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Plate 4: Harbour of Somerset, Qld September 21st 1872:
Watercolour by unknown artist looking out towards Albany Island.
(Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, NSW. Original held in the Small Picture Collection DG*D3 folio2)
Chapter 5:

DISKAINTAIM

5.1 The Fourth Coming

We watched the marakai as she rolled up her swag and gathered her belongings. Any minute now and she would realise they were missing!

Yes - There now. It wasn’t the same if they didn’t feel the loss. There was still a chance though that we would have to give them up. She was with two men of the people. But we did not recognize them and they did not appear to know us. The rules were that unless they spoke the words we could keep the prize. We were going to win, we could feel it!

Last night we had crowded around to listen, just outside the light of their campfire. The new tongue that the marakai spoke was harsh to our ears and hard to understand. We learnt that she had come to study the land, our place that they call Somerset. She has come to learn and observe but she did not see us as we crowded close to claim our prize. We had no doubt that she would be like all marakai, arrogant and deaf to the language of the land. None of them saw us take her knife and shiny silver pen.

I had come to Cape York initially in 1986, to assist a friend on a project (Greer 1995). As a result of that first visit, I began my own research. It was my second visit to Cape York, and the first joint field expedition that Shelley Greer and I had undertaken. Joint survey had seemed to be an ideal way of maximising results. At that time in the early stages of her research she was searching for the elusive ideal site, which might provide evidence for ‘intensification’ in Cape York (cf. Lourandos 1983,1997), and I was looking for historical sites that were witness to European settlement and exploitation of northern Cape York Peninsula.
At this time I still felt alien in the landscape. The rangers, Jackson Sailor and Aaron Sebasio (employed by the then Archaeology Branch, DCS) were assisting us. We had just had a wearying day crossing through the rough “boxing seas” at the mouth of Albany Passage just on dusk. The waves hit the dinghy at right angles and it pitched alarmingly. Once through the entrance, the waters were calmer. We were aiming for Somerset as Jackson had said there was fresh water available in an old well. The boat did not have lights of course and it was dark by the time we made it to Somerset Bay. Aaron leaned over the front of the boat with a small hand torch and guided Jackson through the coral reef. I shivered with visions of crocodile jaws enveloping Aaron as he hung precariously over the boat. After a final nerve-wracking wade through shallow water in the dark, we made the beach. We were wet, tired, sunburnt Shelley and I, and plastered with salt, but at least we had arrived without accident.

Somerset appeared an overgrown and sinister place at night. The scrub encroached right down to the sand, and mangroves fringed either end of the small crescent of beach. The wind washed a chilly hand across my shoulders and I jumped as a small branch scratched my sunburnt neck and snagged my hair. Shelley responded with nervous laughter. It was the sort of place where
you knew it would be disastrous to let your imagination run wild. To camouflage our lack of valour we all played cards by firelight, but I noticed that both Rangers kept their rifles close to hand.

The men cheated at cards but it took Shelley and I a long while to realise it, after which loud protestations ensued. Finally, we slept. Our sleep was marred by the soft hand of the wind across our faces and the small skittering noises of harmless animals. At least I hoped they were harmless!

Later we were to hear the history of this place, and the dangers that lurk in parts of the scrub, and I marvelled in hindsight that the Rangers had suggested that we stay there. But for this stay at least we were largely in blissful ignorance of the stories of power and conquest, brutality and beauty that characterise Somerset.

In the morning the world looked decidedly different. The landscape now seen in daylight for the first time looked picture-postcard romantic. Coconut palms fringed the white sand, which now extended further as the tide had gone out. Before packing up we inspected the graves, which remain at Somerset, including that of Frank Jardine. We looked at the well and the scant signs that were all that remained of one man's dream and the endless nightmare for the Gudang and Kaurareg peoples.

It was not until we were about to get into the boat that I realised that my penknife (a gift from a friend) and my silver Parker pen had been lost. I had had them the night before. Perhaps I had dropped them in the saltwater as I jumped out of the boat, or perhaps I had left them under the tree where we had camped. Although I looked, I could not find them.
5.2 Experiences with Short Men and Red Devils

A week later back in the village of Cowal Creek (now Injinoo) I complained of the loss to my mother’s sister, Mrs Sagigi (Mumma Elaine). Shelley and I had both been adopted by Meun Lifu (Daddy Shorty) and his wife Clara (Mumma Clae) and we benefited not only from their considerable knowledge of the area but also from that of their kin who generously acknowledged this relationship. Mrs Sagigi explained to me:

Dem Bulla Bulla dem short man, long ontop lo land ee alright ee make head go ron but dem wild one lo mangrove [um de red one (daddy shorty)] long arse, all red one, all dem shell ee stik lo arse. Dem all wild one, all red one blo mangarro. Dem alup shell, any kind shell outside lo sea. Em sit ontop lo shell but dem wild. Dem ontop lo scrub ee alright! Ip all look you got something nice or some all fancy ee dat thing lo you, something can cum just from hand blo you, if you gat watch and dey like ee watch and then you...

I commented that perhaps this is what had happened to my pocket knife that I lost when we camped at Somerset.

ee no gad ah?
That one emm kin! Dat one steal em! Dat Somerset dat one! You should aske em back. Aske em!

Mrs Sagigi went on to describe the tricks that the short men get up to:

Them short man ee gad here too inside dem scrub. When you go rond one place ah dere lo scrub you sabbee its dem that makke your head no good. You marke dis place you go you walk go den yu come out here again. Mepla bin dis kind before.

She then described several experiences at Muri (Mt Adolphus Island see Figure 2 and Plate 7). The full transcript of her account is included in Appendix E. On one occasion she had gone there with her husband. While he collected clams just off shore in the dinghy she had gone to collect oysters.

An em I think em bin pigget to sokee talk or something like that. Dempla listen too! Em go wannem ere dinghy - and me I start por crackee oyster, I silly por dem oyster, kum straight in of that pointed hill, hill frontside, crakee oyster insidelo mangrove. I pigget now, I whistle, I talk myself and den whene wane elp I talk too rough. I got big mouth, I go EHEH! I go like dat! An I think dempla listen they think ‘ Mmm dis gel go too far!’ You know anyway, I bin listen whisper! Asa man talking whisper kum and den my heart ee jump now! I mutta stop now I no wanne move! Ya gah! I bin
whistle then sing. Sing go go and when that sing bin stop that frightened feeling now bin kum long me. I listen whisper! And them some stone ee roll asa this kind straight, as if ee can kum and hit my head! This oyster i bin bust him I go raun this kind and kum back. Ee got nither one I bin bust em bust em leabe him. I bin take dis one here. An I kum back I kum back I go start em from begin kum rond this kind again. That big stone ee roll, I no bother for look kum ontap only wait. Ee hitee head blo me! Yeah I bin get that mark and I bin look blood! Two same time! I bin holler I no care only I wait em what time stone bin hittee mee but nothing stone bin fall down. When em bin heaya em bin sabbee straight away, em bin kum start ee engine "kum kum ontap" he broke his shirt tight em long that wannem ee put that shirt raun em say mutta go.

As soon as the stoning began both Mrs Sagigi and her husband knew that it was the short red dev ils and they also realised that they were transgressing in that they had not ‘called out’ or ‘soked tok’ to ask permission to take the resources of the area. To add further insult Mrs Sagigi had forgotten herself to the extent that she whistled and called out drawing undue attention to herself.

Comparing the experiences of Injinoo people with the spirit occupants of the landscape, it was clear that there is a consistency of experience and descriptions about the beings themselves, the places in the landscape that they occupy or are likely to occupy and the behaviour on encountering humans. Red devils are described as short and red with scaly ‘arses’. They occupy stony coastlines, concealed by mangroves at specific ‘magic’ places such as Muri Island (Mt Adolphus Island see Figure 2 and Plate7). Unlike short people who are mischievous and uncaring rather than malevolent, they are usually hostile to humans and delight in hurting them when they transgress hence the stoning of Mrs Sagigi at Muri (Appendix E).

On the other hand the short people who live in the scrub are more mischievous than cruel. They like to steal bright, pretty things and take a delight in making people disoriented and confused. This of course can have serious consequences if one gets lost in the scrub and is unable to find one’s way out. However in all such cases that
were recounted to me the short people in the end relented (or perhaps got bored) and allowed the lost person to suddenly see the way out.

Stories such as these are everyday occurrences in the interaction of people and the sometimes, dangerous landscapes of Cape York and the Torres Strait. Some places such as the scrub around Lockerbie and Somerset are known to be the province of short people and others such as Muri (Mt Adolphus Island) and the coastal rocky shore around from Somerset are known to be even more dangerous and guarded by red devils. Language or langus is a powerful tool in securing protection in these landscapes (refer Chapter 4). There are several rules that apply to ensure safe passage through these landscapes.

Plate 6: Mrs Ethel Sagigi (Mumma Elaine)
Plate 7: Muri –(Mt Adolphus Island) is a dangerous place and is occupied by red devils

Ideally, one should be accompanied by a language speaker for that particular country who should call out, sokee tok, to announce or ask permission to carry out the activity. One should never whistle, as this is likely to draw you to the notice of such beings. You should not call out or shout or generally act in a raucous manner as this may anger red devils who will often retaliate by stoning you or causing accidents or bad luck. You should not swear, particularly at the bush or other elements of the landscape. It is also offensive to these beings to be too greedy and deplete resources and it is advisable to leave offerings for example if fishing leave part of ones catch.

Interestingly, since most people know these rules, there are clearly many cases where for one reason or another they are broken, otherwise such stories of misadventure would not be common. Sometimes, this is because people desire the resources of the
place and either do not have access to a language speaker or they are willing to risk the consequences. In other cases, it is because a long time may have passed since people visited a place and they may have forgotten that it is dangerous. At such times the devils and short people like to take advantage of their carelessness. There is some suggestion that if you are quiet and get about your business and do not go directly onto the land around places like Muri then you are often tolerated by the red devils or they choose not to notice your presence. However, to be loud and raucous is to press your luck. Hence Mrs Saiga’s conclusion that when she called out loudly the red devils must have thought ‘ee dis gel go too far!’ (Hey this girl has gone to far!).

When younger people recount such experiences, it is often used by older people as a teaching opportunity. There are also times when new dangerous places are discovered or rediscovered and once again the experience and the recognition of what this signifies is the evidence for its identification as dangerous. Beings similar to these are known to inhabit the Aboriginal landscape in other parts of Australia and many ethnographers recorded stories of ‘short people’ or what they referred to as ‘pygmy tribes’ (see for example Winterbotham 1982:97 which is a transcript of interviews with an Aboriginal informant in the 1950’s).

5.3 From Devils to the Mundane-Northern Cape York Communities Today

At the time of my first visit the communities clustered at the tip of Cape York were in transition. There are five communities in northernmost Cape York (Figure 2). Of these, the oldest is Injinoo (formerly Cowal Creek), which was established around the first half of the twentieth century, probably around 1915 (see section 5.4) and comprised remnants of the local tribes, who had not been dispersed, massacred or lost to illness. After World War II the Queensland Government had moved to form the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) Reserve consisting of around 39,462
hectares, and since the late 1940s, four other communities had been established in the area (McIntyre & Greer 1994:5.1-5.26). At the time of the commencement of this research the communities had been handed back some control of their land through the Queensland Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) system and were asserting increasing autonomy over their day-to-day operations through local community councils. Economic and social growth, however, were still heavily influenced by Government policy and strictures. For example, it was not possible for a community to establish a commercial operation except a beer canteen, an irony that did not escape many Aboriginal and Islander people (Daniel Ropeyarn pers comm. 1989; David Byrne pers comm. 1989).

Plate 8: The tip of Cape York Peninsula
5.3.1 Changing Government Policies

Aboriginal people in Queensland as elsewhere in Australia, have long been buffeted by changing government policies. In Queensland however, the period of direct governmental control lasted significantly longer than in the southern states. Forced mass removals of Aboriginal people were occurring well into the lifetimes of today’s middle aged Australians, with Port Stewart people removed in 1958 and those from Old Mapoon moved in 1963.

Greer (1995:69) has summarised the work of others on the State governments policies and legislation relating to Aboriginal people in Queensland but for those unfamiliar with this history, Anderson’s (1981:55) four historical periods are a useful overview. They are:

1. 1830 –1872: characterised by the dispossession of Aboriginal people through violence and the use of Native Police;
2. 1873 –1896: a period in which experiments in the setting up of reserves (both private and government sponsored were undertaken;
3. 1897 –1956: the beginnings of a legislative framework and life ‘under the Act’; characterised by so-called ‘Protectionist’ policies;
4. 1957- early 1980’s: the period characterised by the policies of “Assimilation”


In 1895 Archibald Meston completed a survey of Aboriginal settlements in Queensland and presented his conclusions regarding the management of the Aboriginal ‘problem’ in Queensland to the government (Meston 1895). Meston proposed that where Aboriginal people were not being adversely affected by white settlement they should be left alone to continue their lives, but where they were being adversely affected or exploited they should be relocated to areas of land set aside for them. He also proposed that Aboriginal people generally should be compensated for the loss of land and amenity they have suffered through white settlement. Sharp (1992:27) misreads Meston’s comments and has assumed that he conformed to the prevailing opinion that Aboriginal
people were a ‘dying race’ and therefore only a temporary problem for the colony’s administrators.

The Reserve system lasted in north Queensland well into the 1980s ending officially, but not in practice, in 1985 with the ‘handback’ of land under Deed of Grant in Trust by the Queensland Government in Cape York and the Torres Strait. However during the handback ceremonies in the Cape York and Torres Strait communities, the then Premier, Joh Bjelke-Peterson handed back empty envelopes in some cases and unsigned photocopies in others. Life following the supposed handback continued unchanged for a number of years with endless talk about ‘the department’ (that is the State Government Department administering the reserves which at that time was DCS) pulling out of the day to day management of the communities.

In 1949, the Queensland government formed the Northern Peninsula Area, a reserve of some 39,462 hectares that would eventually encompass the communities of Injinoo, Umagico, Bamaga, New Mapoon and Seisia. The reserve was administered and run by Queensland government staff based at Bamaga under the at times despotic rule of the ‘Manager’. During the history of the reserve the department responsible for its management changed its name from the Department of Native Affairs (DNA), to the Department of Community Services (DCS) and finally to the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (DFSAIA). Aboriginal people today tend to use these names interchangeably and in reality these were name changes only with the same staff being employed regardless of the department name. Each of the smaller communities, except Seisia (which the Department steadfastly refused to acknowledge as a community in its own right), had a community council and representatives from each of these formed the Combined Northern Peninsula Area Council, which was nominally the voice of local people in administrative matters. Bamaga became the focus of government
intervention, with government offices, schools, housing, a farm, a sawmill and other light 'industries' located here. This illustrates the Queensland Government’s long-standing favouritism of Island people over Aboriginal people. Today all residences for government employed non-Aboriginal people are located here.

The one common factor in a review of government management of the reserves is the degree of control and intervention over adult lives, exerted by people who often had limited skills and expertise. One policy recommended that people should be herded together as there was more efficiency in managing people in groups. Within the confined area of the NPA, it was decided that people should decentralise onto farms and smallholdings and develop primary industries for the reserves. This was when areas such as Blue Valley (see Figure 2) in the NPA were cleared and settled. Such policies had significant environmental impacts (to the extent that these areas are still visible in aerial photos today some 30-40 years later) in addition to their obvious social impacts. These enterprises were doomed from the start, not being based on information such as soil capability, agricultural knowledge or experience in animal husbandry or business management. Once they failed, people were forced out of their houses and back to the villages. In most cases all structures relating to these enterprises were bulldozed to prevent people returning to live there. This physical erasure of cultural heritage was a consistent form of government control exerted over Aboriginal people in Cape York and a direct response to the most common form of indigenous rebellion i.e passive resistance. Hence, properties such as Somerset and Mapoon Mission were destroyed by the Queensland government without regard for their heritage value, after Aboriginal people resisted efforts by the government to persuade or coerce them to leave (McIntyre 1999).

