (for example Clarke 1995: 13-17; O'Connor, Veth and Carter 1995: 54-56). While many archaeologists are carrying out projects that involve people from the communities whose heritage is being investigated (Davidson, Lovell-Jones and Bancroft 1995), most of these projects do not meet Greer's criteria for a community-based project. In particular, asking permission to carry out research is not the same as involving people in the development of the research question. The bulk of these studies amount to little more than investigations of sites within community lands or projects that engage community representatives as field assistants. Such community participation is worthwhile and has not

always been normal in archaeological research although clearly this is increasing (Davidson, Lovell Jones and Bancroft 1995). In consulting archaeology in most states it is considered normal practice to provide for community participation but this does not in itself address the issues of community control and input into such work, nor has this practice resulted in changes to the archaeological paradigm in heritage assessment. In many cases little has changed in the relationship between the community and the archaeologist. The latter still develops the project objectives and methodologies and assesses the significance of the outcomes. The consultation serves to introduce Aboriginal people to archaeological discourse but does little to induce the archaeologist to embrace or understand indigenous heritage viewpoints.

The rationale for a community-based approach is both *moral* and *pragmatic*. To understand a place or site we have to learn as much as we can about it (this is also a tenet of the ICOMOS Burra Charter). Learning about a place includes understanding how others interpret, use and view the place. In a community-based approach to assessment the social or community values have equal merit to the technical specialist or scientific values. Greer (1995:222-226) outlines a model for community-based archaeology, which is characterised as follows:

- Proposals or projects are developed as a component of research by **both** the researcher and the community.
- Negotiation occurs throughout the project and at a fundamental level. Including the identification
  - o of speakers for country, and
  - o elements within the community which are the basis of contemporary identity
- Excellent communication which involves:
  - o Discussions and negotiations in the language which most empowers the community

- o Discussions and negotiations take place in the domain within which the community is most at ease (e.g village domain).
  - ▪ Decision making is mutual and occurs throughout the project and covers areas such as:
    - o Parameters of ownership and dissemination of cultural property
    - o Community involvement.

Unless the archaeologist concerned is also a member of the community in question, the community-based approach necessarily involves highly developed cross-cultural communication and interpretive skills. However, the problem with cross-cultural interpretative work is that you have to accept from the start that whatever outcome you arrive at, it will not be a precise translation of the meaning and significance of the landscape, place or site to the community. This is in part because as others have observed (Basso 1996: 55; Knapp and Ashmore 1999: 8), the landscapes in question and their meaning or significance are inextricably entwined with the communities or individuals who shape them and who are in turn shaped by them. Their significance then can only be conveyed to the extent that language and comprehension allow. This does not negate the value in attempting such projects as the results may be better than those achieved before and can be refined over time as cross cultural communication improves. For example, at first glance and after some basic historical research one might interpret Somerset (see Chapter 6) as a European or early colonial site, the significance of which lies in the fact that it was an early outpost of the Queensland Colonial Government and that it held a strategic position for the British Imperial Government in the Torres Straits (see also Stevens 1980 and Reynolds 1987). After a little more research including some general discussions with local Aboriginal people one might also conclude that the settlement had an immense impact on local Aboriginal and Islander people and that therefore one could assume that it had significance as an

invasion site to these communities (see Sharp 1992). But if that were all, one would expect to find that there existed a clear 'white /black' dichotomy in the feelings that the site evokes, i.e. sadness and resentment on the part of the Aboriginal community contrasting with the pride in the pioneering spirit on the part of the 'white' community. While it is possible that the latter sums up most of the non-Aboriginal community's regard for the site, the former certainly does not describe how Aboriginal people feel about it. It is only after continuous feedback from Aboriginal people and multiple visits to the site with them that one begins to understand the complex views and beliefs that contribute to the significance that the place holds for Aboriginal people. The occupation of the place prior to the white invasion, the colonial settlement, the long and painful relationship between the community and Frank Jardine in particular, and the ongoing spirit presence in the area, all contribute to the strength of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the place called Somerset.

2.4   Cultural Landscapes

The community-based approach adopted in this research involves a consideration of place, time and the sentient nature of the landscape. Understanding what this meant in terms of the evolving history of the area led me naturally into documenting the cultural landscape of northern Cape York. The cultural landscape is the result of a complex interrelationship between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities and their experiences with place and time.

> The landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group or nation-state (Bender 1993:3).

The term cultural landscape, or similar derivatives (e.g 'social landscape) is being used with increasing frequency by researchers and practitioners in several disciplines including archaeology (Ucko1994; Knapp 1997; Ashmore & Knapp 1999), geography (Clifford 1994:17-29; Cosgrove 1989; Gosden & Head 1994; Head

1993) and anthropology (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Morphy 1995). The term was originally coined by the American geographer Carl Sauer (1925) who 'formulated the concept of a *cultural* landscape fashioned from the *natural* landscape' (in Ashmore & Knapp 1999:3). Since that time however the term has been taken up by a diverse range of disciplinary practitioners some of whom have little knowledge of its application in other disciplines. Hence over time an amorphous range of studies have been undertaken often with little in common with each other.

The growing dissatisfaction on the part of both researchers and the broader community with focussing on isolated sites and objects, and the inability of this approach to address increasingly outspoken community calls for a more contextual approach has led to a range of studies and discussions. Increasingly, researchers and practitioners are using terms like 'landscape archaeology' and 'cultural landscapes' to describe a move <u>away</u> from the collection of representatives samples <u>towards</u> an understanding of the relationship between sites across a temporal or geophysical plane. But does this represent just a change in our language or a change in practice? It is clear that practitioners are using these terms to describe very different approaches.

Cultural landscapes are increasingly becoming a focus for heritage management organizations and authorities. This reflects a growing awareness that the discontinuous site based protective mechanisms entrenched in much state legislation do not succeed in protecting the range of values with which communities are concerned nor in many cases do they succeed in protecting sites or relics. For example in NSW the National Parks and Wildlife Service under the New South Wales, National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, is the agency responsible for the protection of Aboriginal heritage. This responsibility provides for blanket protection of Aboriginal relics. All relics are protected and the onus is on proponents to demonstrate that a site is not significant and seek the consent of the

Director General to damage or destroy sites. All 'relics' are covered in NSW whether on or off park. However, when a landowner at Plumpton NSW appealed against his conviction for blatantly bulldozing a registered Aboriginal quarry site his appeal was upheld on the grounds that while the site and its boundaries were recorded the legislation only protected relics and the NPWS had to prove that 'relics' were destroyed. The court did not necessarily accept the NPWS case that the ridgeline i.e. the stone in its context was a 'relic' and an appeal was lodged contesting any claim that 'relics' had been destroyed (for an account of the case see record of hearing # 50011-3 of 1994 Judge Pearlman in Histollo Pty Ltd vs Director NSW NPWS, judgment dated 15 August 1997). The reality is of course that protecting 'relics' outside their landscape context does not conserve heritage in its broadest sense, nor does it acknowledge community values.

> On the world level UNESCO has moved to include landscapes within the range of monuments and places recognized as having world heritage values. In fact Australia already has landscapes of recognized world heritage value (for example Kakadu in the Northern Territory, and Willandra Lakes and the Blue Mountains in New South Wales) each of these landscapes has multiple values, but strong associative landscape values are one of the basis for their nomination. There are three categories of landscape recognized by UNESCO. These are

1. Clearly identified landscapes designed and created intentionally by man
2. Organically evolved landscapes subdivided into two:
   o Fossil or relic landscapes
   o Continuing landscapes
3. Associative cultural landscapes.

(Cleere 1996:40).

Ashmore and Knapp (1999: 10-12) also identify three landscape types but with a more overt cultural connection than those used by

UNESCO. These are: constructed landscapes, conceptualised landscapes, and ideational landscapes. Furthermore, they go on to identify four interrelated themes, which focus the direction of current archaeological landscape studies. These are *landscape as memory, landscape as identity, landscape as social order*, and *landscape as transformation* (Ashmore & Knapp 1995:10-19).

My understanding of the cultural landscape in northern Cape York is consistent with the model proposed by Baker (1999) in his study of the cultural landscape of the Yanyuwa people in the Northern Territory.

> It (the model)…acknowledges the existence of an indigenous cultural landscape and its interactive relation with the European cultural of the immigrants. The two contemporary cultural landscapes in this model are the result of both groups responding to a new land. The newness of the land to Europeans has long been acknowledged but the fact that the land was in a sense new to Aboriginal people not only because of large –scale environmental changes brought by the arrival of Europeans but also because contact often involved the shifting of Aboriginal people to areas unknown to them.
>
> The common ground in the two contemporary cultural landscapes represents accommodations each groups has made to the other. Both attitudes towards the use of the land, however, remain largely separate (Baker 1999: 21).