All five of these communities in this most northern area are bound together by familial ties and intermarriage. However, different
cultural backgrounds and experience, exacerbated by governmental favouritism, resulted in the emergence of antagonisms and grievances. Today, while the spectre of the ‘Manager’ has faded and there is generally greater movement between communities, old tensions and suspicions sometimes arise to complicate matters. Since the end of the reserve system there has been greater movement between these communities and their southern neighbours and both kinship and political ties have been established and reinforced. In the following pages I provide a brief introduction to each of the NPA communities and their southern neighbours of Weipa, Old Mapoon, Lockhart River and Aurukun.

Plate 9:  Reclaiming Cape York - The first Cape York Land Summit - Inaugural meeting of the Cape York Land Council.
Figure 2: Locational Map Northern Peninsula Area
5.4 Marakai callem Cowal Creek but itse Injinoo

The Community, now known as Injinoo Aboriginal Community, changed its name from Cowal Creek Community officially in 1988. Injinoo is a local word meaning ‘Small River’ and refers to the creek on which the settlement is located. The renaming was a political act through which the community sought to reclaim and redefine itself as it emerged from the reserve period. The assumption was that ‘Cowal’ had been a white imposed name, however it is likely that in fact Cowal was a European spelling of an indigenous word as local Aboriginal and Islander people always pronounced it ‘Kohl’. In fact they distinguished themselves from white people saying ‘Marakai (white people) callem Cow-wal Creek’.

Cowal Creek is an historical anomaly, as it was not established as a mission or government reserve. In 1918 the report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals referred to a small settlement that had been established at Small River (Cowal creek) by the remnants of the Red Island and Seven River tribes somewhere around 1915. Bleakly (1961:157) notes that people at Cowal Creek supported themselves by fishing and gardening and that the Chief Protector had decided to encourage this self–help by providing advice and some equipment but leaving the management of the community to an elected council. As this was not a government reserve or church mission there is very little archival information relating to it. In 1924 a Torres Strait Islander teacher was sent to Cowal Creek (Chief Protectors Report 1924). At some point, the Anglican diocese of Carpentaria sent a trained Islander Deacon there. In 1936 the Chief Protector of Aboriginals commented in a letter to the Under Secretary

It must be pointed out that the natives of this settlement at Cowal Creek are a very primitive type, being the remnants of the old Seven Rivers and Red Island tribes, who formed this voluntary native village, and are conducting the affairs of their little community with no other supervision than a Torres Strait Island Native teacher (QSA A/3866 1936/ 9033).
A commonly told local story maintains that 6 tribes of the area in northern Cape York came together and decided that they should settle down and form a community if they were to survive the effects of European invasion. These ‘tribes’ were the Seven River, McDonnell River, Red Island Point, Cairn Cross, Somerset and Whitesand people (pers.comm. David Byrne 1989). Some people amongst the most northern of these people chose rather to join their Kaurareg neighbours and relatives and went to Horne Island and were later removed to Hammond Island (Figure 2) and then Kubin on Moa Island. Thus strong links remain today between Injinoo and the Kaurareg and in particular people from Kubin. While Cowal Creek was not officially formed via government intervention there is clear evidence that not all people came in voluntarily. For instance, the account told by McDonnell River people of their ‘calling in’ is not quite so peaceful. Alec Whitesand, the Aboriginal man credited with drawing the tribes together, on this occasion was accompanied by police with guns (Goody Massey Tape # 1992/1). Actually the establishment of Cowal Creek with all 6 tribal groups must have occurred in stages. Bleakley records that in 1918 only the Red Island and Seven River people were present at Injinoo (Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1919). Alec Whitesand is reported to have been a Wuthathi man and unlikely to have been the original founder of Injinoo as he is likely to have settled at Cowal Creek sometime after it was established. The McDonnell River people who were brought in by Alec Whitesand were the last to be relocated to Cowal Creek, probably during the 1930’s.

Injinoo today is a result of this alliance between the 6 groups. Mr Wilfred Bowie (now deceased) recalled to me how the village at first consisted of separate clusters of bark houses. Each cluster was comprised of a single traditional group. The original village was built on the sand in the area now known as the lookout or camping ground but was later moved back to firmer ground. The occasional
concrete stump foundation can still be seen towards the rear of the camping ground area.

The early years in Cowal Creek would not have been easy with people living so close to groups that they would not have previously had daily contact with. Interactions including marriage seem to have continued to follow traditional alliance patterns and to some extent this can sometimes be detected in the modern Injinoo. People were to some extent suspicious of other groups and hence more comfortable living in close proximity to their own people (Bowie pers.com 1989). Tensions must have run high at times and as Wilfred Bowie (pers comm 1989) remarked ‘puri puri let fly’ [black magic was rife]. It is a testament to the people of Cowal Creek that despite this they managed to forge a community and a unique identity that continues today.

The fact that Cowal Creek was not a government station (until after World War II when it became part of the area managed as the Northern Peninsula Area Reserve) means that there is little archival information available about the village and its development. The only information in government records are passing references in correspondence based on visits by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals or other official visitors. Despite having a government funded Torres Strait Islander teacher in the village, detailed records relating to the school and its operation at Cowal Creek do not appear to have been kept. It is likely that many of these records were kept locally at Thursday Island and have since been lost. For instance there is not a complete record of annual school supply requisites for the school although one or two can be found in QSA A/15996 (e.g Dec 1941/ 53/40). Where documentary evidence does exist it is often of a dubious nature representing as it does only fragments of debates or conversations. For example a newspaper article in 1936 quoted a Professor Archibald Watson as saying that ‘Cowal Creek should be wiped out as a pest hole...it
can never be made a healthy place.’ He describes the place as follows:

The soil was chocolate brown sand made dark and malodorous by decomposed seaweed and other vegetable matter. The youngsters sat down and slept on this. It was no wonder under such conditions that their teeth were bad, their tonsils swollen and their bones were getting soft (QSA A/3866/9033: Courier Mail Brisbane:1936).

It is hard to believe that the Professor was actually describing the village of Cowal Creek, which at that time was located on the white sand at the mouth of the river. The Chief Protector of Aboriginals at the time, J.W Bleakley, vehemently denied the allegations that conditions at Cowal Creek were unhealthy. He pointed out that all cottages at Cowal Creek (which had been built by the Aboriginal people themselves) were raised on stumps, and set in clean sand with fresh running water nearby. He also went on to protest the Professor’s claims that half caste Aboriginal girls at Cowal Creek were in ‘moral’ danger and forced to live with ‘blacks’ when they should be ‘put in their right place amongst the whites, where their fathers live’ (QSA A/3866/9033:1936).

Sometime in the late 1960’s after the Department of Native Affairs had subsumed Cowal Creek into the Northern Peninsula Area Reserve, the village was moved back from the beach on to the red dirt and the old village was demolished (this area is now the camping ground or ‘Injinoo lookout’ as it is known). At the time of my fieldwork Injinoo was undergoing rapid change. The village currently has approximately 490 residents a high proportion of who are children. Housing standards have improved dramatically and substantial housing construction works have been undertaken over the past 5-6 years and the community infrastructure established over this brief period (i.e. since 1986) includes a large community hall, air conditioned council office and broadcasting station (BRACS), a large vehicle workshop, women’s centre and child minding facility, a modern medical clinic, and a primary school. The re-establishment of a school has been one of the community’s great achievements. The Cowal Creek school, originally
commenced after petition from the Aboriginal people at the settlement had been closed down by the Department of Native Affairs once they assumed management of the reserve. Injinoo has a local female Anglican Deacon (the first female indigenous deacon ordained in the Anglican Church) and local indigenous headmaster at the primary school.

The end of World War II and the withdrawal of troops from the region heralded a new era of government control over the lives of Aboriginal people in northern Cape York. The government began to encourage and coerce communities to resettle in what was to become the NPA. Those non-indigenous people who had returned to the area were soon to find their leases resumed to enable the establishment of the NPA Reserve. For example Stan Holland had in 1949 taken a 30 year lease over a pastoral holding at Cody Hill (not far his home at Red Island Point). This lease was resumed on 23/3/1966 for ‘Departmental purposes’ (QSA:DUP A/47706: Cody Hill Register Entry). McLaren and Graham’s 20 year lease on Utingu had already expired in 1934 and Frank Lascelles Jardine’s lease over Somerset which had following his death, been transferred to Hew Cholmondely Jardine (transferred on 26/5/1920), had expired in 1934 (QSA: LAN P489). Cowal Creek’s neighbours were about to change.

5.5 In search of the promised land

The first of the new communities to be set up were Bamaga and Seisia. In 1947, a group of people from Saibai Island (just off the Papuan coast) are said to have voluntarily moved to the mainland. They initially settled at Mutee Head where there was a WWII jetty for their boats and water tanks on the headland. However the water was not sufficient, nor conveniently located for a permanent settlement (McIntyre & Greer 1994:5-14). Lack of freshwater on Saibai has been quoted as one of the reasons that people moved from Saibai in the first place and the new settlers did not relish the
thought of carrying buckets of water over long steep distances. Local people from Seisia, Bamaga and Injinoo recall that Mugai Elu asked permission of the local people at Cowal Creek to stay and asked their advice regarding where to set up a permanent settlement. Representatives of the Saibai people, the Queensland Land Inspector, Jomen Tamwoy (Torres Strait Island teacher, based at Cowal Creek) and Canon Bowie (Torres Strait Islander Minister based at Cowal Creek) and a traditional owner representative Mr Pablo set out to look at suitable places. The area inspected included both Red Island Point (RIP) and inland to Ichuru. They were advised by Cowal Creek representatives that a place near Red Island Point (now known as Seisia), would be a good spot as there were reliable springs behind the beach and the site would also provide a berth for their pearling luggers (pers.comm. Joseph Elu 1994; Gordon Pablo 1990 and Daniel Ropeyarn 1990; Bob Jacobs 1993). Solomon Woosup, an Injinoo man, showed Mugai Elu and the Saibai settlers the wells along a small creek line behind the beach at Seisia (pers comm. Joseph Elu 1994). The bulk of the Saibai people, however, were told by a Department of Native Affairs (DNA) surveyor and Jomen Tamwoy (a Badu Island schoolteacher living at Cowal Creek) that they had to move to 'Bamaga' (or Ichuru as local people knew it), which they did in 1949. The government officials favoured Ichuru because they considered it to have a more reliable water source. In addition the soils were more arable and the government may have already have had plans to promote agricultural enterprises. It appears that Seisia was settled without the sanction of the reserve administrators. For reasons unspecified, the reserve manager continued to try and pressure people at Seisia to move to Bamaga. Initially the community was not recognised by the Government and so was refused housing or a place in any decision-making process. The community was regarded by the Government as a small camp or off-shoot of Bamaga.
Those who elected to stay at Seisia close to the sea and their boats did so in the face of strong and persistent Government opposition. The small community suffered years of Queensland Government obstruction and yet managed after all to develop the settlement as a successful Islander community.

5.5.1 The establishment of Bamaga

This account of the establishment of Bamaga was recorded for me by Gabriel Bani and Robert Tamwoy in 1993. It is a firsthand account by one of the original Islander settlers who asked for his name to be withheld.

During the wartaim, Second World War, Don Company Battalion bin kum over for meinlan. All callem Red Island Point. Then we see the ples 'ere gud for meke living and we know from Saibai its so very hard to get sum wata in the summertaim. So we made our mind up: one day we are gathering three ilan, Saibai, Duan, Boigu. Yu know try wande shipt kum baek klostum < because hard to get something out for the life. We all agree we three Ilan people. The people we bin in the second war in the army.

Yeah we can’t come though like mepla wannem way unless we get word from office. All dempla Jerry Wasu, Nadi Anu, Mugai Elu, Jimmy Carruthers, Makie Asai, we dem all the spokesmen from the fighting whats a name for mepla (reference to World War II). Well ee bin okay wid de Gubman (Government) before we bin shift cum. Mr Killoran (ee bin wid the Gubman), em speak yupla can makee ples ere, say any people can kum ere but not white people. [as for local people..] Dan's only the man bin ere and em bin go wid that churching ground. Pablo em like a mamoose blo dis place, well da spokesman em go wid him though and it bin okay. The word from Gubman bin 'yes' but Gubman talk about’is title das because place ere well ee < the Gubman so we asks for who-dat-now Pablo. He speaks ‘All right’. He’s de man bin wid us searching raun where we finde Bamaga ere today.

When taim, only the Saibai people bin move but bin split up. Sum dempla not like to be move from Saibai.

An we all agree we shift kum over ere Muttee Head. We look its a very gud pleis, we plant something like vegetables. Its most gud but wata, gud nice fresh wata, but -- long way for kare. Jus like the life wat we do em on Saibai. Akare em wid a bucket, tin kum ere. But we try meeting gain talk over if we can ask for the Gubman give a better pleis.

So Minister John, the pas minister Commonwealth Minister, wend over to Muttee Head wid Mr Turner bin Superintendent same taim and teacher, he’s Gubman teacher but he coming wid us where Muttee Head. We ask em for thinking what we got in mind for the Gubman also akse em. Bamaga bin for Gubman. John tell em:

“Bamaga I do not know you I know only dat book ere where you bin work for so many years for Gubman DNA (yeah sometime DNA). When you move kum ere, ere where meinlan, I know you Bamaga. Well I try to do my best to help you. I went down for the, down south I’ll send the lan
inspector, Queensland lan inspector, Mr Richard. yeah I send Mr Richard kum over ere.

Then we searchin round Muttee Head well I do not know the name, the language name, we got the two or three man from Cowal Creek- Canon Bowie and Mr Jomen Tamwoy, Mr Pablo. Yeah, they kum with us, we try searchin around wi that lan inspector Mr Richard. Searchin raun inlan route down to Seisia, yeah Red Ilan Point anyway, Red Ilan Point. Richard bin findee ere where we now today at Bamaga. But Bamaga they akse him gen for we all mostly the Ilan of the Torres Strait we are, we live on the wata front and seaside mostly. We ol’trade with pearl an trochus. So we try for centre for the boat where boat can anchorit. Das wat we decided we Ilan people, we know the life from the Ilan das all we can get the benefit of the money and from the sea.

Mr Richard said how we go find a better place where we go plant, wata for the vegetables and plenty of wata for yu can haul. He we can be put a peg on dere where the monument (Reference to the monument in the main street of Bamaga near the Supermarket), the build up name after em Bamaga. Now I myself, I’ll be glad to live ere I got mine number of grandchildren. I love dis place is the meinlan.

Bamaga ee name after this place ere just because ee work for the Gubman for many years. But this removal and the spokesman I believe is Jimmy Caruther. He’s the one man been against just like a battle ee fight with the office and with Mr Killoran, the Director. He’s the spokesman do all that movement for wat day we bin decide to kum. That grave yard bilong em. The first man ee bin die at Muttee Head. He got tombstone and put in up. He’s the wan bin spokesman. He removal bin emself before the other now. He put his foot at Muttee Head on the meinlan before his family kum. No Saibai people bin (live) ere before em. We settle down ere first...Tank with wata, army tank but all leaky so we leave, struggle luk raun wata, lovely wata. I think that wata I believe that more gud wata than we have ere lo Bamaga. So we who are ere today in Bamaga, well I talk prom Bamaga now, I settle down ere but I do not mention my name (Tape # 1992/1).

It would seem clear that while the Saibai people who moved to the mainland felt that they made an independent decision to do so, it dovetailed very well with government plans to establish the NPA reserve and introduce tighter controls over indigenous people in the area. The settlers from Saibai arrived in 1947, the NPA Reserve was established in 1948 and they were relocated in 1949 to the site selected by the government, now known as Bamaga. It would seem also that there exists the possibility that the identification of Bamaga as the leader of the Saibai settlers came after the move to the mainland and the involvement of the government. Bamaga had worked for the government previously and was someone that departmental officials felt comfortable with, while Mugai Elu and
Jimmy Carruthers clearly was prepared to contest the right of departmental officials to decide the future of the settlement.

5.6 Umagico: Chased from their Homelands

In the 1950’s a battle began between the local Protector of Aboriginals at Coen and Mrs Prideaux of Silver Plains Station over the future of the people from Port Stewart on the east coast of Cape York, just north of Princess Charlotte Bay (see Figure 3). This culminated in their forced relocation to a new settlement called 'Umagico' which lies between Bamaga and Cowal Creek (Figure 2). The DNA later proposed to also relocate people from Lockhart to Umagico. However, the people at Lockhart resisted the move and only about 64 people were relocated (Long 1970:175) before the government agreed to keep the Lockhart River community but move it to a site they considered more suitable closer to Iron Range airfield.

The forced removal of the Port Stewart people was the culmination of a long running campaign by the Thompson and Prideaux families to remove Aboriginal people from Silver Plains Station (Appendix B). Mrs Prideaux suggested moving the people to the reserve at Coen or the Mission at Lockhart. In a letter dated 16/6/1955 Mrs A.E Prideaux wrote a letter to the Deputy Director Dept of Native Affairs in which she claimed that

> These natives roam over Silver Plains Station accompanied by their dogs and disturb the cattle, chiefly around watering places. Also we know they kill beasts for meat, take what they want and throw the rest of the carcass into a stream where the alligators will destroy all evidence. boys employed as stockmen spend their time with the above natives instead of doing the work they have been sent out to do (Prideaux 1955).

In answer to a query for more details made by the Deputy Director of Native Affairs to the Protector of Aboriginals at Coen, the latter responded that he was ...quite sure that the complaint of the Executrix of the Estate of H.J Thompson is entirely without foundation, and has undoubtedly been made in retaliation for the refusal of Harry Liddy, an aged Aboriginal to work on Silver Plains Station for 10/- per week and keep (Coen Protector A.V
Moylan, 1955 see Appendix B). Furthermore Moylan reported that Mr Wassell had threatened Harry Liddy that if he did not work for him then he would have all the Port Stewart natives sent to Lockhart River Station (see Letter dated 13/7/55 Appendix B).

A paper war ensued following these letters, with Silver Plains Station repeatedly pressing for the removal of the Port Stewart Aboriginals and the local Protector of Aboriginals at Coen disputing each of their claims. Notwithstanding the dubiousness of the claims made by the owners of Silver Plains about the ‘welfare’ and activities of the Aborigines, the Government agreed to remove them to Cowal Creek. In a confidential memorandum from Inspector Gill to the Commissioner of Police it is made obvious that the Aboriginal people were duped into boarding a boat for their removal.

Although the natives are unwilling to leave Port Stewart permanently they are agreeable to travelling to Thursday Island for medical and dental treatment and should it be decided to move them, this may provide the means of making their removal less difficult (Gill 1960).

It is interesting to note that the removal of the Port Stewart people happened despite opposition to the plan from the local policeman and Protector of Aboriginals. Apparently other white residents in the area did not agree with the actions of the lease holders of Silver Plains either. In 1963, Harry Liddy attempted to walk home from Cowal Creek, a journey of around 400 km. He was apprehended at the instruction of the reserve manager and made to return. However, Jimmy Kulla Kulla another Port Stewart man, was allowed to return to Coen briefly for a holiday. While there he appealed to the local Policeman (T.J Newman) to be allowed to stay. In a memorandum dated 14/10/63 to the Director of Native Affairs in Brisbane, Newman presented an appeal on Mr Kulla Kulla and Mr Liddy’s behalf (Appendix B). In it he states that a Mr Ian Boyd Pratt, who had a block of country at Running Creek on the coast of Port Stewart was happy to have the Port Stewart Aborigines live on his property. Alternatively Newman suggests that there would be ample accommodation at the Coen Reserve should
they return there (Newman 1963. See Appendix B). Unfortunately, the response from Brisbane was negative and decidedly paternalistic:

Whilst sympathising with the desire of the ‘old timers’ to remain in the Port Stewart area... The history of these people whilst at Port Stewart left much to be desired and there is no wish on the Department’s part to condemn the young folk to a life of isolation, lack of educational opportunities or a reversion to a nomadic way of life (Director DNA 1963).

It would seem that the Department thought more of placating non-indigenous leaseholders than they did of protecting the rights and welfare of the Port Stewart Aboriginal people. The exchange of correspondence is also of interest in that it reveals the lack of influence that ‘Protectors’ now exerted. Departmental officials took little notice of the views and insights of the Local Protector of Aboriginals except in relation to the mechanics of how they might affect the will of the Department. Clearly the decision to move the Port Stewart people was not based on a consideration of their best interests.
Figure 3: Location of Coen and Port Stewart
In the late 1960's there was an attempt by the government to close the settlement at Lockhart River. Some of the people were at that time relocated to Umagico. Instead of closing Lockhart, the settlement was eventually moved from ‘old site’ to the present location closer to the Iron Range airstrip. In 1964 there were 64 Lockhart River people living at Umagico (Long 1970:175). As Lockhart River continued as a community at the new site many of the people in Umagico have made their way back home in recent years.

5.7 New Mapoon- Punja People

There were three attempts by the Queensland Government to relocate Aboriginal communities to the new reserve. Firstly, some of the people from Mapoon were shipped to Red Island Point, settled temporarily at Bamaga and then taken to the present site of New Mapoon (previously known as Charcoal Burner (See Figure 2). Others from Mapoon had already been relocated to Weipa. This notorious incident has been widely reported (see Roberts et al 1975-6). Through this action the Queensland Government hoped to facilitate bauxite mining in the Mapoon area. Mapoon men who were at that time working for the prospecting company ‘Enterprise’ report that they were not told that their families had been moved but returned to find them gone and the village burnt (Jimmy Bond Snr 1990/1).

The Community at New Mapoon is comprised of older people who dream of their homelands, Mapoon the land of milk and honey, and younger people who have lived their whole lives in the cosmopolitan world of the tip! The young as a rule have no desire to move back ‘home’ and so there is tension in some families between some who would like to return to their land and the young who want to stay at New Mapoon. Even the young, however, see themselves as having a communal identity related to their homelands and hence the popular name for themselves “Punja People” and the name of the local football team Tongandji
(Tjungantji) Brothers. *Punja* is the Mapoon word for the waterlily seed that is a popular traditional food from the Old Mapoon swamps and *Tjungantji* is the local name for Cullen Point near the Old Mapoon Mission site.

In 1990 I took a group of people back to Mapoon in my role as a lecturer in the Ranger Training Program for the Cairns TAFE College. For some of the old people it was the first time they had returned to their homelands and it was therefore a very emotional experience.

> *We have always provided for our people. Fresh springs line the beaches and the swamps are full of rindi, geese and punja. They did not need the white god that came but some gods are arrogant and he came anyway.*

> *We listened to the men who came carrying his cross, they claimed they did not want to change the culture of the people, but they didn’t like the old men having many wives. They did not want the people to talk to the spirits or use the language of the land. Today the language is gone! The people begin to return but how will they know us? The old ones are gone and they have none to teach them.*

> *We watched the truck as it stopped under the almond tree. The ruin of the mission house is nearby. Some say it is haunted, well it is ours again. What do they want these people? On weekends some of the young come out from Weipa, they break all the taboos and they hunt and drink and then go again! But wait there are old ones, perhaps they will know us. The old ones yarn of days gone by. They tell of the evil time when people were torn from the land, when spirits were abandoned to wander the landscape alone.*

### 5.7.1 Jimmy & Mabel Bond’s Story

This is an extract of a story I recorded at Old Mapoon in 1991 as we camped under the almond tree in front of the ruins of the mission house.

> Jimmy: Yeah there was a company here before Comalco, Canadian - Enterprise that one. You caught a plane to Agnew, that’s where the main camp was. They had there camp there at Batavia first. They had some boys working for them before I joined and they all left. That Enterprise the Miller mob bin work there. Where this lot (Canadian) bin work first, up at Agnew. You know when they walk away dey growl first and den bin
walk away. I do not know (what they bin growl about) might be something bout the company, might be men never liked the way they were treated. Then when they picked me and one old bloke Freddy's grandad (Freddy Toby), Harry Toboy and William Parry. Them two companies (Canadian and Enterprise) pulled out and left Comalco. I was working at Bramwell Station and I came down here and I joined with Canadian. I think it was in the 60's. (It must have bin early 60's yufla bin go from here in 63).

Mabel: Yeah. It bin during that time that Jimmy bin start to work...when they come back nobody was here. We bin stay at the back of the place with my sister.

Jimmy: Yeah. I was working at < > then at that time and when I go home I see all the people bin evacuated. I didn’t know till we got back. Some bin shifted to Bamaga and some to Weipa. When I got back here, nobody was here. I didn’t know where to find my family. All the houses everything was gone. (Tape 1990/1)

It is perhaps one of the cruelest ironies that men from Old Mapoon were employed to assist the geologists find the rock samples that would ultimately see the destruction of their village. It is also worth noting the callousness of the government of the time in that they failed to get word to people such as Jimmy Bond regarding events back home and the whereabouts and safety of his family.

5.8 Neighbours to the South

The nearest neighbours to these five communities are the people of Old Mapoon, Lockhart and then Weipa and Aurukun (see Figure 1). The community of Injinoo are related through marriage, trade and friendships with the first three of these communities but are not traditionally affiliated with Aurukun although they have established connections since the first Cape York Land Summit (see Plate 9) and the formation of the Cape York Land Council. Old Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun are located
on the west coast of the Cape while Lockhart is on the east.

5.8.1 Old Mapoon
Mapoon is located on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula at Port Musgrave and was established as a mission station in 1891 (see Figure 4). The Mission days at Old Mapoon are discussed at length in Chapter 7. As noted in section 5.7, the people of Mapoon were forcibly removed and relocated to New Mapoon in the NPA in 1963. Since that time however a growing number of Mapoon families have resettled in their homelands. The focus of the new community there is Red Beach although some families still camp along the beach where the old mission was located.

5.8.2 Napranum or Weipa South
Weipa, on the western side of Cape York Peninsula (See Figure 5), is currently divided into Weipa North and Weipa South. The former was set up as a ‘closed’ (i.e owned by the company) company town to service the Comalco operations in the area. It has now progressed to an ‘open town’ which means that it is no longer under the direct control of Comalco. Weipa South is the Aboriginal community and is located at the site of the former mission. It is more commonly known as Napranum since the hand back of management through Deed of Grant in Trust in the 1980’s. It is located approximately 14 km to the south of Weipa North.

The modern community of Napranum is in some ways quite different from other northern Cape York communities. The complexity of the community is partly due to the relationships between various local Aboriginal clan groups that are present there, the long-standing period of missionary influence and interactions with Comalco and its resources.
Figure 4: Location of Old Mapoon
Figure 5: Locational Map Weipa and Aurukun
Despite Meston’s advice (1895) that the Aboriginal people of western Cape York were doing quite well on their own and should basically be left alone (see Chapter 7), the Queensland government supported the Presbyterian Church’s drive to establish a chain of missions in the area. The Mission at Weipa was first established at a place known as ‘20 mile’ but later moved to Jessica Point (in 1932), a more accessible spot for sea access and less affected by malarial mosquitos. The missionaries were still operational in the 1950’s when serious exploration for bauxite was commenced in the area. However the post war period was a difficult one for the missions. Mission enterprises had never regained their pre-World War II productivity due to the changes that the war had brought to the regional economy.

In late 1957 the Queensland Government granted extensive mining leases to the newly formed Comalco under the Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty Ltd Agreement Act of 1957. Aboriginal people were not a party to the negotiations relating to the mining agreements or granting of leases nor did they have any power over the future of the missions. The church represented their interests along with the Queensland government (the latter having a significant conflict of interest in the matter). The plan was to move people from Mapoon Mission to the Weipa mission and then relocate the Weipa mission to a more ‘convenient’ location. When many of the people of Mapoon refused to relocate to Weipa they were forcibly removed to Bamaga (see 5.2). Finally the government, Comalco and the Church renegotiated a lease, which included the immediate surrounds of the Mission area although considerably smaller than the previous area (That is, 354,828ha reduced to 124 ha). In 1966 the government finally took over the administration of the community from the Church.

The Napranum community today is a mix of traditional owners from the immediate local area, Mapoon people who relocated at the time of the closure of Mapoon and those who have since moved there to
join family, and Torres Strait Islander people who where initially attracted to the mine at Weipa North for employment, who have married into families at Napranum. Due to its unique situation Weipa has some complex opportunities and problems. There is no doubt that the proximity to, and relationship with Comalco provides employment and training opportunities that the community would not otherwise have had. The proximity to a Comalco town also means that people have access to fresh food and Western goods at reasonable supermarket prices and people from further north or Lockhart to the east envy this. Similarly there is relatively easy access to buy greater range of alcohol at much cheaper prices than other communities. While people have the advantage of a range of education and vocational training opportunities, traditional owners must face the daily reality of large scale open cut mining in their country for which they receive no compensation and over which they have no control. The final injustice is that once the mining company has finished with the area and rehabilitated it, it does not, even then, revert to Aboriginal ownership. Due to the revocation of the original mission lease and special legislation proclaimed in relation to the mining interests, the area reverts to the Crown. This has been a particularly bitter pill for traditional owners who say that they were told by the Church and the mining company that the land would be returned to them ‘as good as before’ (Joyce Hall pers comm. 1990).

The links between the northern communities and Weipa are largely due to the presence of Mapoon people in both areas. Mapoon people had traditional marriage links with Seven River people, some of who had settled there while the rest went to Cowal Creek (Injinoo). In addition, since some people had moved to Weipa in the year preceding the forced closure of Old Mapoon, there is frequent movement between family members in New Mapoon and Weipa. Modern day Napranum has recent Islander immigrants many of whom are Kaurareg people with relations in Injinoo. The recent movement of Torres Strait Islander people (particularly Kaurareg)
has also increased the interconnections and movements between Injinoo and Weipa.

5.8.3 Aurukun

The community of Aurukun is situated on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula in the Gulf of Carpentaria (see Figure 5). The 1999 census records for Queensland records 866 people living in the shire of Aurukun. In 1996 it is noted that a total of 825 people resided there, 725 of who were Aboriginal Australians. Originally established as a Presbyterian Mission in 1904 the settlement of Aurukun reformed as the Shire of Aurukun in 1978 following the withdrawal of the missionaries and the transfer of management responsibility to the Queensland government and following resistance on the part of the people of Aurukun to being incorporated into the reserve system. The community was granted a 50 year lease over the shire lands under the administration of the shire clerk and an elected Aboriginal council.

This government structure meant that Aurukun was theoretically not subjected to the same level of direct control by the Queensland government as the other ‘reserve’ communities of Cape York Peninsula. However in practice this system did not achieve autonomy for the Aboriginal people of Aurukun as the criteria for selection of shire clerk ensured that the position was held by a non-indigenous person who was supported by predominantly ‘white’ council staff. The management role of the Aboriginal council members was a nominal one.

In recent years Aurukun community has suffered from the tensions created by a growing population of people from different clan groups who have been forced to live together. The affects of alcohol abuse have been exacerbated by the remoteness of the area, which has provided a niche for ‘grog runners’ who have been able to thwart community attempts to follow a ‘dry’ (i.e. alcohol free) community. The most serious cases of grog running have involved
non-indigenous people bringing in supplies of alcohol and selling them for enormous profits. In response to these and other community pressures some community elders have moved out of the village and back to their traditional lands taking their families with them (see also Martin 1981). The recent Wik decision handed down in November 2000 has recognised the Native Title rights of the Wik people and given an added impetus to the already strong outstation movement7 in Aurukun.

5.8.4 Lockhart River

Lockhart River Aboriginal Community is situated on the eastern seaboard of Cape York Peninsula at Lloyd Bay (see Figure 6). The community comprises a number of cultural groups including the Wuthathi from north of Olive River, the Kuuku Ya’u from Lloyd and Weymouth Bays, the Uuthalganu from the Lockhart River south to Friendly Point, the Umpila from Friendly Point to the Massey River and the Kaanju from the inland mountain country behind these. Over the years a number of Torres Strait Islander people have married into the community and have added to this linguistic and cultural diversity (for a more detailed account of the community and its culture see Chase 1980, 1994).

The Anglican Church established the Lockhart River Mission in 1924. Prior to this, Hugh Giblet a local sandalwood cutter who was located at Lloyd Bay appears to have provided a focal point for people to come together loosely as a community largely as a labour pool for the sandalwood trade. No doubt this was a symbiotic relationship with Aboriginal people providing an available if

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7 The Outstation movement is the name given to the voluntary movement of small groups of people out of the townships and back to their traditional lands. Usually to pursue a more traditional lifestyle away from the pressures of the growing townships and villages.
Figure 6: Location of Lockhart River Aboriginal Community
somewhat flexible labour source and Giblet providing some protection from authorities and potential exploiters alike.