In this sense the landscape as described is so geographically and historically broad that it contains layers that can be divided into each of the three categories described by Knapp and Ashmore (1999), but perhaps the most useful is the concept of ideational landscape. It is clear that in the past (as today) the northern Cape York landscape was not characterised by structures and physical works but deep spiritual and emotive connections. In the case of the indigenous population the landscape reflected their spiritual connection to the land with the sentient nature of that landscape evidenced by the spirits, short people and red devils that peopled the inland lakes, rainforests and rocky coastlines. Today despite the history of government relocations and church and government interventions, the landscape is intrinsically linked to group identity

with people characterizing themselves as *salt-water* people, *punja* people or *sandbeach* people and even *mainland* or *island* people.

The European invaders on disembarking at Somerset, Cape York (see Figure 2), had a preconceived idea of the landscape. They had a very clear 'vision' of what the landscape would look like and what it stood for, that bore no relation to actuality. This vision is captured by the claims that it would become 'the Singapore of the north'. The land could be tamed and cultivated and 'civilised', a common theme in the colonisation of the New World and the conquering of its landscapes (see Thomas 1984:267; Hirsch 1995:11). Family fiefdoms could be carved out of the opportunity provided by territorial expansion. The land and its isolation represented opportunity, challenge, adventure and power and despite the lessons of history and the failure to establish a thriving European colony, the landscape of northern Cape York is still seen in these terms by many non-indigenous Australians with the added values of 'wilderness' and 'untamed nature'.

One could construct a story around the landscape of northern Cape York using any of the four themes identified by Knapp and Ashmore. Take a 4WD trip with Aboriginal elders now resident in New Mapoon back to Old Mapoon the community from which they were forcibly removed in 1963 (see Figure 1 and Chapter 7) and one poignantly visits the **landscape as memory** (see also Kuchler 1993). The landscape is mapped and recognized through stories and events and named places that reconnect the old people to an otherwise now unfamiliar country.

Look at the historical landscape established by European invaders who established a new range of places from which indigenous peoples were excluded and one can easily see and describe the **landscape as social order.** For example the colony of Somerset in which the physically transformed cleared and constructed landscape embodied rules about behaviour not only for the

indigenous people both displaced and neighbouring peoples but also for the groups of Europeans. The location of the Barracks on one headland and the magistrate's residence on the opposite one (see Figure 7) demonstrates tangibly the internal segregation of workers and those in positions of authority. These rules and divisions were dramatically and forcibly enforced. For example, when Aboriginal people were seen coming from Albany Island, an area from which Frank Jardine had banned them (he had his sheep and goats kept there), he shot them and commandeered their canoe.

Clearly one can collect evidence of the *landscape as identity* theme and to some extent this has been explored (although perhaps not under this exact title) by other researchers in Cape York (eg. Greer 1995; Sharp 1992; Fuary & Greer 1993).

The theme of *landscape as transformations* is also apparent particularly in the historic period. The degree of government interventionist policy in the area has meant that the physical and social landscape has altered dramatically with changing government policies and artificial demographic shifts. The frequency of such changes within a relatively short time span and in a relatively confined area has meant that people have witnessed dramatic changes in their landscape which have sometimes been reflected in rapid social change. For example the advent of WWII saw the forced evacuation of all white non military people from the area, the internment of Japanese friends and longstanding colleagues (from Thursday Island) and an influx of military personnel (see Chapter 8). These newcomers physically altered the landscape to an extent previously unparalleled creating major roads, airfields and jetties and setting up huge camps, hospitals and workshops. In the process large sections of the indigenous landscape were taken over, creating a new set of rules about access and exclusion.

It can be seen that both the strength and weakness of themes is that they often reflect the approach of the researcher rather than describe the landscape. Perhaps broadly applied the concept of 'nested landscapes' (Bender 1998; Bender et al 1997) can accommodate not only the complexity of linkages within landscapes occupied by one homogenous society but also the situation experienced in Cape York where multiple diverse societies occupy/share the same physical landscape. In such a case each of these groups modifies the landscape, triggering adaptive responses and a relearning of the landscape by the other groups.

2.5 Influences from work experience

In addition to the theoretical influences, which I have just described, my career in heritage management has influenced the direction and development of this research project. Having worked for 19 years spanning each side of the three cornered fence of heritage management i.e.

- as an independent consultant archaeologist;
- developer (a archaeologist with a large mining and electricity generation and transmission organization); and,
- regulator/bureaucrat (senior manager in a state heritage agency).

I have formed strong opinions on some of the issues in heritage management in Australia including:

1. The need to move away from a focus on the protection and management of sites and relics to a more holistic landscape approach as a way of sustainably protecting our heritage;
2. The artificial separation of indigenous and non-indigenous heritage in terms of government regulation and protective mechanisms and the flow on effect that this has had in the relation to how Australians perceive their heritage places;
3. The need to focus more attention on developing methodologies for the effective assessment of social

or community value as a way of celebrating the attachment of people to places and protecting those places and landscapes that are important to communities rather than 'experts';

4. The need to redress the artificial separation of natural and cultural heritage values which has lead to the assessment of natural values being the domain of scientists and which has effectively sidelined indigenous (and other Australians) interests in natural heritage;

5. The dangerous emergence of heritage interpretation as a field in itself, focussing on mechanics of presentation and separated from the fields of enquiry that must inform it (e.g anthropology, social geography, archaeology, history etc).

2.5.1   Heritage Management and the community-based approach

Gibbs (1995:18), although referring directly to the pursuit of historical archaeology, suggests that it behoves the archaeologist to pick and choose techniques and theoretical approaches to achieve a positive outcome in archaeological investigations, rather than to allow one to be hampered by purist notions of schools of thought. Greer (1995) describes a community-based approach to archaeology as 'embracing' other relevant disciplines to achieve the best outcomes for the community and project. These flexible approaches lead directly to heritage management where it is important to choose approaches and methodologies which best address the management needs or questions. In heritage management it is equally important to consider that there are other disciplines that might augment or supplant archaeology as the primary discipline involved in management of a heritage place. It is important to recognise the multitude of disciplines, which contribute practitioners to the area of heritage management, eg. engineering, architecture and history to name only a few. Looking at the reports

and assessments of heritage practitioners it is interesting but perplexing to note that archaeologists think that heritage is an offshoot of archaeology; architects believe that heritage management is conservation architecture and engineers believe it to be the documentation of old machinery in engineering terms etc. This is perhaps one of the negative aspects of the dominance of contract or commercial fields of heritage study, namely that practitioners have a tendency to become locked into formats which are usually aligned with their discipline bias and that they may become streamed or isolated from other heritage fields.

I suggest that most of the work Greer (1995) describes in her thesis is not 'archaeological' *perse*, but rather sits more comfortably under the banner of heritage management. In fact she goes so far as to point out the dangers of archaeological techniques to successful heritage conservation in some circumstances (1995:237). Greer's thesis demonstrates the strong contribution that the discipline of archaeology can bring to heritage management. When Greer, after quoting the definition of social value from the Burra Charter says that 'the community-based approach differs, however in terms of the emphasis given to 'social ' rather than other (eg scientific) values' (Greer 1995: 237) one must read '..differs from other prehistoric or classical archaeological approaches' rather than from other heritage management approaches, as the Burra Charter does not weight the various values.

Of course, Greer's real challenge to archaeology lies in questioning the legitimacy of any non-community-based archaeological work aimed at heritage management (implied), notwithstanding, the difficulties (especially time) and the limitation on the nature of research questions and direction that she acknowledges are inherent in this approach. I would suggest that the same challenge could be made to the heritage industry generally where even though the importance of 'social' or 'cultural value' is recognised, all too often it is the province of 'experts' to determine research

directions and significance, and community consultation is only minimally undertaken.

Until recently, heritage management has been little more than a banner under which a wide range of specialists have gathered but which was characterised by little cross-disciplinary dialogue. It really had few defined ground rules that were readily accepted by all practitioners. Hence archaeologists working in this field tended to continue to behave like archaeologists and see the primary values as archaeological ones, architects carried out heritage studies that were merely inventories of building styles and historians documented the history of places but were often unable to tie that history directly to elements in the landscape or place.

In recent years, however, we have seen heritage management begin to emerge as a field of endeavour in its own right, albeit closely related to other disciplines (eg. Kerr 1990; Ross and McDonald 1996; AHC 1998; Johnson 1998). Significantly, major universities in Australia are responding to the need for a framework for heritage management studies with a range of post graduate degrees, for example Sydney University's Master of the Built Environment and James Cook University's Masters in Cultural Heritage Management. As pointed out by Greer (1995:2), the 1980's saw the emergence of the field of CRM (Cultural Resource Management) and there is no doubt that CRM gave a sort of legitimacy to heritage management which had previously been seen to be the province of volunteers, non-professional groups and the middle class. Largely archaeologically dominated and with a high proportion of female practitioners, CRM introduced the notion that it was a worthwhile pursuit to seek to conserve heritage items in their own right and that this required a concerted and systematic approach. However, the emphasis in this approach was always on material culture or 'things' and did not embrace many of the aspirations or values of the broader community. Further it was never fully embraced by the other disciplines involved in heritage management, particularly those dealing with the heritage of post-

colonial Australia. Because 'things' were seen as independent of people there was also an emphasis on classification and representative samples. It followed then that energy should be put into keeping the 'best' and sacrificing the rest. In recent years there has been a move away from the term CRM which implies that resources can be managed, conserved and collected independent of, but for the general good of the 'people' or 'community', to heritage management which emphasises the integral relationship between people and place and which uses heritage items or places to demonstrate the 'values' that a community holds important.