As at other missions in Cape York, dwindling post war productivity of mission enterprises and a refocus of evangelical attention to other countries such as China led to the closure of the missions. The Queensland government took over the control and administration of the communities. At Lockhart it was reported that a committee with Aboriginal representation was convened to consider the future of the settlement (Directors Reports 1962-3: 18-20 cited in Long 1970: 175). It was intended that Lockhart River people be absorbed into the super reserve, the NPA. The lease over Laradeenya Pastoral holding was resumed from Stan Holland as an option for the relocation. The Department of Native Affairs favoured a move to Alau near Bamaga (Long 1970). The location had been renamed Umagico, the name deriving from Umagi an important place near ‘old site’ at Lockhart River. However in the end it was agreed that Lockhart village would be relocated closer to Iron Range Airfield but within the homelands of Lockhart River people.

While the Lockhart River community is one of the most geographically isolated in the Cape it has fought a number of key battles over recent years over threats and incursions into their land. These include opposition to the expansion of National Parks, the ill-fated Lloyd Bay Resort proposal, silica sand mining proposals in the Whitesand country immediately to the north of the community and the proposed space sport near Olive River. There are strong links between Lockhart River and Injinoo people as witnessed by the fact that some Wuthathi people live in both places. There are also strong long-standing links between Lockhart River people and their neighbours on the Western side of the Cape. It was something of a shock to the defence forces stationed at Iron Range during World War II to find that people actually walked between these apparently isolated communities trading information and goods. An
investigation into security issues at Iron Range in May 1943 noted that

...Seven Aboriginals and halfcastes, some of whom had been previously employed by CCC recently returned from Mapoon Mission on the Gulf side of the Peninsular [sic] and were re-employed. It’s understood that they freely discussed Australian and US troop concentrations in the Wyper River area and there does not seem to be any form of restriction on the periodic movement of this type of itinerants (cited in Marks nd: 30).

5.9 Conclusion
The communities in northern Cape York today have each developed unique identities based on a synthesis of pre-contact and historic experiences and beliefs. There is increasing contact between communities as they develop both economically and politically in the post reserve era. There is also increased contact between these communities and the members of the broader Australian public. Whereas in the past most black/white relationships in northern Cape York have been set within the paternalistic framework of first the missions and then the government reserves now increasingly relationships are being forged on a more diverse basis. Examples of this include black employer/white employee or contractor, white tourist/black host, and even Indigenous religious leader/white congregation.

While there is increasing emphasis on new relationships there is also a strong emphasis on cultural continuity. Many communities are seeking way to develop and support community identity through times of change by promoting their history and taking a more active role in the formal education of their children (e.g the community school at Injinoo). Despite strong traditional bonds and in some case new political bonds there is still in some cases strong intercommunity rivalry and competition for resources. The following Chapters expand on some of the historical influences that have contributed to the character of the Cape York communities, as they exist today.
Chapter 6

PASTAIM

6.1 Falls the Shadow: The Establishment of Somerset

The strangers come more frequently nowadays. Once before they had come and sought to take the land. They caused the people much pain and the spirits and we grew restless, swelling rapidly in number as the marakai plundered and diminishing as traditions were trampled. Jardine! Ah yes, that was the name! We scattered his cattle and stole his tools but in the end we gave him his dream, to live here forever and to be held in awe. He is still here under the strange monument. Those who brought the ‘light’ made the people erect them to imprison the spirits of the dead, to prevent them living on, as they should. But Jardine has outsmarted the Light. Sometimes he emerges as a large taipan, during the day he shelters from the sun under his concrete prison.

With the coming of the first marakai things changed but some things endure. We have reclaimed the forest where once his cattle roamed and where the soldiers lived. Inside the shade of the scrub we lie in wait for the unwary. Trespass here and we will turn your head until you wander aimlessly and all your pretty little things will be forfeit.

For all that its flare in world history was tentative and short-lived, quite a surprising amount has been written about Somerset and the Jardine family who pioneered its settlement. As with many pioneer stories, most of the accounts are thick with romantic bias. In the title of his work ‘A Barren Promontory: The Failure of the Colonial Vision at Somerset, Cape York Peninsula 1864-1877’, Stevens (1980) captures part of this. Isolated, failed attempts at colonial settlement capture public interest because of the poignant suggestion of failed dreams, struggles and hardship. Stevens discusses the reasons behind the rise and fall of the colonial dream.

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8 From T.S Eliot “The Hollow Men” 

And the creation

Between the emotion

And the response

Falls the shadow

9 On one of my visits to Jardine's grave I was surprised by a large snake that had made its home under the headstone. I exclaimed about it (somewhat shakily as I had come upon it quite suddenly). Mrs Sagigi just said "that
at Somerset. The generally accepted history of Somerset has been
summarised by Sharp (1992) and is contained in part in works like
Prideaux (1988). These studies however are not based on
systematic research into the history of the settlement and like most
publicly accessible information they rely heavily on secondary
sources and a large amount of hearsay, which has entered the
public domain and taken on the dimensions of folklore.

In 1860, the HMS *Sapphire* was shipwrecked and the survivors had
to sail 900 miles to Port Curtis, the nearest European Settlement.
This was the catalyst that spurred the Governor, Sir George
Ferguson Bowen, to suggest establishing a station in the Torres
Strait as a joint venture between the Imperial and Colonial
governments (CO 234/2: 1860).

As a result, in 1864 the Imperial and Queensland governments
determined to establish a harbour of refuge at Port Albany, Cape
York. Governor Bowen selected the site himself after a
reconnaissance voyage on the HMS ‘Pioneer’ which left Brisbane
on the 27th August 1862. (Austin 1949:218; see also QPP Despatch
#24 Richards 1872 QSA Col/A216). ‘On April 4th 1865, the first
sale of Crown Land for the new settlement of Somerset took place
in Brisbane’ (Kennedy 1902:9). Seventy lots of land were offered
for sale. Kennedy reports that they were bought for £20 per acre. In
all 109 town allotments were sold at auction for a total of £2093.3.0.

The settlement was to be called Somerset and its primary purpose
was to provide support to colonial shipping as a refuge to
shipwrecked sailors and a re-fuelling and re-victualling port. A
secondary aim was to secure the northern coast for the Imperial
Government. Australia was a large continent with an unguarded
coastline that was largely unsettled by the colonists. Therefore the
government was ever conscious of the risk of rival empires
annexing parts of the country. But the enthusiasts who purchased
one em now-Jardine!”. No one disputed this they all nodded solemnly. Somerset is like that, a place where things are
the land ‘site unseen’ at auction were obviously hoping for more than this, and no doubt they anticipated a thriving trading port to develop, consistent with the Government’s sales hype that Somerset would become a ‘second Singapore’. In 1865 Somerset was declared a ‘free port’ in the hope that this would act as a catalyst to trade development (Farnfield 1975: 70).

Somerset was established in 1864 and had a brief lifespan as a Government settlement until 1877 when it was abandoned in favour of Thursday Island. It appears that the selection of the site was made hastily and based on emotive first impressions rather than on sound knowledge of the landscape and environmental conditions. Once the reefs and waters of the Torres Strait were more intensively mapped, it became clear that preferred shipping channels would bypass the new settlement, as the waters of Albany Passage were difficult to navigate. Stevens (1980) cites hostility of the local Aborigines as a major factor in the decision to move the settlement. However, this appears unlikely as the traditional owners of Thursday Island, the Kaurareg, had been responsible for as many (if not more) hostile attacks on ships and Europeans as their mainland neighbours. The value of Albany Passage as a shipping route had lessened as its troublesome reefs were better mapped, and a new route which passed closer to Thursday Island had been mapped and was being used as the preferred shipping channel.

It is hard to believe that this settlement, which lasted only 13 years, could have had such a major effect on the future of the area and on the lives and livelihood of the majority population group, the Aboriginal people of northern Cape York. While the Jardine family remained in residence at Somerset until 1919, the site itself does not bear great testimony to colonial settlement. All that remains on the surface are the graves, some tumbledown stone garden walls, scattered broken glass, a well and a few isolated and dying coconut
trees (see site description and site plans in Chapter 11). What nature did not claim, the Queensland government bulldozed in 1967.

6.2 The Jardines Arrive

We had seen their kind before. The people called them “marakai” and it is true that they haunted the landscape. Arriving from the sea, pale and wraith-like. At first we did not take notice, we satisfied ourselves by playing with their strange huge canoes getting them lost and entangling them in the reefs. Many times they strayed into areas that were forbidden and sometimes we revenged ourselves on them by sinking their vessels. We thought that, like the people, they would learn to live by the rules but they did not. They were peculiar and headstrong creatures who took from the sea and the land without ever paying their dues to the spirits or us.

Then came the old man. He came and put up a flag; many supplies were unloaded from the large clumsy canoes, which managed to stay afloat by some strange unknown magic. Later we heard the cries of the land and the people as the brothers slowly made their way north from the unknown void to the south. Scattered behind them, the people who had crossed their path lay dead or dying.

The main family characters in the history of the area are John Jardine Snr who was the first Police Magistrate, and his sons Alex, John and Frank. Any account of the Jardine family and their influence in the area is bound to raise more questions than it answers. It is difficult to get a clear view of each of the characters and the role that they played in the history of the area. This is due partly to the fact that Frank Jardine, who had the longest and most powerful influence on the area, overshadows the other family members. In most local accounts he is simply referred to as ‘Jardine’ and even amateur histories (particularly those associated with the tourism industry) collapse all activities by the Jardine family into stories about Frank.
John Jardine Snr (1807-1874) was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands, North Cook and Police Magistrate of Somerset in February 1844. He arrived at Somerset accompanied by his youngest son John Robert (1847-1911) aboard the ‘Eagle’ in June 1864, to take up his post as Police Magistrate. Prior to accepting the post he was Commissioner of Crown Lands and Police Magistrate of Rockhampton and before that he held the equivalent position in Dubbo, NSW.

Two more of John Jardine’s sons became involved in the establishment of the new settlement. Frank Lascelles Jardine (1841-1919) his eldest son and Alexander William Jardine (1843-1920) led an overland expedition to drive cattle and horses to the new settlement. Alexander Jardine left Rockhampton on the 14th of May 1864 with a party of 9 other people and 31 horses. He met up with his brother in Bowen where they purchased more horses. The brothers again split up with Frank remaining in Bowen to purchase cattle and Alexander proceeding to Carpentaria Downs the most northerly cattle station in Queensland at that time. On the 11th October the Jardine expedition finally departed Carpentaria Downs into the unknown expanse of Cape York Peninsula. The party comprised Frank Lascelles Jardine, Alexander Jardine, Archibald J. Richardson (Government Surveyor), C Scrutton, R. N Binney, A. Cowderoy, Eulah (later killed in an uprising at Vallack Point in 1868), Peter Sambo and Barney (the latter 3 eventually executed by Frank Jardine in 1868). The latter four Aboriginal men were ex-native troopers from the Rockhampton and Wide Bay areas. While it was not uncommon to hire Aboriginal guides, no one ever seemed to question how Aboriginal people from areas far removed, without kinship and language, could be expected to guide people or communicate with or determine the intentions of the Aboriginal people that they came across on the journey. The expedition was taking with them 41 horses, 1 mule and 250 head of cattle (Bryerley 1867:7). There were of course no roads and the interior of Cape York had never been mapped. Only the river
mouths had been mapped by cartographers from the relative ease of ships, but while such coastal maps were of use to navigators they proved little use to travellers on foot.

By the time that they arrived at Somerset on March 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1865, they had lost 60\% of their horses and 20\% of the cattle and much of their equipment. They had also left a trail of dead or injured Aboriginal people marking most points at which the party and locals met. Jardine’s journal (Bryerley 1867) reveals that approximately 95\% of encounters between the Jardine brothers and Aboriginal people on their journey resulted in acts of hostility. Hostile encounters occurred near Cawana Swamp October 16\textsuperscript{th}, Cockburn Creek November 14\textsuperscript{th}, Staaten River November 20\textsuperscript{th}, Camp 28 Staaten River area November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, Camp 29 and nearby November 27\textsuperscript{th} (in two separate encounters), Camp 42 December 16\textsuperscript{th}, the Battle of the Mitchell December 18\textsuperscript{th}, Camp 47 Mitchell River December 21\textsuperscript{st}, Camp 54 December 28\textsuperscript{th}; between Camp 68 and 69 January 14\textsuperscript{th} (Bryerley: 1867).

John Jardine Snr intended his stay at the fledgling settlement to be temporary. He had accepted the post on the understanding that it would last about 12 months at which time he would return to his post in Rockhampton (see extract of John Jardine’s letter in Prideaux 1988:xv). Because of this he did not bring the rest of his family including wife, daughters and youngest son Charles Lennox (1855-1908) with him to Somerset.

Descriptions of the Jardines, their motives and nature are without exception polarised between those who see them as great white heroes of the frontier (Prideaux 1988), and those who see them as tyrannical despots, who were responsible for atrocities perpetuated on the local Aboriginal population (e.g Sharp 1992:65). Over the years there has been some collapsing of stories regarding the Jardines into a single Jardine ‘bogey’ man. Local accounts usually refer to ‘Jardine’ as single entity and if pressed people describe that
entity as Frank. For instance it is often pointed out that ‘Jardine’ fought with the missionaries (Jagg and Kennet) and the Commanding Officer of the Marines (i.e. Lieutenant Pascoe) however this was John Jardine senior, the marines had departed Somerset (in 1867) by the time that Frank Jardine took up his post as Inspector of Police in 1868. The actions concerning the harsh treatment of Aborigines, which were part of the disagreement between these people and Jardine, were the actions of John Snr not Frank Jardine.

The actions and rationale of the various Jardine men would be clearer if it were possible to gain access to family archives which are held at the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. Unfortunately the person who vets the access to this private collection claims that people only want to access it to discredit the family and tell lies about them. Restrictions on access to the archival material only add fuel to the theory that the family is hiding unpalatable truths.

Government records for Somerset are incomplete. Where correspondence exists it is not always possible to locate a response and one is forced repeatedly to read between the lines to attempt to answer key questions. The real nature and character of Frank Jardine is likely to be much more complicated than the secondary polarised sources would suggest. There is often a hint of hidden agendas in Government records relating to the period (for example the sudden appointment of Chester to the position of police Magistrate and Frank Jardine’s departure for a year and then subsequent re-instatement - see correspondence Somerset Letter Book MSQ 589). It is likely that Frank Jardine was eventually seen as a limiting factor in the development of the settlement. Numerous complaints were made against him regarding his behaviour towards the Aborigines and Islanders, and throughout the pearling industry there were allegations that he stole pearling beds already claimed by others and illegally pirated ships (Telegraph 28th July 1873).
In August 1867, the Royal Marines left to return home to England. In effect their departure marked the end of official external scrutiny on the management of the settlement of Somers et. In discussions in England the matter of what police force might protect the settlement had centred largely on issues of costs to the Admiralty. Other more moral issues regarding the impact of policing options on the local Aboriginal populace were not really considered relevant although there is evidence that they were aware of them. For example the Admiralty had received correspondence from the commanding officer of the Marines, Lieutenant Pascoe criticizing the treatment of Aborigines by the Police Magistrate John Jardine (Pascoe 1864 CO234/14 XC2195).

### Plate 10: The Jardine Men
Photograph #7036 courtesy of the John Oxley Library.

#### 6.3 Royal Marines and Native Troopers

In August 1867, the Royal Marines left to return home to England. In effect their departure marked the end of official external scrutiny on the management of the settlement of Somers et. In discussions in England the matter of what police force might protect the settlement had centred largely on issues of costs to the Admiralty. Other more moral issues regarding the impact of policing options on the local Aboriginal populace were not really considered relevant although there is evidence that they were aware of them. For example the Admiralty had received correspondence from the commanding officer of the Marines, Lieutenant Pascoe criticizing the treatment of Aborigines by the Police Magistrate John Jardine (Pascoe 1864 CO234/14 XC2195).
From its establishment the settlement at Somerset was the subject of a tug of war between the Queensland and British governments. Neither government could be said to have embraced the settlement whole-heartedly. Despite numerous positive reports on the settlement (for example see Colonial Office files CO234/16 XC583 p179 dated 1865; CO234/19 XC583 Extract from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council of QLD 1867) it is clear that the Imperial Government wanted to extricate itself from any active financial or other resourcing of the settlement almost as soon as it started.

Governor Bowen stressed the relief role that Somerset played in assisting shipwrecked and distressed sailors

It will be seen that the establishment of the station at Cape York is fulfilling the humane object for which it was so strongly recommended by as many distinguished Naval Officers. Doubtless this fact will be taken into consideration by the Lords of the Admiralty before they finally decide on withdrawing the guard of Marines (Extract from Colonial Office records CO234/16 XC583 from George Bowen to Edward Cardwell M.P).

No doubt Bowen would have ground his teeth in frustration if he had seen the hand written notes scrawled on his correspondence as it was passed from person to person in the Colonial Office. Someone (signature illegible) has added the comment:

It is a satisfactory report and in acknowledging its receipt some notice might be taken of the assistance, which the Establishment at Cape York has already been the means of providing to the crews of the Vessels wrecked in the vicinity. If the Colony had not come forward and acted liberally in the matter the establishment would never have been formed. Another person has added the comment below this that

I would not praise them too much...

And the commentary would not be complete without the public servant who was left out in the cold and wrote:

This is the first time that I have heard of a guard of marines stationed there. Before sending this to the Admiralty I’d like to like to know the nature of the arrangement proposed by the Colony and agreed to by the Home Government for the establishment of a Settlement near Cape York.

This of course was the problem with having a settlement dependent on joint funding and support from both the Imperial Government in London and the Colony of Queensland in Brisbane. There were
advantages and disadvantages to the distance between the day-to-day operation of the settlement and the complicated cross-government bureaucracy. While it took a long time for the powers to find out what you were up to it also took along time to get decisions made. One did not have the advantage of personal advocacy to influence outcomes and decisions.

After all official documents had changed hands the outcome was the same as had been predetermined by the Admiralty. The Marines were withdrawn from Somerset. Ostensibly the decision was based on advice from Commodore Wiseman who had visited Somerset on the HMS Curacoa and who wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty dated 18th February 1867 suggesting that the Marines’ health was failing and recommending that they be withdrawn. This was despite a report from the Governor of Queensland dated 12th September 1866 which claims that Dr Haran RN, the naval surgeon responsible for the settlement

...continues to report favourably on the healthiness of the detachment of the Royal Marines stationed there, and generally on the salubrity of the climate (CO234/16 XC583 file p177).

In contrast Commodore Wiseman proffered these opinions:

The men are scarcely adapted for the peculiar bush of Australia. I would strongly recommend their being withdrawn and replaced by native police who being taken from killers at variance with those in the vicinity of Somerset - would (in accordance with the well known fact regarding natives of Australia) be at deadly enmity with them and take every care that the settlement was not surprised.... Should the system of Native Police be decided on or that the Marines at Cape York are to be relieved by others, no time should be lost in doing so as the men although not suffering from any actual disease show signs of **incipient debility**, they have already lost one fifth their number and the present time of the year is the most trying and debilitating the rainy season (CO234/19 XC583 file p 14 Commodore Wiseman to the Secretary of the Admiralty).

It is worth noting that the recommendation for a detachment of Native Police to be stationed at Somerset was rejected by both the Governor General and the Council of Queensland and individuals in the Colonial Office in England if for different reasons. The Council of Queensland observed that

the Commodore Sire Wiseman and Captain Nares RN have suggested
that the RI Marines be replaced by a detachment of troopers of Queensland Native Police Corps. But this is not the opinion of most persons practically acquainted with the Country, and with the character of the Native Troopers. On the contrary it is generally agreed that it would be utterly unsafe (?) to place a detachment of Native Troopers at a distance of several hundred miles from the control of a European population at Cape York. They would probably mutiny on >? and would certainly carry on an >? war with the neighbouring Aborigines for the sake of their women (CO234/19 XC583 file page 36).

On the 15th of August 1867 Commander Nares who had visited Somerset wrote to the Admiralty recommending that the detachment of Marines be withdrawn and replaced by ‘black troopers’ (Nares 1867: CO234/17 XC583). It is clear that the Admiralty was aware of the likely dire consequences for the local Aboriginal people should the Colonial government replace the departing marines with a contingent of native police.

As a handwritten annotation to a memorandum from the Admiralty to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, someone whose signature is indecipherable has added

It is clear that Commander Nares means a native force. It is lamented to be the first omen of extermination. But I recommend (if possible) to have nothing to do with it on the part of the Imperial Government. I would answer as prepared - only substituting the words in brackets "The employment of armed [sic] native police or any other native force in their plan would rest with the local govt. As in other parts of the colony" (CO234/17 XC583\(^2\)). The initials are unclear but look like JN 20/12).

It is clear that although individuals in England were aware of the likely consequences of a native police force being stationed at Somerset, the real question for them was one of demarcation of responsibility between the Colonial Queensland Government and the Imperial Government. A handwritten attachment to Nares letter which is signed simply ‘C’ (assumed to be Lord Carnavon) summarises the situation

The first questions to decide is whether the post is of Imperial or local consequence. Hitherto it has been treated as an Imperial station. Marines paid for from home have been placed there and its value in the care of shipwrecks has been strongly urged.

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\(^2\) Although typed transcripts of some official correspondence exists as summaries for Parliamentary Papers relating to Somerset. Annotations such as this one are not included. The original documents although more difficult to access and to read can provide valuable insights into the behind the scenes bureaucratic discussions.
On the other hand if it is to be maintained for the protection of the individual colonists it becomes a local question.

The Admiralty works with studied ambiguity but it is necessary to force them to speak out their mind. If they distinctly decline to recognise it any longer as of imperial value then the question of maintaining a force there must be put to the Gov.- but until the Admiralty view is known no object will be gained by communicating with the Colony. Write therefore to the Admiralty in such terms as will force them to a distinct reply and an immediate one. It is no affair of theirs what the nature of the force is to be at the station if they decide on withdrawing the marines. If they consider the post to be imperially important to then and wish to withdraw the marines, they must pay—at all events in part—for any police or other force maintained there. In that case they will have a voice in the nature of the forces not otherwise. They must understand this (CO234/17 XC583).

And so the future of the Aboriginal people of northern Cape York and the neighbouring islands of the Torres Strait depended on a battle between governments over demarcation of colonial and Imperial responsibilities and budgets and the role of Native Police and their participation in genocide in the Australian colonies was well known but not considered significant enough to warrant intervention.

By the time that Frank Jardine took up the position of Inspector of Police in 1868 the decision had already been made to install a contingent of Native Police. This heralded a period of violence against local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that is still remembered today in the local accounts of history. In 1870 Chester records that the Native Police numbers had been increased to 8 and that 5 of those had been recently released from goal and in lieu of serving as Native Police they had considerable reductions to their sentences for violent crimes (Chester Somerset letter Book Letter Number 22-70 MSQ 589). Their crimes apparently ranged from robbery under arms and larceny and assault with intent to commit rape (Prideaux 1988:95). These then were the men who were expected to keep the peace and hold the local indigenous population in check.
6.4 Frank Jardine

John Jardine Snr accompanied by his sons Frank and Alex left Somerset on board the HMS ‘Salamander’ to return home to Rockhampton in August 1865. Walter McClintock who was the Customs Officer and the Clerk of Petty sessions was in charge at Somerset until 1866 when Henry Simpson was appointed Police Magistrate. John Jardine remained behind at Vallack Point, the Jardine cattle station. John Snr returned with his son Frank briefly in October 1865. Frank stayed behind when John Jardine Snr left in November 1865 taking John Jnr with him. Little is recorded of Frank Jardine’s activities between the point of his father’s departure and his own appointment as Inspector of Police in 1868 (Letter from Colonial Secretary 21 December 1867). It appears that the position of Police Magistrate was downgraded and the pay reduced in 1868 and Simpson declined a further appointment to the downgraded
position. This downgrading appears to have been only temporary as Frank Jardine was once again signing as Police Magistrate in 1869 (see MSQ 589 Somerset Letter book).

It would be untrue to claim that Frank Jardine did not during his time at Somerset and elsewhere in the Straits develop an attachment to some Aboriginal and Islander people although it is hard to reconcile the man who rode up and summarily shot Peter, Sambo and Barney his three Aboriginal companions of his overland trip (for their part in a revolt against the homestead at Vallack Point) with the image of a man who could form deep attachments to indigenous people. He was, however, known to report accounts of unfair treatment against Aboriginal and Islander people by others, as can be seen in this routine report to the Colonial Secretary.

We have recently had anything but a desirable addition to the fishermen in the Straits in the shape of two West Indian blacks who have bought the “Crowns” long boat and settled on Murray Island, where with the help of natives principally women taken by force from other islands they are carrying on the Beche de Mer fishery. They have already become a severe terror to the Natives of the smaller Islands in the Straits, and in a recent affray with the Coconut Islanders about a woman shot one of them.

I am informed that several other boats will arrive next season - which will be exclusively owned and manned by South Sea Islanders, in which case the state of the Straits can be better imagined than described.-

On the information of Mr Tucker master of the Schooner “Margaret and Jane”, I issued a warrant for the apprehension of Nine Rotuma men, who had stolen a boat and deserted from his vessel while at Campbell Island. (Captain Delargys fishing Station). John Larkins the person now in charge of the Station denied all knowledge of their whereabouts, but the men were afterwards apprehended with his party at “Murray Island”, to which place the Station was then in the course of removal. The boat was discovered concealed in the scrub on Yorke Island but her oars were found on the Station in possession of Delargys people.- The deserters were brought to Somerset, some of them speak good English, and are Christians.- They give as their reason for absconding, the brutality of the Mate, (Thompson) who it appears was in the habit of compelling them to dive for shell by firing at them with a revolver. They also state that he sank a canoe full of Marbiack (Torres Isd) Natives, who were making their escape from the Schooner, where they had been employed as divers, and fired indiscriminately among them killing two, Mr Chester verifies their statement, as in a recent visit to Marbiack, the natives complained to him of the loss of two men “Nukis” and Edowah who they affirm were shot by the mate of the “Margaret and Jane” - Mr Chester also tells me that the confident and fearless demeanour which formerly characterised the Marbiack people has given place to a cowed and sullen manner, and now instead of gathering on the beach to welcome a boats arrival, they make off with all their property into the
Scrub so soon as one heaves into sight. - This man Thompson, on
hearing that it was Captain Tucker’s intention to call at Cape York left
the vessel and took a passage to Sydney by the “James Merriman”.
...Although it may not perhaps be within the scope of my duties, yet I
think it right to mention that several deaths have occurred recently
among the Natives employed in the fisheries: no report is made in such
cases; on the contrary, in some instances the facts are carefully
concealed, and as the men are not on the “Ships article”, it follows that
no investigation ever takes places - Several of these vessels
systematically avoid Cape York, but were they in need of assistance,
would only be too ready to make use of it
F.L.J P.M.
(MSQ 589 Dixson Library " Records of Somerset Cape York 1872-
1877"These are extracts from Somerset letter book #2. Entry 2.72 dated
January 1st 1872 from Frank Jardine to the Colonial Secretary about the
Pearl fishing industry).

Frank Jardine's time as Police Magistrate was fraught with
controversy and allegations of improper conduct. It is difficult to
determine from the government records just how much foundation
exists in the allegations. Staff under his supervision generated
some of the allegations against Frank Jardine. For example
complaints by Constable Ginivan that police were being forced to
carry out personal chores for Jardine at the Government’s expense
and that the Jardine brothers were short-changing the Government
in relation to the supply of beef to the settlement. The letter cited
below is a long litany of complaints (Somerset Letter Book. Letter
number 26-68 MSQ589).

Copy Police Station Somerset
2nd Sept 1868

Constable Lawrence Ginivan? No. 41 respectfully begs leave to report to
the Commissioner the ill treatment that the Police of this Station are
receiving from the Inspectors Mr Jardine on his appointment to his
present rank, when men complained of being ill - he told them ‘that it
was only exercise they required, and that he would try and find the
sufficient work to keep their blood in circulation’ two of them in particular
namely consts. Ginivan and Healy, the cause of which they do not know
accept that they assisted his. [...] previous to his appointment...[>?
however he has put his threats into execution by keeping the men
constantly at work, contrary to the Commissioners orders, clearing scrub
for driving his cattle through, building stockyards, for slaughtering at the
Police Magistrates residence and afterwards salting the meat which is
sold when a ship passes, in keeping? the Government horses out of the
bush for the amusement of civilians. They also had to draw timber and
grass out of the bush a distance of half a mile, to build a boat house for
his boat, while police boat is left out under the sun, but is seldom [sic]
used accept [sic] on exkursions [sic] of pleasure he has also compelled
the guard to work during the day; and resume his duty at night under
arms, and if not strong enough to endure the hardship he gets fined the
following money £2 or eight days imprisonment, for what he calls neglect of duty- he also when he meets the men in the morning after returning they salute, tells them that they are looking quite fresh and rosy and that they will [>?] be a fine a looking lot of fellows, as any one could wish to see - also when I complained to him about my legs breaking out with scurveys, he said Scurvy be damned it is only filth they/try [>?] lots of fresh water and if it does not succeed try lime juice it is splendid antli [>?]

The men are now also frightened to make complaints [>?] as he is always in a good temper and only laughs at them - he will take no complaints unless written ones, when he punishes as severely as he can, to prevent them as he says from coming again.

Even when the half? rations from the 5th of June to the 3rd of July in consequence of the flour being sold to traffic with the natives the men will still kept cutting scrub and finding themselves unable to continue working from fatigue and hunger they remonstrated with him and referred him to the Commissioners Instructions for the Police at Somerset, he said they are exactly what I go by- That the police as fatigue are to keep the barracks, other Government Buildings and their approaches in order, so do not talk about things you do not understand as the work has to be done and of course you must do it, if you do not wish to, say so, as for your rations I consider 5lb of flour, 2lb sugar,1/4lb tea and as much meat as you can eat, quite sufficient - for any man- at any rate if it is not, I can’t make the flour for you- The men here also consider his orders very unsafe, as he has laughingly told both civilians and Police from the bench, in future not to bring their Petty quarrels before him, but had better file? it out between themselves on the flat, when he would come and see fair play if they wished it. It is also positively asserted by the natives that he has shot two Blacks Barney and Sambo he put two balls through Barneys head and one through Sambos back, as stated by the men who were looking on, also he leaves home sometimes in the middle of a dark rainy night with his troopers and we hear nothing of him for two or three days, the Blacks are in great terror of him, and will do anything for him so that it is useless anytime trying to get them to do anything, if he forbids them- the reason that they so dread and/not? Respect him is that he never breaks a promise or threat with them no matter what it may be so the name he goes by amongst them is Marmouchy, which means earnest and determined which is quite true of him as all the men know.

The medecine that was left at the hospital for the use of the men has somehow? disappeared and on one of the men in his illness going to Mr Jardine for a dose of oil, he told them that there was none, then he found him at the same time using Castor oil cleaning his arms, and to compleat[sic] his speshel threat he has suspended Const L Ginivan on the 26th August for not being able to endure more hardship that he actually is at present he was drawing water on the 25th from 8am to 4 o.c pm after which the Luit.? Inspector told him to commence painting, he Ginivan told him that he was unable to work any more that day after filling his tank with the horse and dray, and that he might report home to the Inspector, he got suspended next morning for not being obedient to continue working longer -

Instead of Police the men are private servants to the Inspector and if they grumble at their hard lot, they are laughed at or threatened with severe punishment, and we all know Mr Jardine to be just the man to keep his promises - Constable Ginivan hopes the Commissioner will be pleased to have these charges investigated, as there is nothing stated here but facts but what can be testified to by all the party, except his favourite men who like him because they say there is no ?> About him as he always means and does what he says, and has always been kind
to them—although he makes them work just the same as the rest and fines them just as heavily—in conclusion Const. Ginivan begs to state that he and Const Healy would not tender their resignation if it was not for the hardships they have to endure.

Lawrence Ginivan Constable

The Inspector of Police Somerset
(Somerset letter Book letter # 26.68 MSQ 589)

Frank Jardine, as might be expected, responded to this complaint with a letter of his own which accused the constable of laziness, drunkenness and fraternising with blacks. Jardine’s correspondence implies that Ginivan is motivated by spite after being suspended for bad behaviour. In a memorandum dated October 9th 1868, Jardine concludes, ‘Constable Ginivan is without exception the most unsatisfactory and troublesome man that I ever had anything to do with’.