2.5.2 The notion of non-indigenous heritage vs shared heritage in Australia

In Australia it is common practice for heritage practitioners to speak of non-indigenous heritage, often called *'historic' heritage,* and indigenous heritage, which is often called *Aboriginal heritage.* For example, places nominated for registration on the Register of the National Estate must be divided into natural, historic or indigenous places (see Nominating a Place for the Register of the National Estate

http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/register/furtherinfo/nominations.html). Most other state and local registers are organized along similar lines. Practitioners often specialise in one or the other of the strands. But are these strands real or meaningful? What do they achieve? I would contest that the division is not useful and indeed it is a dangerous and counter-productive practice that results in a narrow, inaccurate and misleading interpretation of Australia's shared heritage.

At one level all Australian heritage is 'Aboriginal heritage', although obviously some places are have greater and some places of lesser significance to Aboriginal people. While the language currently in use recognises that places may have differing values to different groups or individuals and that multiple and layered values are actually the norm, the practice is still for agencies and practitioners

to draw a division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sites. The practice is virtually to regard the terms Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal as <u>site types</u>. This is of course a false division.

In part the division comes about as a bureaucratic convenience, allowing for different budgets and a dedicated amount of money focused on indigenous priorities. However, in practice this division serves conveniently to isolate Aboriginal people from having a say in many so called 'non-indigenous' sites that may nevertheless be important to them. In addition non-indigenous sectors of the community are also disadvantaged as they rarely get the same degree of involvement in decision making in relation to 'their' sites as Aboriginal people do in indigenous heritage. This is because the so-called field of 'historical' or 'non-indigenous heritage' has in the main been less politically fraught. Formal channels are still used in most cases as the only form of consultation. For example in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) NSW, a lead agency in heritage management in Australia, the accepted practice relating to the conservation of a non-indigenous place is to put the Conservation Management Plan on public display for a set period if the item is of State or National significance or locally controversial. For sites assumed to be of lesser significance there is usually no display period at all. Increasingly we are finding that people are demanding more of a say in the long-term management of places, but practice is slow to respond to this demand. It is still the province of the expert to make decisions based on technical knowledge rather than emphasising community control and social significance.

> Of course the whole heritage management industry is thrown wide open if you question the legitimacy of separate fields for non-indigenous or historical heritage. In a country where the indigenous minority live alongside the successfully dominant colonisers there can obviously be no such thing as a non-Aboriginal

site. All sites or places have some meaning or consequence in terms of Aboriginal culture. Significance then becomes a matter of 'values'. Some places, while of high value to non-Aboriginal people, will be of low value to Aboriginal people. By way of example, Fort Denison is a site that has all the accepted attributes of an unambiguous 'non-Aboriginal site'. Fort Denison sits in Sydney Harbour atop a small island rock outcrop, the natural surface of which has been totally removed to enable the construction of the fort. Ostensibly built to protect the colony from external invasion forces, it was built solely by the European labour force provided by the new colony. The values of this place have been documented for its inclusion on a number of registers including the National Estate and World Heritage. The assumption was made that this was a non-indigenous site and the values documented in the statement of significance relate solely to its technical development and do not even reflect the attachment if any that non-Aboriginal Australians have to this place let alone possible attachment by Aboriginal people.

'Fort Denison was built in stages between 1840 and 1862 and is evidence of the design and changes to harbour defence works and tactics of the colony from 1836 to 1866. It reflects the impact of events and changes to personnel associated with the place including George Barney (the designer), George Gipps, James Gordon and William Denison. Fort Denison is mounted on a rock entirely surrounded by the waters of one of the finest harbours in the world. It's tower, battery and terrace afford a superb urban and marine panorama. It is evidence of the use of techniques of masonry fort construction. It is the only one of its type in Australia. Martello towers are normally free standing and the combination of the tower and battery is rare' (Kerr 1986: 46-48 as in the NSW State Heritage Register Listing Item #00985).

What is the social significance of this site? What could this site mean to Aboriginal people? What might it mean in terms of

Australia's shared history? Fort Denison sits like a monolith in the Harbour built on what had been a small oyster strewn rock outcrop, where once Aboriginal people had enjoyed a reliable source of a favourite food as part of a landscape which had provided all their daily needs. Here a military structure now stands, off limits to indigenous Australians until very recently. The guns of the fort were not only trained in the direction of potentially dangerous inbound vessels but also out across the colony, a symbol of the new order and a reminder, visible from many of the Harbour fishing and hunting spots, that life had changed irreversibly! Clearly, evidence of our colonial past can have meaning for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians (McIntyre-Tamwoy 1998)

At the recent 5th World Congress Heritage Interpretation International held in Sydney, I posed the question "Who owns the sites and places like Somerset which remain as testimony to the period of colonisation/invasion?" (McIntyre-Tamwoy 1998). Is it the white community who see these places as evocative of the 'frontier' and 'pioneers' but who now live thousands of miles away or, is it the Aboriginal people of the area whose lives were changed for all time by this brief whimsy in the history of colonial England? Because this debate has never really been elevated to the main stage, Aboriginal people in the Northern Peninsula area like other parts of Australia have had to fight a continual battle to fend off a sporadic but ongoing push by some sectors of the non-indigenous community to interpret these places inappropriately so as to exclude the Aboriginal experience.

This problem is not limited to the heritage of early colonisation of Australia by Europeans. The entire heritage of the northern Cape York area since 1864 has evolved through the interaction of Aboriginal people and their country and their interaction with distinct waves of non-indigenous groups who for the most part did not aspire to permanent residence in the area.

World War II provides us with further examples of this problem of heritage ownership. I would like to share two anecdotes that illustrate how heritage administrators and bureaucrats view this.

While I was working at Injinoo several years ago, co-ordinating training programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait rangers, I took a telephone call from a retired brigadier who wanted to know who he could speak to about arrangements for a trip by the Army to salvage a Beaufighter which had crashed in the area during World War II [It is perhaps relevant here to note that the area was one of strategic importance for a while during the war and that the Coral Sea air battles were supported from here as well as attacks over New Guinea]. The brigadier seemed somewhat taken aback that I knew about the plane and was familiar with the crash site. He went on to explain that they were going to use the plane to 'do up' one in Canberra that was being restored for display.

I told the man that he would need to speak to Robinson Salee the Council Clerk of the Aboriginal community, but I expressed the opinion that I did not think that people would allow the plane to be removed for that purpose. The brigadier was outraged. He demanded of me, what right did they [Aboriginal people] have to hold such opinions? He bellowed that if it wasn't for 'us' they would have been over run and would all have slant eyes, speak Japanese and eat rice!

At that point I handed the telephone over to Robbie who answered it saying " Hello my Name is Robinson Salee, I have slant eyes, I eat rice three meals a day, I can't speak Japanese but I can find an uncle who can...What can I do for you?' (pers comm. R.Salee 1990). Needless to say the brigadier did not get his plane.

Clearly this man was surprised to find that the Aboriginal community saw as 'theirs' an item of heritage that he viewed as 'his'. More incomprehensible to him was their complete rejection of

his planned way of conserving and interpreting that heritage. And this was aside from his ethnocentric assumption that a defined boundary exists between Australia and Asia and his ignorance of the long history of Japanese pearling in the area.

This division of heritage into 'white' and 'black' baskets is deeply entrenched as this second anecdote illustrates. I was speaking to other heritage professionals who worked in the tropics, immediately following a seminar in which, as part of a larger group, we had been discussing at length the need for consultation with Aboriginal people regarding their heritage and more flexibility in bureaucratic requirements to cater for Aboriginal management preferences. All members of the group had agreed that consultation with Aboriginal communities was absolutely essential for any heritage work being undertaken in relation to indigenous heritage. During a conversation about the Australian Heritage Commission and the Register of the National Estate one person remarked that recently they had completed a list of all World War II sites in Cape York and the Torres Strait for the Australian Heritage Commission. The work had been done in a very rapid time frame. I expressed surprise that Aboriginal people had agreed to this so readily as my experience in the area had revealed that there was a lack of information in the communities relating to the implications of listing on the Register of the National Estate and a general suspicion directed towards the whole process of providing information and listing places on government registers. I therefore asked how they had been consulted. The person was surprised at my questions and replied that there was no requirement to consult as they were only dealing with World War II sites and not Aboriginal sites. Most of the sites referred to are on Aboriginal land, the events that these sites commemorate impacted on Aboriginal lives and the day to day management of these sites is in Aboriginal control, but because they are World War II sites (not an indigenous category in Commonwealth or State inventories) Aborigines need not be consulted. One can, I think, often detect an element of relief that

this means project costs can be kept down and processes speeded up, which is always the case when people are excluded from the equation!