As to the allegations that Jardine shot two blacks, he vehemently denied this sometime later saying (Somerset Letter book letter 49.68 MSQ 589):

In a complaint of Const: Ginivan’s enclosed in No 26-68 of Sept 2nd he accused me of shooting two Blacks; as the report was untrue I took no notice of it here— but now that the same report has been carried to Burketown, and returned in an exaggerated form—I think it only right to contradict the above story, which I now have the honour to do most flatly...

This statement does not ring quite true as in his previous correspondence to the Commissioner, Jardine denied all the other allegations listed by Ginivan but the letter was conspicuous by its avoidance of the allegation about shooting the two Aboriginal people. There were in fact 3 Aboriginal men killed in this incident. As mentioned previously they were his own companions of the overland trip who had been working as his stockmen ever since Barney, Peter and Sambo. Does this imply guilt? Or simply a recognition that the charge of roting the government in relation to the supply of beef and use of government personnel for private work would have been regarded by government authorities to be the more serious of the charges? It is likely that in summarily...
executing these men for their alleged involvement in the Vallack Station uprising, Jardine had exceeded his authority.

Other anomalies exist in the portrait of Frank Jardine as popularly painted. If the man were given to the unjust actions attributed to him in relation to his treatment of local Aborigines, would he have cared one way or the other about unjust theft of their canoes by station personnel? Yet this memorandum to one of his police force is recorded:

Some of the Mud Bay Blacks, have been complaining to me that the two canoes on the beach have been taken from them by some of the Police; So find out if the canoes have been fairly? come by - and if they have not; Launch the boat, tow the canoes into the middle of the pass; set them adrift- The Blacks will be able to pick them up as they float by Mud Bay (Somerset Letter Book letter number 48.68 dated 28th October 1868).

Of course someone who thought they had a right to kill Aboriginal people is quite likely to have also felt that it was justifiable to falsify records to provide evidence that indicated an impartiality that was not true. The tone of the memorandum certainly does not imply any acceptance of responsibility for the actions of his staff or apology to the owners of the property however it seems to suggest an acknowledgement of property rights on the part of the local Aborigines and also that local Aboriginal people felt confident enough to put complaints to him.

1868 was a particularly torrid year for Jardine in terms of allegations concerning his actions. The claims made by Ginivan and others whether true or not, made their way south and surfaced in Brisbane newspapers. At one point there was obviously enough concern to precipitate his temporary removal from the post. The reason for Frank Jardine’s sudden and as it turns out temporary departure from his position in August 1869 is not specifically discussed in government correspondence. He was replaced by Henry M Chester until his return in 1870. Chester obviously believed that his appointment was to be permanent as indicated in
correspondence between him and the Colonial Secretary he states that

In reply I have the honour to refer you to the letter 543-'69 dated 6th July addresses to me by Mr Hodgson late Colonial Secretary, and to the Government Gazette of 17th July 1869. From these it will be seen that my appointment as P.M at Somerset was absolute and without reference to any leave of absence granted to Mr Jardine. I would certainly have declined an acting appointment of a temporary nature involving banishment from all society, in addition to a most expensive journey of upwards of 1,500 miles, upon such terms more especially as I had at that time an offer of another appointment in Brisbane nearly as good in point of salary, and without these drawbacks.

Moreover, it is evident Mr Jardine did not regard my appointment as merely to have effect during his absence, for, in the first place, he then knew nothing of the 12 months leave of absence on full pay afterwards granted him, and, secondly, he asked me whether in the event of his getting another appointment I would be willing to exchange with him (Chester 1870 Extract from Somerset letter book FM4/2565 also CY837).

There is evidence that Frank understood the power he held over the local Aboriginal population. On his arrival Chester tells us that Frank Jardine urged him to leave the police magistrate’s residence on the southern hill and settle on the northern hill where there was a similar house located with the old garrison. Chester recalls that

‘Before leaving, Jardine urged me to abandon the southern hill as he said it was not safe for us to remain there with only four men. He strongly advised me to remove to the northern hill where there was a house similar to the one on the Southern Hill which I have described, because if we were attacked by the blacks the police from the Barracks would be unable to come to our assistance as they would immediately be speared from behind the trees without even seeing their assailants. "the blacks" he said "will probably burn this house and the Stockyard, but that you cannot help" (CY837 Henry Majoribanks Chester Autobiography and Parodies undated).
There was obviously a great deal of rivalry in the pearling industry, and a lot of misinformation was generated which has obscured the true nature of Jardine's involvement in the industry. Frank Jardine gives this amusing account of deception by rival boats:

As an instance of the rivalry &c displayed by the 'Pearl Shellers' I give the following, which came under my notice a short time since - One of the Fishing parties having discovered a rich patch of shell, and wishing to keep it solely to themselves, made a practice of hoisting the quarantine flag, whenever opposition boats were seen cruising in their neighbourhood - On one occasion the Captain of a rival Station, came alongside and inquired why the yellow flag was flying - in answer, he was told that small pox! had Broken out on board the vessel, from which ten men had already died, and that 15 more were down with it, not expected to live; The information had the desired effect, that of
frightening away the trespasser, whose boat was allowed to get well out of sight, when those of the unfortunate vessel were at once started to work again, and collected a ton of shells (about 630) before dark - the ruse succeeded for some time, but ten tons of shell had been taken, before it was eventually discovered by a boats crew of Kanakas who ignored small pox and the “yellow jack”. I think for the future that the yellow flag, among the fishing community in Torres Strait will be an attraction, notwithstanding the warning that it is usually understood to convey (MSQ 589 Dixson Library "Records of Somerset Cape York 1872-1877" Entry 25.72 From FLJ to Colonial Secretary dated April 1st 1872).

In 1873 Frank Jardine was removed from office, his conduct once again under scrutiny. The incident generated some media controversy in Brisbane and other southern ports (Telegraph 28th July 1873) and subsequent protestations from Jardine as to the unfairness of the allegations. He was suspended from office on October 16 1873 (see Prideaux 1988:120) and was not re-instated. 1873 was also according to Prideaux (1989:195) the year that Frank Jardine married Sana Solia, a Samoan woman who was the daughter of one of the missionaries in Reverend W.A Murray’s party. I could not find a record of their marriage in the register of births deaths and marriages for Somerset so if they were formally married the ceremony may have been held elsewhere, presumably closer to Frank Jardine’s family. Charles E. Bedome was temporarily appointed to the position of Police Magistrate until the appointment of George Elphinstone Dalrymple in May 1874.

6.5 Deciding the Future of Somerset
In late 1877 the Settlement of Somerset was removed to Thursday Island. At the time of the move London born (1832-1914) Henry Majoribanks Chester was the Police Magistrate. Chester was first appointed police magistrate at Somerset for the duration of Frank Jardine’s leave of absence (1869-1870). Following Jardine’s return, Chester remained in the area completing several exploratory trips to New Guinea and parts of the Torres Straits. He became Police Magistrate at Somerset again in 1875 and remained in that position until the removal of the government settlement to Thursday Island late in 1877. He continued to serve as Police Magistrate at the new Settlement on Thursday Island and in 1885 he was instrumental in
annexing a large part of New Guinea to Queensland.

At this time Frank Jardine had his pearling operations headquartered at Nagai, an island to the northeast. With the removal of the government establishment he again took up residence at Somerset in the old magistrates House. Captain Green in his *Memories of the early Days of Thursday Island* also reports that

> The Shellers who had their quarters at Albany Island took up their quarters nearer the new settlement, some in Prince of Wales Island, Friday Island, etc.... (ML MSS312 A g56. Carbon copy of an unpublished manuscript “Memories of the Early days of Thursday Island” by Captn. S.G. Green.).

Once again Frank Jardine ruled Somerset, although in somewhat more isolation than before and with no official status. He lived there with his wife Sana until his death in 1919.

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*Plate 13: Somerset Bay from Albany Passage*
Plate # 51300 Courtesy of John Oxley Library.
Chapter 7

THE COMING OF THE LIGHT

“...the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned”\(^{11}\)

We watched as the vehicle approached, sometimes they came from Weipa to hunt for geese. But always they would leave again and the wind in the almond tree would echo with the cries and laughter of those past children of Mapoon.

The vehicle pulled up under the almond tree. Some of the people were old, they looked about them. One old man said quietly to himself “At long last I see my home”. He thought nobody heard... we did. And we recognised one of the people who had been taken from us. One of the lost ones who knew no language but who still belonged. The change had begun when that white man came with his strange and greedy god...they came and the world was changed forever...

In 1990, I travelled to Old Mapoon (see Figure 4) with Victoria Luff, Katherine Parry, Mabel and Jimmy Bond, Stephen Mark, Tom and Rose Ware, and Rocky Tamwoy. On this trip other people visited our camp from both the new settlement at Red Beach and from Weipa. Andrew Miller from Weipa was one of these and he contributed to the stories about the mission days. Freddy Toby who lived along the beach adjacent to the old mission site assisted with camp necessities such as hunting and clearing the well and shared the benefit of the elders’ stories.

The trip was arranged as the Traditional Management Module in the TAFE based ranger course that I was co-ordinating at the time, however the only Mapoon Ranger who attended was Tony Barkley from Old Mapoon. The Elders’ Committee at New Mapoon, which was established to advise the rangers, had specifically requested that Mapoon Rangers learn about their heritage and the history of

\(^{11}\) Matthew 4,16
the community prior to the forced removal of people from Old Mapoon in the early 1960s.

This trip and the discussions under the old almond tree at the mission site brought home to me the important formative role that the missions played in developing the communities as they exist today. Equally important are the places themselves, the old mission sites, in contributing to Aboriginal community identity in northern Cape York.

One cannot discuss Aboriginal history in Cape York since European invasion without referring to the impact of Christianity and the people who promulgated it. Not all missionaries could be described as having an unequivocally negative effect, and the religion they brought has been embraced by so many that the church is often an important part of Aboriginal community life.

The story of the mission period is also important in contemporary accounts. Illustrating these stories are many places scattered across the landscape but focused around the mission establishments. The visit to Old Mapoon was the catalyst for reminiscing about those days that are often referred to as pastaim or bufo deiz. All of the communities that I have had contact with in Cape York have a wealth of mission stories. And it is not unusual for a storyteller in the one story to recall these bufor deiz with longing while at the same time cry over some forced indignity or loss that dates to that time.

There is an inherent tension between these two dimensions of mission history. With distance and time it has become easier for people to see what that period cost them, but they still harbour feelings for the place that they laboured in, and perhaps for the period when there was some certainty and, compared to the post mission days of Government control, a level of prosperity.
Plate 14: Camping in front of the old Mission House in 1990. Freddy Toboy, Stephen Mark, Andrew Kennedy, Tony Barkley and James Bond Snr.

7.1 Early Missionary Attempts

In 1870, the London Missionary Society conducted a survey of the Torres Strait. Around the same time the southern part of Cape York Peninsula was beginning to open up. William Hann successfully led an exploration team from the Lynd River to the Stewart River and back in 1872. In the same years telegraph communication was established to the Gulf of Carpentaria and perhaps most significantly James Mulligan discovered significant quantities of gold at Palmer River in 1873.

The 1870s and 1880s were a period of expansion and discovery. Two major expeditions were launched in the 1880s. The Queensland Government geologist, Robert Logan Jack, led the first in 1879 from Cooktown northward to Somerset. The second in 1883 was led by J.R. Bradford to explore Cape York. The need to establish telegraph communications with Thursday Island was probably the most organised push for colonisation. Throughout the
1880s a series of telegraph stations were established as the line pushed northward. They became the focal point of white/black contact and the implementation of government policy.

The churches launched the other concerted attempt at colonisation. Although missionaries had attempted to establish a Mission at Somerset in 1866, obstruction from the local government official had meant that this attempt was not successful. It was not until 1891 that a mission was successfully established on the mainland in Northern Cape York. This mission on the mouth of the Batavia River was later called Mapoon and was established by Moravian Missionaries under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions. It was followed by the establishment of Weipa in 1898 (the original site was on the Mission River), Aurukun in 1904 and Mitchell River (Kowanyama) in 1905.

One of the supporting arguments for establishing missions in Cape York was for the protection of Aboriginal people from unscrupulous Europeans and others. Roth (1901) the Northern Protector of Aborigines, was an ethnographer who travelled amongst and reported widely on Aboriginal people in the Cape York area. He mentions Mapoon in his analysis of problems caused by the shelling and beche-de-mer industries. Roth spent the period 24th September to the 8th November 1899, in the area of Port Musgrave to Albatross Bay. Alleged abuses performed by those in these industries included taking young boys against their will and often leaving them stranded (see also Howard 1907 cited in Chase 1988:128 re Lloyd Bay area). Exploitation of women from Mapoon presumably occurred, as the early Mission Death Register included many cases of women, many of whom were not more than children, dying from sexually transmitted diseases. Ganter (1999) has pointed out that the proliferation of statements about abuses in the pearl shelling and beche-de-mer industries, which imply eyewitness accounts of such abuses, must be regarded as suspect. To illustrate her point, she identifies two separate
submissions on the subject, one by Douglas (QVP Vol 2 1894 pp14-15 in Ganter 1999:273) and one by Hey (1897 Mf186 AIATSIS cited in Ganter 1999:273), which were written 3 years apart but have almost identical wording. While undoubtedly injustices in the industries did occur it is likely that these may have been exaggerated and that in fact the real issue with the industries was the increased movement of indigenous peoples from one area to another outside the control of Government authorities, the ensuing transmission of ideas and increased independence of those individuals concerned.

Missionary endeavour is inevitably by nature paternalistic, predicated as it is on the assumption that Christianity is ‘right’ and ‘superior’ to the beliefs of the subject tribe, nation or community and that the latter can only be improved by being converted to it. In Aboriginal missions the strategy was to take and mould the children, and in this the missions were useful confederates to the Queensland Government’s assimilation policy (Loos 1988:113; Hey nd: 4 MLMSS 1893 item MLK2568).

All missions established under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions had common and clear objectives. The following extract is from a mission filmstrip lecture notes entitled ‘Aborigines at Ernabella’:

The purpose of the Mission is three fold- Firstly to act as a buffer cushioning the impact of Westernism on the primitive nomads, secondly to give them spiritual and mental certainty, economic capacity, and health security as the inevitable changed way of life comes to them; and thirdly gradually to build them up into a settled community with the new skills, knowledge and experience required for securing an independent livelihood as Christian citizens of a predominantly white Australia (Records of the Presbyterian Board of Missions MLMSS1893 Item MLK2568).

Missionaries themselves differed widely, although operations were subject to the Board of Missions ‘Regulations for Missionaries’ and overseen to some extent by the Board itself. In reality due to the remote locations involved, the individual representatives of
Christianity who ventured forth to run these stations shaped a mission's environment and had complete autonomy in day- to- day operations.

7.2 Old Mapoon – A Case Study
Mapoon is situated on the western side of Port Musgrave on Cape York Peninsula (see Figure 4). It was established on the 28th November 1891, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church by Moravian Missionaries, the Revd. J.G Ward (1857- 1895) and the Revd. J. N. Hey (1862 -1951).

7.2.1 Old Mapoon today
When I travelled to Old Mapoon in late 1990 the skeleton of the old mission house was still standing as an eerie reminder of the once busy mission. All of the other buildings had been demolished when people were removed to New Mapoon. A new settlement had sprung up at Redbeach nearby as some people continued to move back to the Mapoon area and establish houses. Along the beach several people had re-established their families on the site of the old mission settlement. Mrs Suzy Madua had re-established a small farm on the outstation site. Of the old mission, only the graveyard had survived relatively intact, even if neglected.

At the time of my visit in 1990 the mission house still stood as a substantial ruin. Unfortunately since that visit I have been told that the frame of the old mission house has been finally demolished. All that remains then to draw the eye to the old mission site is the big bush almond tree (Terminalia sp.) that still stands in front of the site of the old mission house. One cannot over emphasise the impact that missionaries had on the people of the area. And one cannot express fully the power of the ruined mission house to evoke an emotional response from visitors. As it stood at the time of my visit, it was a powerful symbol of the tragedy that had been perpetuated on the Mapoon people with their forced removal.
The complicated emotions aroused by memories of Mission days are probably typical of people’s feelings about other missions. Memories of missionaries themselves often get bound up with the place and all that is familiar leading to apparently conflicting feelings and attitudes to mission places. People can often express resentment at injustices both felt at the time and those events or restrictions re-interpreted in light of contemporary understanding and yet on the other hand recall a past time with fondness and nostalgia.

7.2.2 Mapoon -The history of a Mission Station:
A lot has been written about Mapoon, particularly regarding the later years of the settlement and the forced removal of the people by the Queensland Government in the 1960s (Presbyterian Board of Missions 1961; Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement 1962; Roberts, McLean, Parson & Russell 1975-1976). Few of these documents focus on the early days of the mission (but see Hey 1923; Presbyterian Board of Missions 1946). However, the Chief Protector of Aborigines the Revd Archibald Meston (1896) commented on the fine work being done by the missionaries at Mapoon mission station. In his report he comments on the lack of arable land and of the ‘problem’ of old men taking multiple wives. He also notes that the missionaries intended to establish a new mission south of Batavia, perhaps on the Hey River. He recommends against the establishment of such a mission because of the undisturbed nature of Aboriginal settlement and occupation in that area. His recommendations in this instance appear to have been ignored and the Presbyterian mission at Weipa was established in 1898 on the banks of the Embley River.

By the late 1930s, the mission station was a thriving enterprise. Captain C.A.S. Mansbridge (1939) describes the Mapoon mission station as ‘partly self supporting’. Copra was grown and transported to Thursday Island by the mission boats the ‘J.G Ward’ and the ‘Kuila’. Cattle were also fattened for sale and home consumption.
Mansbridge’s only insight into the lives of the local people is given in a description of a duck hunting expedition. He described how they waded into the swamp with a bush in front of their faces for camouflage. Seventeen ducks were shot with two cartridges. This method of hunting is still used today and the ducks and geese are still as plentiful.

Mansbridge (1939) describes the mission:

We were surprised at the neatness of and the huge number of native huts. These huts are mostly made of bark. Any cooking is done outside but a number of older people are partly fed by the mission... Among other things, building timber is transported to other mission centres and sometimes even to Thursday Island...cattle horses and many other things can be exchanged for the timber thus enabling the mission to support itself (Mansbridge 1939: 35).

It is interesting to note that Roth (1901) mentions the ‘problem’, reported to him by missionaries, of older men taking multiple and younger wives. This seems to have been a constant complaint raised by the missionaries to anyone who would listen.

Partly to address this situation and in part because of prejudices about the genetic strength and intelligence of Aborigines, missionaries practised a form of genetic experimentation by importing men from the Solomon and Cook Islands to marry Mapoon women. This was not a covert activity but one of which they were proud. So it was not unusual when introducing two people in a slide for the Rev. Hey to comment that:

... Jack himself is an Islander and was not trained at Mapoon but came here for a wife... It was quietly our endeavour to bring new blood into the race (Hey 1893: slide 48).

Ganter (1999:279) comments that

He [Hey] had now successfully appropriated the role of the male elders in allocating material resources and regulating sexual relations: he had restructured social relations from polygamous gerontocracy to monogamous patriarchy. Having condemned the elder males for having an interest in the liaisons of the young women, Hey now took it upon himself to order young women into monogamous marriage (Ganter 1999: 279).

Often missionaries, despite their good intentions, brought with them the baggage of their own ignorance and prejudices as well as the
current beliefs of their society and time. The records that missionaries kept often yield insights into these. For example, the Revd. Hey's notes, which were prepared to accompany a promotional slide show depicting the works of the missionaries in the Cape, describe Aborigines at Mapoon thus:

A group of wild natives taken just after Mapoon started 53 years ago. A careful study of their faces will show that they belong to a very low type. Strictly speaking they have no religion, in our sense - except we call a fear of evil spirits the innate [sic] good, the little of God is hidden and lies dormant, but it is not dead. He can be raised. The cord that has been broken will rise once more. The Aborigine belongs to the animistic races, a form of re-incarnation. Their ceremonials are mostly connected with various totems resting on superstitious beliefs - they have no revelations only traditions. Thus it appeared to the missionaries at first - notwithstanding, we gradually found they possessed a considerable amount of interlact [sic] and ability, the young are responsive to kindness, to teaching, much might be said but time will not permit. The Gospel of Jesus Christ - the good news is able to transform the lowest, as the following slides will show. It should be mentioned that the Aboriginal is seen at his best in the forest home in his native element. If closely observed, there we realise his wonderful staying powers, his clear observation of nature, and endurance, and his good humour- but when aroused he is a dangerous savage (Hey 1893)\textsuperscript{12}.

The Presbyterian Board of Missions Regulations for Missionaries dated 1948 \textsuperscript{13} clearly states that it is a requirement that missionaries learn the local language of the people amongst whom they are to work. The regulation provided provision for language examinations, which were compulsory. In mission stations elsewhere in Australia, such as Kunmanya this practice was observed and the result was that psalms, hymns and parts or the entire Bible were translated into these languages. However, for some reason this practice does not seem to have been followed at Mapoon, once again illustrating the amount of autonomy that existed in practice for missionaries.

The Revd. Hey quite openly boasted that:

\begin{quote}
The missions in the Gulf never went to the expense of printing parts of the Bibles or hymn books, nor did missionaries encourage pidgin English, which has been called 'crazy mixture of baby talk and slang' -
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Revd Hey in' Notes for a Lantern Lecture showing slides relative to the Aboriginal Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the Gulf of Carpentaria' Records of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in Mitchell Library MLMSS 1893 Item # MLK02568. [Note that Hey's spelling and grammatical errors have not been altered here]

\textsuperscript{13} Paragraphs 54-58 in Records of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in Mitchell Library MLMSS 1893 Item #MLK02570
The young Aboriginals learn the English language very quickly and in a few years almost the rich English literature was open to using. Almost from the first in our Gulf School we used the old discarded Government school books, without cost and today the young can hold their own in many ways with the European workers - As stockmen and sailors they earn often more than the white man in the same position. Many natives have a better Bible knowledge than their white co-workers that would not be possible if only the native language had been taught with its limited literature (Hey 1893).14

One cannot help noticing that these ‘benefits’, if one can describe them as such, did not last beyond one generation and yet the ‘cost’ of the loss of language was absolute. The last known Tjunganjti language speaker died around 1990 in Weipa. At that time Stephen Mark, an old man himself, said that most of his generation, the first generation mission children, did not know any language as they had been taken into the dormitories and from that time taught only English.

In the example above we again see the view that European literature will ‘better’ the Aborigines. Significantly, the dormitory system was an orchestrated strategy practised by missions to separate and distance the young from their parents and traditions (Loos 1988:113; ML MSS 1893 ctn 4; Jacobs, Laurence & Thomas 1988).

Perhaps even more poignant is the comment provided by the Revd. Hey to accompany a slide showing children playing at the mission. He writes:

At play. To achieve the desired result, a variety of healthy games and clean sports have to be created, suitable for native conditions, otherwise their empty loveless lives grow sour and healthy strong development would be frustrated, hence a playground is to be found at every Mission Station (Hey 1893 ML MSS 1893 Item# MLK02568).

While one does not doubt that the children enjoyed the playground, the concept that this somehow filled their 'empty loveless lives' and

14 Revd.Hey in' Notes for a Lantern Lecture showing slides relative to the Aboriginal Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the Gulf of Carpentaria' Records of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in Mitchell Library MLMSS 1893 Item # MLK02568.
substituted for the loss of daily contact with parents and involvement in traditional activities is heartbreaking.

Mapoon people who were first generation mission settlement children do not know their parents' full names nor much detail of their lives and specific country. Missionaries gave people a single name based on either a play name that the individual may have already had or a borrowed Christian name. Children of these parents simply took on their father's name as surname. For example, Stephen Mark's mother was called Connie and his father Mark. Mark presumably did not really answer to this name, as according to Stephen he was not a resident of the mission but one of the 'wild natives' from up Seven Rivers way. Stephen was given his father's mission name as a surname (Stephen Mark pers. comm. 1990).

Hey was not sensitive to the issues of names and identity and he played down the cultural impact of taking over the role of naming children,

I envisage to give two names to each baptismal candidate, Deindidtschi is Jimmy's real name, his father, brother and sisters have the same name…i have entered both names for him because we have several Jimmies. As far as I can tell Deinditscy [sic] has no special meaning. It is a very old name and there is a little bird here by the same name. I could not make out whether the name stems from the bird. I am not especially fussed about beautiful names or their meanings, otherwise I might have chosen a nicer name but I do not wish to interfere too deeply with the existing conditions, only to shake off the sinful (Hey 1897 in Ganter 1999: 270).

People feel this loss of language and genealogy perhaps more than any other impact of Christianity. Regardless of what they know of their culture, they are always more conscious of what they do not know and hence Stephen Mark's lament

And look today we no sabbee our own lingo, our languages, we no sabbee em. We bin lo dormitory all the time. Wish we could bin stay with our father and mother. Our Father or mother one well they speak language…today only English (Stephen Mark Tape #1990).
This is not to say that strong bonds of attachment, affection and in some cases respect did not form between missionaries and the people whom they sought to convert. Once again, the Revd. Hey summarised this well in the caption of one of his slides:

... One of the Missionaries recorded in her journal 'When I first came face to face on my landing, with the natives, what a scene. A crowd of dirty humanity covered with all kinds of sores and dangerous diseases, a breading ground for swarms of flies. I said to myself I shall never love these people. I would have given anything to be home again in Europe.

This very place has in the course of time become a second home and to say farewell was harder after all than my arrival many years before (Hey ML MSS 1893 Item# MLK02568 slide 74).

Undoubtedly some missionaries, especially those like the Rev. Hey who spent a long period of time at this mission, came to recognise and respect some of the qualities inherent in Aboriginal people of the area. For example, in describing a scene at Aurukun, Hey writes:

Preparing for a fight probably ending in talk and threats. These people have a wonderful control over themselves, knowing very well that bloodshed (not murder) would mean serious prolonged trouble on account of their law of revenge (Hey 1914)\textsuperscript{15}.

This recognition of logic and validity in the traditional practices suggests a greater degree of insight into the traditions of the Mapoon people than one would expect given the level of intervention imposed on the community by the missionaries. It is a good example of the ambiguities in the relationship between missionaries and the subjects of their endeavours.

The period of missionary control at Mapoon was not without controversy. In 1909 an incident in which a female Aboriginal person at Mapoon was physically punished by Revd.Hey became the subject of intense media debate. The \textit{Messenger} August 27\textsuperscript{th} 1909 ran an account of the 'Mapoon Inquiry: Government Resident’s Report’. The Brisbane \textit{Courier} dated Nov 10 1909 ran several letters to the editor predominantly supportive of the

\textsuperscript{15} Another lantern lecture This one written c. 1914 Records of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in Mitchell Library MLMSS 1893 Item # MLK02568.
Missionaries, about the incident. The *Truth* ran a Sunday series colourfully critical of the missionaries and the government, outlining the inquiry and its findings commencing December 5th 1909. Interestingly the official mission records in the Mitchell Library do not contain information detailing the event but merely include tantalising references by the Hey’s in their correspondence to their ‘troubles’.

It is difficult to ascertain exact details of the alleged incident although clearly the missionaries were unused to have their freedom to punish those in their care questioned in any way. Regardless of what actually took place, it seems clear that the actual lodgement of charges against Hey by a disgruntled Mission employee Mr Baltzer, was motivated by spite rather than ‘conscience’, as they were brought to the attention of the authorities so long after they took place. One wonders then how often in the period that the mission was operational had similar questionable incidents occurred. The charge as relayed to the Police Magistrate, Hugh Milman, was that:

…one of the inmates of the institution namely a halfe caste girl named Ellen or Nellie was beaten in school for something that she had done to Mrs Hey, viz striking her, she being the teacher for the day: that in consequence in the course of an hour or so, i.e. after school was over, was taken and tied up to a post by Mr Hey and Mr Baltzer and that while there she was flogged by both these men with two stingaree tails, receiving more than 100 cuts in all: that the girl cried very much: that she had only light dress on at the time: that after receiving about that number of cuts her head fell back and she gasped, when Baltzer loosened the ropes quickly and the girl fell slowly to the ground: that Mrs and Hey and Mrs Ward and the children and a number of natives were present while Ellen was being beaten; that Mr Hey then took and anchor chain, passed it around Ellen’s neck and round the post and locked it: that Mr Hey brought out a tar pot and painted her face over the eyes and mouth and that she laid there in the sand for two days and was moaning and was there for four of five days: that Mr Hey would take dirty water from the ends of the kitchen spout and pour it over Nellie’s face and body: that Mr Hey ordered that she should only be given a small bit of food daily and that one of the native women was told that food was not to be given or she would be treated in the same way.

The Police Magistrate goes on to conclude that following the Inquiry he finds that the charges were exaggerated in that

...Ellen did not receive 100 cuts but only 20 or 25. She had on at the time in addition to her dress a thick flannel petticoat and possibly a chemise in addition. She was not tarred over the eyes and mouth, but only on the forehead. Dirty water was not thrown over her daily by Mr Hey but possibly on one occasion that accident occurred. She was well fed and not kept on reduced allowance while in confinement; that in my opinion no bleeding took place from the wounds.

He also states that he found ‘no suggestion of cruelty or harshness on the part of Mr Hey.’. The other Magistrate who heard the Inquiry was Mr Frank Jardine J.P and his opinions on the matter were in stark opposition to that of Mr Milman. He concludes that

After listening attentively to and carefully considering and weighing the evidence taken at Mapoon Mission Station on the 12th, 13th and 14th days of August 1909, in the case of the half caste girl Ellen- or Nellie- I am of the opinion that the punishments inflicted by Superintendent the Reverend Nicholas Hey and his assistants therein were carried out with unnecessary harshness and undeserved severity; more especially so when their calling is taken into consideration (Frank L Jardine HOM J60 1910/4388 QSA).

The Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Mr Richard Howard was also present during the hearing and believed that the charge against Mr Hey was serious and proved. He also states that it is clear from the evidence that other ‘natives have been beaten in a more or less severe manner, with the full knowledge of Mr Hey’. Significantly he points out that

The Regulations give the Superintendent of a Reserve authority to administer corporal punishment but provide that if such punishment is given to the inmate who is over the age of 16 years the Superintendent must at once report the matter to the Chief Protector. I have no knowledge of any such reports reaching me (report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals to the under Secretary, Home Secretary’s Dept 16/8/1909 HOM J60 1910/4388 QSA).

One of the problems of course was that at the time that the enquiry took place the incident was already 3 years old and so it came down to the word of a discredited former employee against the Mission Superintendent. It is unlikely that Aboriginal people when questioned would have answered very frankly so long after the event. No doubt the Aboriginal participants in the incident had no wish to rake up the matter and disrupt their lives and security. The fact that the incident was not addressed at the time that it occurred
and was only being addressed as a result of a fight between two white people would have clearly indicated to many that this was not about addressing an injustice against Aboriginal people but about one white person winning against another. One of the factors highlighted by Milman as proving that the incident was not serious was that Ellen had written to Mrs Hey on several occasions in the years following the incident expressing the wish to return from Thursday Island (where she was in service) to Mapoon. This does not necessarily indicate any great affection for the Heys but only a homesickness for friends and family in Mapoon. One could however ask why the missionaries had a barbed ‘stingaree tail’ whip if this was an isolated incident?