The problem of assumed values generated by the clumsy division of sites and places into indigenous and non-indigenous is central to my thesis as most of the places discussed are regarded by authorities and many practitioners as non-indigenous or 'white sites' when clearly the Aboriginal community sees them as integral to their cultural heritage. I discussed this topic in a paper presented to the 5th World Congress on Heritage Interpretation (McIntyre-Tamwoy 1998). It was clear from the discussion at the conference that people do not question this false division enough. While everyone saw it as ridiculous if not outrageous that practitioners and governments did not consult long and hard with Aboriginal people over these sites in a place like Cape York, they could not really make the jump into the urban environment (which is where the vast bulk of historical heritage work is practised). One delegate commented that they regularly included the whole story in museum displays and that this was now general practice. However, when asked to clarify what was meant by 'the whole story' it became clear that the place or historical interpretation followed a Western time-line approach with the Aboriginal significance being quarantined to the past. Byrne (1997) has discussed the relegation of Aboriginal heritage to the deep past by archaeologists and heritage managers as a 'structure for forgetting' the events and consequences of the colonial invasion for Aboriginal people.

2.5.3 Celebrating *attachment* and studies into social value

Although I had already conceived the format of this thesis and in fact had written a substantial segment of it, I was encouraged in this endeavour after a friend introduced me to the work of Janet Spector. In her book '*What this awl means'*, Spector (1993) outlines her growing dissatisfaction with processual archaeology and its language, which avoided emotion and attachment to people. For

Spector (1993:13) the day finally arrived when she was forced to acknowledge that 'I no longer wanted to investigate the archaeology of the Indian people unless their perspectives and voices were incorporated into the work'.

To come across another archaeologist who had struggled with the same dissatisfaction with the discipline and who had documented this in what has become a fairly widely accepted work was enough to reaffirm me in my purpose. Like Spector, I had struggled with various ways of writing this thesis and for some time I had two parallel versions of the same work. One in the traditional dry third person and this one. I hope that this final version conveys the complexities of the history of the area, which are a result of the way in which 'history' is a very real part of the contemporary in northern Cape York. It is difficult to know the people in the communities mentioned in this thesis and still manage to describe them in a dispassionate way. Even the individuals in the historic record come to life as one tries to imagine them living out their lives in this familiar and sentient landscape.

There is a growing literature in heritage management that talks about 'attachment to place' as a more effective way of describing social or community values. This includes but is not limited to concepts of home (Read 1996; Massey 1992) and belonging (Read 1996; Read 2000). The approach adopted in this thesis and reflected in its structure emphasises this attachment or social significance by linking people with place and beliefs. Hence the red devils and short people introduce events and history in a *stage whisper* that emphasises contemporary values. This technique was discussed with community elders who endorsed the approach as an appropriate way of recognizing and conveying the sentient nature of the landscape. The thoughts and actions ascribed to the red devils, short people and spirits reflect the stories and description from local indigenous people but are my words. This technique possibly owes something to the folklorist tradition of

repeopling the landscape through stories and anecdotes (Ryden 1993; Glassie 1982).

2.5.4 The relationship between natural and cultural values

Working within a nature conservation agency and often representing that organization on working parties with green group representatives and other stakeholders it has become increasingly clear that the separation of natural and cultural values is leading governments increasingly into community conflict despite their best effort to address important issues in nature conservation such as 'biodiversity'.

The increasing emphasis on scientific analysis to reach quantifiable targets and conservation goals is creating a widening gulf between community aspirations and relationships with the environment and government management. This becomes particularly important in places such as northern Cape York where communities do not have access to the specialist language and knowledge of scientists and who quickly become disenfranchised in conservation negotiations and decision-making. This is especially the case in relation to wilderness, conservation and biological resources management.

2.5.5 Heritage Interpretation

The preceding sections in this chapter have addressed issues essential to understanding and communicating heritage. In other words, we have to learn about a place, event or heritage item to be able to interpret it but the way we go about that learning or the disciplines via which we approach our understanding of the place, event or heritage item to a large extent dictates what we 'learn' and therefore what we understand!

There is a growing literature in the field known as interpretation. However, a large proportion of the literature on interpretation focuses on the physical aspects of the presentation of information, for example, how to engage the public through innovative

information products, hands on experiences and visual displays (for example Lunn 1988; Uzzell 1989; Rabinowitz 1994; Luxemberg 1994). Here, however, I have been exploring interpretation in terms of the <u>information that is being presented</u>. This is how we interpret the meaning of a place, object or item, in effect our understanding of history and heritage values. Freeman Tilden, often seen as the father of 'interpretation' stresses the fundamental link between interpretation and research.

> ...Interpretation is a growth whose effectiveness depends upon a regular nourishment by well directed and discriminating research… (Tilden 1957:5).

The importance of research as the cornerstone of interpretation cannot be overlooked. However, the construction of heritage in Australia, or more importantly, our interpretation of the concept of heritage, to a large extent limits the effectiveness of much of the research undertaken.

In sorting through the growing literature on 'Interpretation' it is clear that much of it focuses on the *presentation* or the *techniques* for communicating the meaning of heritage rather than that meaning itself. Uzzell (1989:5) warns that there is a very real risk that "the medium will become the message" and the heritage experience will be more about the technological wizardry than about the place.

Contrary to the view of an immediate and complete understanding of a place via an interpretative work, a successful outcome would be one where the community and visitors are so engaged by the process leading to the development of the interpretation that they continue to come forward with insights and relevant information. They should not be overwhelmed by the supposed 'reality' of the interpretative work, whether it is a display or a document, and they should feel confident to challenge that interpretation.

2.6   Conclusion

In summary then while I have been strongly influenced in my approach by a background and training in archaeology, the dominant influence on this thesis has been the emerging discipline of heritage management and a conviction that unless we can understand the cultural landscape of Cape York and its evolution it is impossible to achieve effective management and conservation outcomes.

Far from building and managing inventories of places and objects identified by other disciplines, the field of heritage management is now tackling some of the difficult questions around what we as a society are conserving, as well as how and for whom. An even bigger question is: What is heritage, and how does one conserve anything so inherently dynamic?

One of the keys to promoting the conservation of heritage is of course interpretation. But the physical aspects of interpretation or techniques for engaging the public dominate the heritage interpretation literature. It rarely questions the process leading up to the decision to conserve and for the most part it does not get involved in documenting, measuring or assessing social significance. This is evidenced by the way in which the false division between Aboriginal and historic sites is not questioned for most heritage places in Australia unless they fall into the accepted overlap category of missions, massacre sites or other accepted so-called 'contact' sites.

This thesis has been so long in the birthing that I have at times determined to set it aside assuming that the need for such a discussion must surely be past. The emerging heritage discourse which focuses on the cultural landscape and values of places rather than sites suggests that practitioners and researchers are already focusing more on the relationship between people and place and the importance of places and their interpretations in supporting or undermining the belief systems of communities,

community values and heritage principles (AHC 1998; Australian Committee for IUCN 1998). However, on reflection and despite the rhetoric, which appears often to be limited to the adoption of the new language into the titles of papers, little has changed in the actual practice of heritage management.

One cannot underestimate both the Australian Commonwealth and state governments' roles in this regard. The Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) now subsumed within Environment Australia, has for many years augmented state funding for heritage management and as such has played a key role in the shaping of heritage management across the country through funding priorities and directions. But the cultural landscape as promoted by the Commonwealth is a sterile one, the language more important than the practice. Little has changed in the nature of the data collected or the manner by which it is collected.

Finally the potential for heritage places, if researched and well interpreted, to enhance cross-cultural understanding is immense. At present tens of thousands of tourists each year visit the places described in the following chapters of this thesis and yet little information is available for them regarding the significance of these places to Aboriginal people. In many cases the only information is misinformation that excludes Aboriginal values or frankly is racist.

The recent history of this area is complex and places have the power, if interpreted appropriately, to evoke understanding. Sometimes individual places can in themselves tell a powerful story operating as symbols of broader concepts, themes and events. For example Somerset has become to some extent a symbol of European invasion and the loss of a pre-settler traditional lifestyle. The latter has been romanticised similar to the way that non-indigenous Australians have romanticised the 'pioneer' or frontier experience. However, the best understanding of community, heritage and identity in northern Cape York can be gained from a

cultural landscape approach which acknowledges the interconnection of spirituality and land and sees the human experience and events woven as threads into this rich tapestry.

If one accepts that despite the best intentions and research the story produced is not quite the truth then one can through sound interpretative practice develop a dialogue both within communities and between communities and other stakeholders, which would in turn generate new information and a uniting sense of shared heritage. In the following chapters I have set myself the ambitious task of commencing this dialogue and describing this cultural landscape.

Chapter 3
PREVIOUS STUDIES IN THE AREA

3.1 The range of studies

There have been a number of previous studies conducted in the broad geographic area covered by this current research. These can be grouped broadly into the following categories, although some do cross boundaries between disciplines to some extent.

- Historical Research
- Archaeological Research
- Anthropological Research
- Linguistic Studies
- Natural Heritage and Resource Studies

3.1.1 Historical research

Many small historical articles have appeared from time-to-time relating to Cape York (e.g Farnfield 1973, 1974 and 1975; Bayton 1965). However, only a couple of major research projects have been undertaken which have a direct bearing on this current research. Adrian Stevens carried out research into the failed settlement of Somerset for his honours thesis (Stevens 1980) and Steven Mullins has undertaken historical research into Frank Jardine that has direct relevance to this project (Mullins 1982). He has also written a general history of the initial contact period for the Torres Strait (1995).

Elizabeth Osborne has carried out research for her BA Hons (1990) and PhD (1995) into the role and experiences of women in the region, although most specifically the Torres Strait during World War II.

Schoolteachers and amateur historians, often collect information for use in education and tourism, and have undertaken other less ambitious research projects throughout the Torres Strait and northern Cape York For example the brief histories of Thursday Island State School (1986) and Lockhart River State School (Anderson 1987).

3.1.2 Archaeological research
Relatively little archaeological research has been undertaken on mainland Cape York and the near off shore islands.

David Moore carried out research in the northern Cape York area in the 1960's. His Diploma of Anthropology thesis '*The tribes at Cape York: a reconstruction of their way of life from the literature and a consideration of its relevance to the archaeology of the area'* (Moore 1965), provides a good introduction to the area and particularly the period of early Aboriginal and European contact. This work was later published (Moore 1979) and his book *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York* has become a popular starting point for people interested in learning more about the area.

While Moore sees the strong relationship between the Kaurareg and the mainland tribes he still sees an artificial barrier of sorts between Torres Strait and mainland culture that begins with the coastline. He observes

> It seems that the lives of the Cape York Tribes had already been considerably disrupted by influences from the Torres Straits by the time of first European contact, but the fact that Islanders had not colonized any part of the mainland does not necessarily imply that the contact period between the two people was only of recent occurrence (Moore 1965:127).

It is interesting to note the use of the word disruption here and also the implication that there was a discernible period when these peoples were not in contact with each other. The implication is that somehow the Aboriginal culture of the area has lost 'integrity' through the disruption caused by a more dominant culture. This is a minor point in Moore's work but a thread which runs through a lot of

research undertaken in the area and which belies the complexity of the interrelationship between the mainland and Torres Strait peoples.

Archaeological investigation in the western Cape York area has largely focussed on the large shell mounds located near Weipa and Aurukun (Bailey 1977; Cribb 1986a, 1986b, 1996; Cribb, Walmbeng, Wolmby and Taisman 1988). These sites are of particular interest to archaeologists because they represent a sophisticated form of ecosystem management. The site type described however is confined to this western portion of the Cape York Peninsula. Other sites identified in archaeological and anthropological surveys in the area (Sutton and Cribb 1988) which do occur generally throughout northern Cape York (e.g Hynes and Chase 1982) include wet season occupation campsites along sand ridges behind beaches. Many of these sites exhibit evidence of domiculture (Bailey 1977; Cribb 1996:171) contributing to evidence of a rich and complex economic and social system prior to European invasion into the area. The documentation of the archaeological features of these sites appears to have started out as 'pure' archaeological surveys and database generation but close relationships with the local communities and custodians and partnerships with anthropologists and others working in the area have resulted in the incorporation of ethnographic data and indigenous explanations for archaeological phenomenon. For example Cribb provided the following background support his theory of a managed ecosystem in the area:

> Plant communities maintained by generations of human management would take many years, perhaps centuries, to return to a 'wild ' state once that management ceases. In Aurukun beliefs about 'looking after' country represent a pervasive cultural theme. Such beliefs always involved, in addition to rituals, practical measures such as controlled burning and clearing. Moreover some of the rituals are intended to make access easier or increase the availability of local resources. There is a strong belief that what causes country to go 'wild' is the prolonged absence of human smell and that the presence of human smell (i.e. human occupation) will cause it to 'go down again
>
> (Cribb 1996:152).

Morrison (2000) has recently waded into the ongoing discussions regarding the Weipa shell mounds, reappraising past assessments and available data and reviewing the conflicting arguments relating to their formation and use from a Marxist perspective. He argues that current cultural ecological explanations for the mounds suffer from a highly selective and simplistic use of ethnographic data.

In her PhD thesis Greer (1995) has focused her case study on the Injinoo Aboriginal community. In critiquing models of heritage management she questions the way in which heritage has been defined up until that time, develops a model for community based archaeology and provides guidelines and principles for others seeking to carry out such work (see also 2.3 for a summary of the community based archaeology model). She concludes that:

> In northern Cape York, archaeological sites are significant in terms of contemporary cosmology through the stories and beliefs and practices that are associated with them…. these memories stories, beliefs, practices and places provide the shape and form of the 'cultural landscape'. Moreover, it can be seen that this cultural landscape is the framework upon which contemporary notions of cultural identity are constructed. This view of sites and landscapes is in contrast with scientific models of scientific assessment and heritage management that focus on the more distant past.
>
> (Greer 1995:Abstract)

While in general there is close agreement between Greer's approach and that adopted in this thesis it is likely that some of the conflicts she sees between contemporary heritage management, archaeological investigation and assessment and the community based approach stem in part from her understanding that there is or was an homogenous heritage management approach across all aspects of Australian heritage and that this was the one adopted by those working with Aboriginal heritage (see 2.5.2 for discussion of the notion of indigenous/non-indigenous heritage). She points out that social value is defined and accommodated in the *Burra* Charter (1988: Articles 1.5 & 2.5) but in *practice* emphasis is given to the scientific values. There is of course no weighting given to the consideration of different values in the *Burra* Charter in either the

current version of the document (Australia ICOMOS 1999) or the version Greer discusses which preceded it. The corresponding Articles in the new document to those cited by Greer are Articles 1.2 and Article 2 (1999). Article 5.1 stipulates that 'Conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others' (Australia ICOMOS 1999).

There is obvious common ground between Greer's research and this research project. There are two main areas of commonality. The first is working with Injinoo Aboriginal Community. The experience of working with this community was the watershed for Greer in confronting issues of archaeological research and methodologies in relation to Aboriginal heritage. Similarly my understanding of Aboriginal cosmology and heritage in northern Cape York are largely learnt from my experiences and relationships with the Injinoo community and its members.

The second is the adoption of a community–based approach to archaeology and heritage management. As discussed in section 2.3 this term was first used by Greer (Greer and Fuary 1987) to describe her changed approach to working with the Injinoo Community. While not setting out to implement Greer's model (which was not fully described until 1995) clearly the approach adopted in my own research is a community-based approach. This approach is the product of close community involvement with Injinoo and other communities particularly Mapoon, Napranum and the Kaurareg of Horne Island. Therefore the outcomes of this research endorse the principles of community-based archaeology as outlined in (Greer 1995).

3.1.3   Anthropological research

It is a well worn anecdote in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York, that when a white person walks into

a beer canteen and sits down for a drink an indigenous person turns to them and says 'do not you want to know about my culture?'

There has been a long history of anthropological work in the area (Thomson 1933, 1934a, 1934b, 1935, 1939, 1956, 1957, 1966, 1972; McConnell 1936, 1940; Chase 1980; Sutton 1978, 1988, 1995, Sutton *et al* 1990; Taylor 1984; Von Sturmer 1978; Martin 1993; Fuary & Greer 1993). While Thomson and McConnell roamed broadly across the area focussing on observations of practice and social organization (McConnell 1939; 1940; Thomson 1935) and the analysis of specific myths (McConnell 1936, 1940; Thomson 1934,1956, 1957); Sutton (1978), von Sturmer (1978), Chase (1980), Taylor (1984) and Martin (1993) have each carried out major research in Northern Cape York for their doctoral theses. Their research however has concentrated on the more isolated (and arguably more homogenous) communities to the south of the area known as the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA). In the main these anthropologists have tended to maintain close links with the communities that were the subject of their initial research and have continued to conduct targeted research in these communities often at the request of the communities themselves. (Altman and Taylor 1992, 1996; Sutton 1995, 1996; Martin 1981, 1997; Martin & Taylor 1995; Martin & Finlayson 1996). Fuary (Fuary and Greer 1993) is the only anthropologist to have carried out a specific project in Injinoo and that was in conjunction with an archaeologist. That project, conducted at the community's request, helped to establish baseline information for Injinoo families to document their genealogies and connection to land.

3.1.4   Linguistic studies

Similarly a range of linguists have carried out research over the years (Crowley 1980; Harper 1996; Laade 1965; Sutton 1976) but most have focussed on the traditional Aboriginal languages. Most relevant to this project has been the work undertaken by Shnukal (1988, 1995, 1996) in documenting Torres Strait Creole of which a

version, Cape York Creole (also known as *Blaikman* or *Broken*), is spoken throughout northern Cape York. The orthography developed by Shnukal (with provision for local variations) is used as the basis for writing Cape York Creole in this thesis.

3.1.5   Natural and resource studies*.*

A series of natural resource studies have been undertaken in northern Cape York for a range of projects. Many studies have been carried out in relation to the assessment of environmental impacts and the rehabilitation to mining lands (for example Cameron 1981; Comalco 1987; Gunners 1984; Foster 1985). Studies have also been undertaken by students and researchers with ecological and conservation interests (for example see Stanton 1976; Lesslie, Abrahams and Maslen 1992). Environmental studies or natural resources studies have been undertaken in both the marine (Mulrennan 1993; Smyth 1993) and terrestrial environments of northern Cape York Peninsula. In recent years a range of studies have been undertaken as part of the Cape York Land Use Study (CYPLUS). Few of the studies carried out into the natural values of Cape York have focussed on Indigenous knowledge of or interests in the natural environment or resource under study but there have been some attempts at this (see Smyth 1993; 1994; Asafu-Adjaye 1994; Cordell 1994; Mulrennan 1993).

3.2   How this research differs

In this thesis I draw on these previous studies especially Greer (1995), McConnell (1939, 1940), Thomson (1935) and the CYPLUS studies (Cordell ed1994). I have had the benefit of a snapshot view of each of the Northern Cape York communities through the work of anthropologists who have worked there (Sutton 1978, Chase 1980, Taylor 1984 and Von Sturmer 1978) and this has helped me to understand the complexities, similarities and differences of these communities. These works provided initial insights into both the degree of transformation and of continuity in Aboriginal communities in Cape York since European invasion, the

introduction of Christianity and subsequent government interventionist policies (see for instance Taylor 1984 and Chase 1980).

However most of this information has provided a background framework against which I have constructed a history of the early contact period in the region. I have relied heavily on oral testimony from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in particular from Injinoo, New Mapoon, Napranum and Bamaga, to provide insights into that history and the significances of key places relating to it. I have also relied heavily on archival records particularly those held in State Archives in Queensland and New South Wales as well as those in the Australian War Memorial, Commonwealth Archives and Public Records Office (England). The Uniting Church allowed generous access to their archives held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

I have used this information to explore the history of northern Cape York since the period of European invasion, to identify key places and types of places evidencing that history, and to describe and understand the importance of these places to contemporary communities and their identity. The combination of both oral and archival testimony has enabled me to construct a **shared heritage** of the region. Places of significance to northern Cape York communities have been used to illustrate the history of the region and the ability of these places to present this history to tourists and future generations of Cape York residents is also explored. From this work I believe that not only can communities and government heritage authorities find a way forward in the conservation and interpretation of heritage places in Cape York but also other communities and researchers will be able to gain some guidance as to the types of places that may be of significance to people in Cape York.

While conforming to Greer's model for a community based heritage project, I draw more broadly on a wider field of natural and cultural heritage management and I present the information relating to these places and history in terms of a complex cultural landscape drawing on a growing anthropological and archaeological literature relating to cultural landscapes and the notions of place, space and time.

Finally, unlike other researchers in the area, I discuss at some length the heritage management issues relating to specific places and types of places including their conservation and interpretation, and the challenges facing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities now managing them. In doing this I draw on my experience in heritage management and the development of heritage policy and regulation in NSW.

Chapter 4

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE, TIME AND PLACE IN NORTHERN CAPE YORK

4.1   Introduction

Whereas Chapter 2 discussed and overviewed the theoretical influences, which have a bearing on this research, and chapter 3 provided a brief overview of the nature and scope of relevant disciplinary work previously undertaken in the research area, this chapter explores the central concepts that underpin any discussion of the cultural landscape in northern Cape York. There are three concepts, which are fundamental to an understanding of this thesis. These are the concepts of:

- language (*langus*[2] and *Broken*[3]) as empowerment;
- Cape York Aboriginal 'time' (*taim*[4]); and,
- 'place' (*ples*[5]).

Because concepts of language, time and place form the basis of every person's worldview they are easily taken for granted. Therefore, if we are to achieve any understanding it is important to explore just how different the Western worldview of time and place might be from that of Aboriginal people in Cape York.

4.2   Language as Empowerment

To understand the relationship between people and the land and their reactions, at times even nervousness and fear of certain parts of the landscape, one needs to understand that language is a powerful tool in managing a sentient landscape. *Langus* is the Creole term for traditional languages in northern Cape York and the Torres Strait. Due to the impact of missionary and later government policies regarding forced adoption of the English language on the mainland, there are relatively few fluent Aboriginal language speakers in the area from the tip of Cape York to Old Mapoon. This

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[2] Cape York and Torres Strait Creole refers to a traditional language.
[3] Cape York & Torres Strait Creole for the Creole language sometimes also referred to as *blaikman.*
[4] Cape York & Torres Strait Creole for the English 'Time'. Spelling after Shnukal 1988.
[5] Cape York & Torres Strait Creole for the English 'Place'. Spelling after Shnukal 1988.

is very different to other Cape York Aboriginal communities such as Aurukun to the south and those of Torres Strait to the north where most people have retained fluency in their traditional language.

In 1990 when I enrolled my son in the local primary school at Bamaga, I was informed by an earnest young (non-indigenous) teacher that they were 'concentrating on developing language skills in the children as without them they could not conceptualise' (pers comm. name withheld). I pointed out that the children in the class were already fluent in at least one and often two languages other than English by the time that they came to school and that undoubtedly they were adept at 'conceptualising' judging from their conversations. The problem was that he could not understand them. At that time it was still compulsory for the students to speak English exclusively when at school and children would be chastised if caught speaking *Broken* in the playground. This has changed in recent years and some language classes are conducted in the school and children are no longer punished for speaking in *Broken.* Indeed amongst education professionals there is a growing literature on Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal English and creoles and the educational issues associated with language (see for example Partington 1998; Malcolm 1998; Harkins 1994; Harris 1990) so that it is becoming recognised that:

> The exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait languages and Aboriginal English from classroom communication is a symbolic exclusion of the identity and perspectives of those who speak them. It packages education as a one-way process in which only one culture and way of thinking are legitimised. It forces a choice upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, either to suspend or deny their identity, or to accept the status of 'outsiders' in the education system (Malcolm1998:131).

The anecdote above illustrates the Eurocentric view of the teacher and the way in which people have been stripped of their language in the region over the past 130 years since the initial attempts at education by missionaries. This has significant implications in terms of day-to-day negotiation of dangerous country. To get around this problem many people know key language phrases that

are used to 'call out' and introduce themselves to the spirits. Some places however are too dangerous and cannot be safely entered without a language speaker who can *soke tok* (literally chuck or throw out an introduction or call out an introduction to the spirits, for examples see also Greer 1995: 131; Strang 1997: 211).

While it is now understood by linguists and other researchers that Aboriginal Creoles are a legitimate first language of many Aboriginal people around Australia, this is not yet broadly understood or accepted by the general public. Many non-indigenous people consider *Broken* to be simply bad English. This is sometimes exacerbated by the politeness of Aboriginal people who switch to English when talking to white Australians. As the English is often flawed the non-indigenous person often makes the mistake of assuming that this is *'Broken'* and their ability to understand leads them to dismiss Broken as 'bad' English. Any researcher in Cape York could fall into this trap. While most people in Cape York Communities are multi-lingual and can speak English with varying degrees of fluency, their first language is either an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or Broken. Broken is the lingua franca of the area and the only language that everybody is fluent in (except for Aurukun where the primary language is Wik Munkan but even here people can speak and understand Cape York Creole). This means that if a researcher is asking questions which go to the complexity of the local cosmology, custom, etc then they will not be able to operate in English, as very few people will have that degree of fluency.

When government officials and others conduct meetings in English it is quite common for people to contribute little to the discussion and they may even give the impression that they are in agreement. However it is only after the meeting that people begin to discuss amongst themselves the issues that concern them and try to clarify matters they did not understand. This has led to a tendency for communities to employ 'white' advisers or interlocutors to deal with

outsiders particularly government authorities. For example one only has to look at the range of staff in the peak indigenous representative bodies such as the Cape York Land Council or the number of Aboriginal community councils with white staff members. Even excluding those cases where the employee has a specific qualification other than language, which is essential to the position, there are a lot of non- indigenous employees in these organizations who carry out a lot of the direct interaction with government departments and others. Obviously this is a strategy employed by Aboriginal people to deal with situations where communities are disempowered by the language used in negotiations and discussions.

Clearly then in Cape York, fluency in *Broken* or a relevant community language such as *Wik Munkan* in Aurukun, is a prerequisite for understanding community aspirations and complex and layered meanings in oral testimony. It is also essential in feeding back research results and enabling informed consent or endorsement to research.

4.3   The Concept of Taim (Time)

Cross-cultural studies of the concept of time in different communities suggest that understanding and suggestions of time are both divergent and embodied in social and cultural practice (Gell 1992; Owen Hughes and Troutmann 1995). Understanding that time is not linear in Aboriginal communities in northern Cape York is a pre-requisite to understanding the simultaneous occurrence of past and present which is a standard characteristic of a stori *ples.*

> Time is the crucial element in all human activities and in order to understand it we do not need more refined means of measurement but concepts which can catch temporality and change. Humans are characterised by particular ways of creating and binding time (Gosden 1994:7).

The story of Wundrapine (see sub-section 4.3.1) illustrates the way in which Cape York people conceptualise time. Time is not a

straight linear continuum as we might see it, although in many parts of the Torres Strait and Northern Cape York there are words which might suggest that this was the case. For example time is often described as *diskaintaim* (now); *pastaim* (earlier as in my childhood or father and grandfather's time); *bipotaim* (before living memory). Occasionally people also use the term *bufor deiz.* This is a colloquial expression whose meaning depends largely on the context in which it is used. For instance if a man was jealous of his girlfriend's suspected relationship with an old boyfriend she might respond by telling not to be silly that was *bufor deiz.* The time frame is indistinct and the expression merely used to express finality and that things were in the past. The relationship referred to could have been recent as last week or alternatively it might have finished years ago. Alternatively an old man might complain that things were better in the *bufor deiz.* The expression can only be taken to refer to past behaviour or a way of life no longer practised and cannot be interpreted to indicate a standard time period. Strang found a similar division of major units of time in Kowanyama, an Aboriginal community on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula to the southwest of my study area. 'In Kunjen there are words for 'today', *Ugnall,* and for 'grandfather's time' or 'before Church time', *Ong*, but 'before that' was the Dreamtime' (1997:248). In the case of northern Cape York the pan Australian contemporary term 'Dreamtime' is referred to as *Bipotaim* which literally translate into English as 'before time'. Chase also records similar time categories *kuma* - the span of events witnessed by the speakers, *anthantnama* –a long time ago,and *yilamu* – the creation period. *Kuma* is separated from *anthantnama* by the advent of the white invaders (Chase 1989: 173). Similarly, throughout Aboriginal Australia time is divided into units that represent themes or socio-cultural practices rather than a linear or chronological sequence (for example see Cribbin 1984; Baker 1999; Kimberly Language Resource Centre 1996).

The years and experience of World War II sits uneasily between *pastaim* and *diskaintaim.* It is seen as separate to the mission days and the first days of European invasion but is not familiar to enough people alive today to be regarded as *diskaintaim.* As a result I have dealt with it here as a category of time and places within *pastaim.* It should be noted that on the Torres Strait Islands this situation might be very different as the social impact of the war was much greater. In some cases people were removed from some islands (e.g Horn Island and Thursday Island) that became the exclusive province of the armed forces. In addition more people served directly in the war as part of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Brigade than did on the mainland.

These parcels of time are not as strictly quarantined as in European concepts and often stories will contain elements of each. This has major implications for the interpretation of sites and places. In Western societies the site is often seen and interpreted as a snapshot in time. The site is nearly always significant because it can be seen as indicative of an important period or person or activity in time. The site may indeed have been added to over time, but fabric can usually be pinpointed through architectural or archaeological methods to a particular time. Therefore, one object or a piece of fabric is evidence of one point in time and that time only. For example a drain built in 1840 is always evidence of what happened then. While new fabric might be added for repairs say in 1900, that new fabric can be then dated to 1900 and is evidence only of activities carried out on the drain in 1900. In the presentation and interpretation of sites and places to the public it is common for the evolution of landscapes and complex sites to be graphically represented by a time line. This device is borrowed directly from natural evolutionary theory and reflects a widespread understanding of time in Western societies. In this context, to most non-Aboriginal Australians, all pre-1788 Aboriginal sites are in a prehistoric time category. This represents a fundamental difference

in the way sites may be interpreted by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Most *bipotaim* sites in Cape York while formed in a time beyond human memory, continue to be occupied by the spirits of the owners. Often these spirits co-exist with contemporary users and there are particular restrictions or activities designed to accommodate these multiple occupants/users. A site may therefore be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways, the true relationship between people and place being set in a multifaceted time frame. So in contrast to the interpretation of the drain which used Western concepts of linear time, material from a hearth on a campsite in northern Cape York constructed in say 500BP is evidence of activity carried out by people living at that time but may also be evidence of the continued presence and occupation of the spirits of those people. So while the archaeologist might point out that the hearth is evidence of past use that is 500 years ago, an elder or custodian might accept this, but point out that it is evidence of the activity of spirits in the present and proof that the site is occupied. Gosden has examined the issue of time more generally and he points out that:

> only recently has the problem of bringing together measured time and human time been discussed within archaeology. Such discussion has raised the problem of how far the abstract measured sequences of radiometric time will allow us to understand the changing rythms of social life and to investigate in the past the point Durkheim made in the present about the social creation of time (Gosden 1994:7).

The potential differences between *measured* time and *human* time are relevant to an understanding of Aboriginal attitudes towards heritage and places in northern Cape York.

For many Europeans the concept of linear time is so well entrenched as to form a truth in our understanding of the operation of the world and life within it. Time passes in measurable segments of seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years and in this way we can understand the creation of the universe and all life

within it. We have expressions which reflect this measured passing of time in our everyday language for example future events **unfold** past events **recede.** Past events and people are always firmly fixed in the past, and are unrelated to future events except in that we can, if so inclined, learn lessons from them. In this way we see socially significant places of the present become historical places or 'heritage' as time passes (Byrne 1993:79). This is contrasted in Cape York by a much looser partitioning of time. The past is often occurring simultaneously with the present. For example the *old people* or deceased past occupiers of a campsite may be present and occupying the same space as people camping today. The people and events of the past can actively shape events in the present. So for instance if a stretch of road becomes notorious as a place where many accidents occur this may be explained as being because the road is too close to a graveyard of the old people despite no foreknowledge of such a site. The past is interpreted or identified by its visible impact on the present.

4.4 The Concept of Ples (Place)

Upitis states that for her '... interpreting cultural sites is about understanding people- their needs, values and aspirations, and understanding how people see their place within the environment' (1988:3). Understanding how people see their place within the environment (which I would redefine as the cultural landscape) is central to this thesis. When asked to describe their place in the environment, Aboriginal people in northern Cape York almost invariably refer to *ples* and one's behaviour in relation to that *ples*. In other words, culture is described by insiders in terms of interaction with the landscape, and this in turn illustrates belief systems. This is to say, as has been observed elsewhere in Australia places are objects of Indigenous discourse (Layton 1995:214).

The Aboriginal perception of what has taken place in the recent history or '*Pastaim*' of Cape York is very different to that of most

non-Aboriginal people involved or interested in the same history. Most non-Aboriginal researchers have assumed that they know how Aboriginal people fit into the history and the environment. In fact, it is clear that Aboriginal people see their place in time, environment and history very differently. I explore this difference and thereby present a history of Cape York that describes the colonisation of this area from this perspective.

> An analogous contrast between an emphasis on the particularity of places as seen from a specific (subjective) vantage point and an emphasis on the study of space, divorced as much as possible from a subjective position, has been the central concern to the way the concept of landscape has been taken up in geography and anthropology (Hirsch 1995:8).

To begin to understand how Aboriginal people in northern Cape York feel about and interpret places it is essential that one begin with an understanding of the landscape as a sentient element. The connection with the landscape is subjective and the relationship with place specific and personal. The landscape is peopled with red devils, short people, ancestral spirits and new and unknown ghosts. In general terms this is not dissimilar to other parts of Cape York and Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities in other parts of Australia. Strang writes of Kowanyama

> ....As well as being sentient in itself, the environment is alive with ghosts, 'placespirits' and devils. The new ghosts', oroleb, the spirits of the newly dead will stay in their country until sent on by the ritual that reopens the place...The old ghosts', inyiw-inyiw spirits of 'the old people' who lived there in the Dreamtime, might talk to the people or steal scraps from the camp at times they are quite malevolent, and will steal people away if they can. Strangers are particularly at risk. .... The 'old people" also protect the resources of the country refusing to give them to strangers.... The 'place spirits' are however only one manifestation of the power rooted deeply in the country. The ancestral presence is powerful and responsive; trees grow bigger and more fruitfully at sacred sites and in some places use or misuse of the bark, leaves or soil can act on human beings and the environment both positively and negatively (1997:255-6).

Similarly, in northern Cape York, the land, spirits and people form a complex relationship governed by rules. To damage the land or even to 'bad mouth' (swear) at the land can cause serious consequences to people as the spirits may take offence. In this

regard I proved something of a liability in the scrub as I had a tendency to swear at thorns, stony ground, green ants down my back, dense snake-hiding leaf litter and sharp oyster covered rocks amongst other things. It took a lot of remonstrance from family and friends in Cape York, as well as attribution of blame for various mishaps before I managed to get this habit under control. Some places in the landscape are more dangerous than others and because of a demonstrable lack of understanding about the rules; Aboriginal people in Cape York are often very nervous or concerned about the safety of white people in dangerous areas.

On the other hand by following the rules and sometimes actively maintaining country through specific practices at specific places the spirits may choose to reveal the abundance of the land or sea and people can benefit from increased catches, yields of fruit or yams discovery of fresh water springs and so forth. When language speakers accompanied me on field trips, they would point out for example, that the spirits revealed the finds because they approved or understood what we were trying to do. The language speakers had *soked tok* to explain this to them.

While cultural identity is made up of a complex interweaving of many factors, 'place' is the most important single material concept influencing it. The stories documented in this thesis illustrate the links between 'place' and 'identity'. This is evidenced by the term '*stori ples*' which is used by people in Cape York to describe areas of cultural significance and therefore identity. The significance is intrinsic to the place rather than any object or structure on it. This is why, for instance, the location of the old Mission at Old Mapoon is still seen as a place of great importance to people even though the mission buildings have been destroyed (see Chapter 7).

Stori ples are associated with a tale that is important to the way in which people view themselves and which influences the way in which people live. For example, the place 'Wundrapine' near Weipa

is both a place and a story. It is associated with a dreamtime figure (the white dog) and there are rules affecting behaviour at the place (e.g you cannot swim there). Greer (1995) relates the story of Wamera in which the creation of the landscape on the East Coast is described through the story. Again there are rules surrounding appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in this area. For instance you should call out in language to the spirits to announce yourself and your intentions, you shouldn't swim there, you should avoid loud and raucous behaviour and you should not wander into the scrub.

Stori ples, however, are not always directly related to the Dreamtime or *Bipotaim,* as it is known in Cape York. The failed settlement of Somerset is also a *stori ples* (see Figure 2). As for other *stori ples*, it is associated with stories about indigenous spirits but also those of Jardine family. There are rules about behaviour at Somerset, such as calling to the spirits in language, not sleeping near the graveyard on the beach, and it is dangerous to wander into the scrub areas.

Listening to people talk about stori ples's, it is easy to see that places are important to people and that just by telling the story people are asserting their right to the story and their ownership of the land. Stories often include traditional explanations backed by recent evidence or eyewitness accounts of events, which prove the story. In this way people assert the current validity of the story. '*This ee no bipotaim, this one ee diskaintaim*!'

4.5   Understanding *ples* and *taim* in northern Cape York through the *stori ples - Wundrapine*

I recorded this story at Wundrapine near Weipa in 1991. It is a good example of how a creation story may be interspersed with more recent events from within the lifetime of the storyteller. This bears witness to the truth of the story or illustrates essential elements of the story.

Mrs Eva Yorke (*Atakainay*) is talking to Weipa Rangers (Apea Miskin, Tony Barkley, Eddie Keppel and Matilda John) and myself. Additional contributions can be heard from time to time from Mrs Ina (*Nggolpandan*) and Mrs Joyce Hall (*Kaynath*).

Plate 2: Traditional elders Mrs Motton *Adheytha*, Mrs Ina Hall *Nggolpandan*, Mrs Joyce Hall *Kaynath* and Mrs Eva Yorke *Atakainay* at Wundrapine

This is Wundrapine!
The story is about wild dingoes, not European dogs. The Europeans now today, they scared to swim. I think they [dingoes] are in the water here. If we put water on top their heads they alright. They can have a swim too. Oh there is a leech here too like in Anung (language discussion - to clarify this point).

This place was made when a big dog poked his head out. After that dog bin poke his head out em bin go in again. I do not know where em bin go now! Yeah, I do not know where em bin go, might em bin look around for wallaby now, might em bin come out nother place there. Because dogs must eat wallaby and (I do not know) which part em bin go a come back. (Language discussion not documented here).

Bufor deiz, we used to camp here. Then we move go nother place, like there now Peppen, but ee still got big water too. Go out for spear em, not shooting like there now today. Spear all brolga, ibis, ducks, and geese. When we look our parents come now, we make big fire, I do it. Alright, if ee some of the birds our mothers want to do earth oven - kupmari. They tell us " no more touch em now!" Alright, we go away somewhere play. No go near that place where the birds are dead one you know, ready for cooking. I do not know where them bin getting ti-tree from [for kupmari]. Plenty I think dat way or dis way down.

When the birds are cooked, our parents' holla "Come on dinner time now" (they follow the sun you know, poor ol' fellows. Them no bin have watch! Well today we do like that kind too when we ask one another "Where sun? What Time- What time today now? or What time?" and someone says "oh 8 o'clock" some say "ooh going on for 9 now". Next minute you look boys there where mission comin in for have a cuppa tea).

Kathy Butler, she bin swimming here, European little girl who bin grow back here. She got sick. Then they bin find it was leech. It was in her stomach, I think. But she big girl now. I never seen her too, and she got children now.

So Sue, you could give stories to other Europeans if you want to tell stories to them. This one and there home Andoom[6] is a bad place you know for swimming.
[Rangers: Do you think that rangers should put up signs here saying that people are not allowed to swim?
(Joyce) Yeah. Yes and put proper name of Wundrapine.]

(Ina) When we stayed we wondered where this white dog came from because no one ever had a dog like that and real white! And later on it grew into a very big dog! Its name was "*Tweynuk*". The owner of it came around here hunting and it must have had some connection between Wundrapine Swamp and the dingo. The dingo must have had something to do with the mother slut and the dog came out, because no-one ever had a dog like that - real white, fluffy hair. The

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[6] Andoom is a place between Weipa and Old Mapoon - now incorporated into a mining lease. The bauxite mine has the same name Andoom Mine. Here, Ina is referring to a freshwater swamp which has not yet been mined but is within the lease area.

owner used to look after it. It really stand out amongst all the dogs and the legend has that it came from here.

When the tribes came around hunting they really came around for the birds and fresh water turtle, what we call *rindi*. Always at night we would see the dogs come out at night and walk around the edge but the marvellous sight was the puppy that came from here. How did it come? Where did it come from? And the elder ones say it came from this Wundrapine Swamp.
And has anyone seen that dog from here ... that father dog?
(Joyce) It gets up certain times not all the time it just pops its head up. It stays under water.
(Ina) No but one wonders why that white dog was the puppy. Must be some connection with the father. It was a real fine dog. It was very pretty. Lot of Enterprise (mining company) boys wanted it for their own but the owner says "No, It's mine you can't have it!"

In this story Eva, Joyce and Ina all demonstrated their knowledge of their country, through first hand accounts of their experiences at the site and their knowledge of the taboos and the actual consequences of breaking those taboos. This story has particular significance in that it proves that non-Aboriginal people may be affected both adversely (the leeches) and positively although unaware. Certain Aboriginal people may also get inexplicable benefits at times. In this case someone benefited by gaining *Tweynuk* a white puppy that was obviously the offspring of the Wundrapine dingo and the envy of everyone. The power of the place is therefore reinforced.

In describing the question and answer sessions from their childhood, 'Always at night we would see the dogs come out at night and walk around the edge but the marvellous site was the puppy that came from here. How did it come? Where did it come from? And the elder ones say it came from this Wundrapine Swamp', the storytellers demonstrate how story telling is practised and recreated at each telling. The dynamic nature of the stories

means that they can accommodate the questioning minds of children and endless clarification.

Plate 3: Wundrapine

We can also gain an insight into the importance of language and place names. In response to the rangers' proposal for management of the area i.e. to erect signs prohibiting swimming in the lake, the elders demand that the correct place name also be indicated on the sign. This insistence on the correct name for places is common throughout the northern communities and reflects a growing concern that through loss of language and in

particular place names communities are losing their understanding and knowledge of the landscape.

While the naming of countryside is an ongoing process with places being commonly named after events that have occurred there particularly where these are significant events or have an impact on the broader community (e.g *Bahnbridge*, where once an important bridge burnt down) there is concern with the practice of recent immigrants to the area, notably white tour guide operators and mine personnel to create their own landscapes through naming places regardless of whether or not they have already got local names and then promoting the new names (their landscape) via maps and signs. Language then and particularly place names becomes a weapon in the battle for control and ownership of the landscape.

4.6 Conclusion

Increasingly archaeologists are finding themselves struggling with the debates around time, space and place as we strive to find better ways of understanding and describing cultural landscapes so that they are recognizable to 'insiders' as well as 'outsiders'. This becomes more important as we move into the field of heritage management if we are not to disinherit communities from their heritage by appropriating it for tourism or for national heritage for the state in general.

While scientists and some sections of the Australian public may be interested in radiometric dating information which seeks to establish a chronology to affirm the oldest, most ancient occupations, such preoccupation with precision measurement of time does little to help us understand 'culture'. To understand the history and culture of Aboriginal people in northern Cape York we need to look at ways of accessing and understanding the 'human' time referred to by Gosden (1994).

Aboriginal people in Cape York as elsewhere in Australia, are connected to their landscape through their occupation and use of resources in their day to day lives but most personally and specifically they are connected cosmologically through special places or *stori ples* which encapsulate their history, often back until the period of creation.

At such places Aboriginal concepts of time may be evident as a multi layering of spirits and entities from the *Bipotaim*, more recent *pastaim* and the present *diskaintaim*. Language is an important weapon in the management of such potentially dangerous places as it is the key to communicating with the beings that occupy these places and of re-affirming ones right to use and travel through such places. The information in this chapter serves as an introduction to the *Stori blo Meinlan* as detailed in Part II of this thesis.