The Revd. and Mrs Hey ran the mission for 35 years. It seems to have been economically successful and visitors appeared impressed with its progress and appearance while Hey was in charge. The mission station appears to have deteriorated rapidly after he left. A report of an inspection of Cape York missions by the Board of Missions in 1941 states:

Mapoon has suffered greatly by the too frequent changes in the management and administration resulting in the lack of settled policy in the workings of the Station. Mapoon has been in existence now for 50 years. Of this period Revd.N Hey was in charge for 35 years. In the succeeding 15 years there have been no less than 7 or 8 changes in the Superintendents; this has had an undesirable effect upon the people who are unaccustomed to change, and on the working of the Mission, since each Missionary in charge has pursued his own policy. This lack of continuity in policy is detrimental to the Mission financially, and in every other way. As an example - At the outstation there is a good church building, erected some years ago because the Missionary in charge at that time considered it necessary to have a church building to meet the requirements of the people there. Today that building is not in use, the door is closed, the building is rapidly deteriorating because the Missionary in charge has centralised Church services at the Mission Station on the grounds that one well attended service is better than two poorly attended ones, and that riding out to the outstation in the heat on a Sunday afternoon, for the few people attending, does not justify the expenditure of energy necessary for this, and breaks in upon the Missionary's opportunity for rest necessary to keep them fit for the work of the week (Board of Missions 1941).
7.2.3 The economics of life at Mapoon Mission

Many non-indigenous Australians have only a vague idea of what life on a mission may have been like. There is often an assumption that people were freely provided with food and clothing funded from church fund raising efforts. At many missions however the reality was quite different. At Mapoon people had to pay for food and clothing and housing. Only the children in dormitories were provided with ‘free’ food and clothing. Others either got paid in goods for labour on the mission and mission enterprises or paid with money if they had outside work. In such cases the pay of the person went into accounts held by the missionaries and could be redeemed in goods from the mission store. Fishing and hunting remained important to adequately feed the family. Stephen Mark recalls (Tape # 1990/2):

Well when we come up in age, we come out from dormitory Well you gotta work we gotta go work lo Boat, we sign lo boat now we go lo Sarree Tinkler, we sign lo Sarree Tinkler he send mepla go trochus? Island. We stop there. .... we buy all red calico, buy all singlet we no get enough wages we only get about £2.10 a month. When we discharged now well when we come home we chuck that money here by the shelf big (Sign language, laughter [Sue - I don't think that can translate to tape- Baby boom days!] laughter). if we no got enough money we got stop two or three months. We watya callait got £2pound 10 a month, not enough money when we come home we can't pay our own tucker. When we stop here lo mission we got to have dry coconut for damper bread. Ee got work for them man who work but they only give em like ration. From mission before ee bin very hard we bin live a very hard life. Like we, you look today we no worry if we get small tucker. We can stand because we didn’t ...from our early days we bin learn the hard way until today we luk when we swim. Mus be im bin dead, I no luk im I luk father Hey and Mrs Ward but them two lady bin two sister one bin married to father Hey and one to Mr Ward.

The swamps at Mapoon are still renowned amongst Aboriginal people in northern Cape York for their magpie geese, duck and other waterfowl. They also supply the Mapoon delicacies rindi (freshwater turtle), gweeny and punja (the latter both parts of the water lily).

Oh small wanyu callit but you get when swamp all dry. Unless swamp ee dry ee hard. Them sort of bullrush the sort of grass- you look under them kind and ee got them round... good when you smash em up, roast em in ashes Yeah. No that swamp ee no gad. They got what you call "gweeny" but you no got. If you go inside today that alligator come out lo you you either got a speedboat or something. We all the time go swim
inside unless that lily ee too much you get caught you know... you follow that stem go up. The flower ee dead you got that fruit ee called gweeny and underneath that fruit ee we call em quafu them old people ee go, skin bark carry em go home. Thats how we bin live before if ee no got punja and them lily we wouldn't be here today. (Mark 1990: tape #1990/2).

7.2.4 The destruction of Mapoon

In 1963 the Queensland Government removed the residents of Mapoon at gunpoint, put them on a boat and took them to Bamaga. Stephen Mark recalled this event:

Mr Stephen policemen. Proper cheeky policemen that one before. Em bin com here. All bin right down there. It bin low water take all people make em all walkabout go round down lo beacon there, I sit down I no follow them go. All tie em up them wannem you call coconut leaf - make light. Right down there lo beacon All jump go lo boat, the Gleam - morning em leave. Big lo water like all sit down there watch all take em lo boat then morning I bin go for drop my swag I want to catch that boat to but them bin tell me - no you stop you're not coming. I said what for they said no you go look after this place. Everyone bin go All big lo water right down there lo what you call it.

Everyone bin go... nobody. I bin sleep dere first down lo Jubilee Harrris house. All go lo boat all sleep morning drop anchor and go but What could we do now. Them other mob em bin go Weipa My two sister there lo Weipa, Ethel and Margaret all stop there...wife blo Billy Miller. Ethel...em and Margaret bin go there now, Till today all stop there. But I stop here lo Bamaga because I bin here when policeman bin come long boat. Me and that coon there Billy and George Williams. And I bin go morning and sit there lo point.... all bin sleep lo boat but I bin stop here lo < and that Jim Harris bin tell me 'I kum after’ so. Then that school hose and that Church bin go up lo flame ... too bad! Thas ol Barkley who bin build all lovely big church Old man Barkley father blo Willy Barkley.

That Tower [Church] they bin take em go Aurukun and all... bin go. ... We can't do nothing now because what the government say it goes. We can't do nothing If the government says remove you from Weipa then we gotta go. We got own policemen there. They police and they take you ... The black policemen ee get paid by the government our own colour ee's a policemen for DNA too. The moment you punch him you go Stuart Creek16.

I bin here, when all my people bin shift from Mapoon- I bin the only man bin live here. I stop there down where Jubilee Woodley house I stop there, I stop there where Mission house I got 3 carpenter, bin come for break the church lovely church. Where they go ee called sweet corner - I no bin go, my wife bin go I stop here. Dempla speak for Flora - Stephen Mark em still live? I live long coconut! Jim Harris say he go come back but I sit down here but no noise, I sit lo point but no noise I sleep here down and then 3 carpenter bin come DNA bin send them Dem all bin die, non alive now. What I say ee go be long long time before I die.

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16 Stuart Creek is a Queensland goal at Townsville, well known to Cape York Aboriginal men.
7.3 Other Mission Stations in Northern Cape York

The experience of people at Mapoon was not dissimilar to the experience of other people living on a number of mission stations operating at that time in Cape York.

7.3.1 Weipa

Weipa Mission was originally situated on the Embley River, which runs into Albatross Bay about 100km south of Port Musgrave. The mission was about 80 miles upstream from Albatross Bay. The mission was later relocated to the location of present day Napranum Aboriginal Community at Jessica Point (see Figure 5).

The Mission was founded in 1898 by the Revd. and Mrs Brown, despite the Revd. Meston's (Chief Protector of Aborigines) advice to the contrary. The word Weipa is recorded by the missionaries as meaning 'hunting ground'.

While from time to time tensions arose between the Queensland Government or its representatives and the missionaries, on the whole, Church and State worked hand in glove. The Chief Protector of Aborigines therefore was an occasional visitor to mission stations. From the 'Event Diaries' at each mission, however, it seems as though his visits were of short duration and spent entirely in the company of mission officials. It is therefore unlikely that these visits placed any real scrutiny on the missions, in spite of the fact that missions were dependent on the goodwill of the Government for part of their income and a trouble-free existence. At times the Chief Protector would be called in to add weight to missionary directives or endorse their approach (for example see outline of the Chief Protectors ruling at Men's Meeting at Jessica Point dated 25-10-31. ML MSS 1893 CY Reels 874). Missions were expected to enforce Government directives pertaining to Aborigines such as the official memorandum regarding sale and use of liquor by Aborigines on reserves.
The Diary of Events at Weipa contains frequent references to work being carried out on the extensive gardens and plantations. A system was in place where people worked for pay on the mission farm/plantation and also maintained a separate community garden. Several outstations were established.

The Court Books for Weipa illustrate the total control of all aspects of people's lives that the mission wielded. The vast bulk of charges were for adultery and even temptation via the sending of messages. For example, a Mr Y was charged with having sent a message to Ms X suggesting that he wanted her to join him ‘in sin’. The suggestion never came to anything so Ms X was completely exonerated, however, Mr Y was suspended from work as a stockman.17

Often the punishment for these offences was carrying loads of wood and other menial tasks for the mission. It seems then that it was in the interests of the missions to encourage such petty charges. These courts operated with selected community members and the missionary presiding over them. The fact that Weipa appears to have had more recorded incidences of temptation and adultery whereas Mapoon had more charges of fighting and/or arguing with only some temptation and occasional adultery, probably says more about the focus of the missionaries than about the behaviour of Aboriginal people in these communities. The court books poignantly illustrate the amazing intrusion into the personal lives of adults that was part and parcel of life on a mission.

7.3.2 Aurukun

Aurukun was established on the Archer River some 80km south of Albatross Bay. It is approximately 8km inland. It was opened by the Revd. and Mrs Richter in 1904. The word Aurukun is recorded by

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17 This is a real example of one such entry however I have deliberately not recorded dates or names so as not to embarrass anybody. See Weipa Mission Court Books 25th March 1936- 24th May 1943. Item 6(8) CY Reel 3568 Mitchell Library.
the missionaries as meaning ‘lagoon’. In addition to the mission settlement, a large reserve comprising over 7000sq mils was set aside by the Queensland Government at this time for the sole use of the natives in the care of the mission. Aurukun mission although established contrary to Meston's recommendation, was supported by the Queensland government who subsidized it to the extent of £500 per year.

The Queensland Government also assisted the Mission by ‘stocking the Mission reserve with suitable cattle for grazing, to develop the country and to help the natives successfully to establish a pastoral industry. Fat stock is sold in the markets of Queensland' (Hey 1893 slide 23).

Plate 15: Church house at Aurukun: (note the steeple which is the handmade steeple from Mapoon Mission Church that Stephen Mark refers to).
7.3.3 Lockhart River

Until his death in 1923, the area around Lloyd Bay, now known as Lockhart River (see Figure 6), was controlled to a large extent by an Irish settler named Hugh Giblet who had established a trepang station there. Following his death the Anglican Church with the support and sanction of the Queensland Government established the Lockhart River Mission Station at Orchid Point in Lloyd Bay. However, they found the location to be unsuitable and moved it a year later to Bare Hill.

From the outset this mission appeared to struggle economically for its survival. This was perhaps because of the era in which it commenced as well as because it was not part of a small relatively close network of missions such as those established by the Presbyterians on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. In the 1960s the Anglican Church successfully negotiated with the Queensland Government for its withdrawal and the commencement of direct Government control.

The experience of people at Lockhart was similar to that of Aboriginal people at other missions in some aspects, but it also differed from some of them on several significant points. This may be due to the later establishment of the mission or to the promotion of the

..'holiday’ system where people were encouraged to go bush for extended periods in the early dry season, after the monsoon rains had ceased, to reduce the mission expenditure on rations at a time when funding was miniscule (Chase 1994: 74).

Unlike at Mapoon, a significant degree of Aboriginal ceremony survived the mission period at Lockhart River and while people were, as in other parts of Cape York, discouraged from using their own language, some language survived (this is also true at Weipa).

Other people in Cape York for whom language and ceremony are

\[\text{At the time of most of my visits to Lockhart River I was predominantly pre-occupied with locating and identifying places related to World War II. I did not record any stories relating to the mission period.}\]
indications of power and knowledge acknowledge this difference as significant. Hence Lockhart, Weipa and Aurukun are known to other Cape York peoples as places where individuals have strong magic. The magic or sorcery of others is still feared in Cape York and in fact to some extent protection from sorcery may be one of the considerations in conversion to Christianity. Blessed oils, blessing salts and holy water feature heavily now in the daily protection against sorcery in northern Cape York communities (see for example Chase 1988:136).

While at some communities, Aboriginal ceremony was completely absorbed into the church resulting in indigenous ceremonies, which were primarily Christian, at Lockhart River Aboriginal, and Christian religious ceremonies have survived as separate but complimentary practices.

At Lockhart River old and new religious forms were practised side by side. These are the traditionally based Bora initiation ceremonies, and Christianity focussed on a local church. The latter is marked both by the mission-planted tradition and Aboriginal adaptations. While each is perceived as a discrete tradition with its own structure and leadership, there has inevitably been some interaction and cross-fertilization between them (Thompson 1988:263).

Thompson also comments that:

Both Bora and Church, however, are under severe restraint because of the secular institutionalizing of beer drinking and the subsequent alcoholism, which inhibits other community-scale activities (Thompson 1988:273).

Since that time Bora practice has become even more disrupted with longer periods between ceremonies. Several powerful figures have died which, combined with the lengthening time periods between ceremonies, threatens the survival of Bora.

Contrary to popular belief the location of Bora sites is widely known amongst the community and when I visited Lockhart with family from Injinoo in 1989, I was warned to be careful in the vicinity of the
beer canteen because there was a Bora place not far behind it in the scrub and at all cost I was not to go there.

In 1963 when part of the Lockhart community had been relocated to Umagico, the practice of Bora was still strong and a Bora Ground was created there almost immediately. The location of the old Bora place behind Umagico was generally known to older Umagico residents during one of my visits in 1989. While some people were a little wary of this area, others advised that it had not been used for many years and so had ‘lost its power’. The area has now been redeveloped for housing in a recent expansion of the community.

7.3.4 The area north of Seven River

In 1866, two Englishmen the Revd. F.C. Jagg, an Anglican priest and Mr William Kennett an Anglican lay teacher, arrived at Somerset to establish the first mission in Cape York. They had been sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. They commenced a small school for Aborigines, which concentrated on English language lessons and practical skills such as carpentry and sewing clothes (Bayton 1969).

They did not have the free reign to carry out their task that characterised the other mission endeavours in Cape York. There were many tensions between the Royal Marines stationed there, Jardine and the missionaries (see again Chapter 6). With the withdrawal of the Royal Marines in 1867, resulting in the total control of day-to-day events by the Police Magistrate, the missionaries found their situation untenable. Consequently, in 1868 Kennett and Jagg left the settlement. It was not until 1871 that missionaries, this time the London Missionary Society, again set foot at Somerset and then it was only as a springboard to New Guinea.

Following the early but failed attempt at establishing a mission at Somerset there were no official missions established on the
mainland north of Lockhart and Mapoon. However the settlement of Cowal Creek, which was established sometime around 1911-1915, came under the religious oversight of the Anglican Archdiocese of Carpentaria and a Torres Strait Islander deacon was stationed there around 1923 (Long 1970:165).

Not much is known about the catalyst for formation of the settlement of Cowal Creek. There are several versions of the story of how and why the settlement was formed (see Chapter 5). The community was never organised as a Mission Station as such, although clearly the Church of England representatives wielded great influence over the community. Jomen Tamwoy (see Appendix H) one of significant figures in the history of Cowal Creek, talks of being sent there in 1936 by the government to take over the school from the Church ‘missionaries’ although a government Torres Strait Islander teacher had been stationed there in 1924 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Bleakley 1961:158). Today the rectory next to the local church at Injinoo (Cowal Creek) is still referred as the ‘mission house’ even though technically there was never a mission. This reflects the great influence that the Islander teacher and deacon wielded in Cowal Creek. They have became important figures now commemorated in local monuments and family stories.

7.4 The Last Years of the Mission Period
Towards the end of the 1950s the cold winds of change began to blow across the northern Cape York area. The post-war environment was not as profitable for the missions and discussion at the Board of Missions and General Assembly level began to focus on the need for re-organization and rationalisation of mission stations.

During 1956, Enterprise Exploration Pty.Ltd., carried out extensive prospecting for bauxite in the area. Based on the outcomes of the survey, the parent company sought mining leases with tenure of 100 years over large parts of the Mapoon, Aurukun and Weipa.
mission areas. Suddenly the very landscape which supported life was being threatened. The Church was very aware that they had not prepared Aborigines for an invasion of this magnitude.

Mission policy has been set to progressive tempo of spiritual and temporal progress aimed at assimilation over 2 or 3 generations... The Mining Development envisaged in such a large scale means the sudden penetration of reserves with white community life.

From the first they did not dispute the right of this invasion, although they sought to accommodate the mining and Government interests while securing some concessions for Aborigines.

The 1957 Annual Report to the General Assembly of Australia deals at some length with the issue of mining and its potential impact. At that time the favoured proposal was to merge Mapoon and Weipa and move Weipa to a new site to accommodate the development of the mining village and infrastructure at Jessica Point.

The mission set about negotiating on behalf of Aboriginal people with the mining company. It is not at all clear from the Board of Mission records just how much input Aboriginal people had into developing the basis for these negotiations. In the 1957 Annual Report it was stated that the safeguards and concessions by the Board of Missions were:

- Compensation claim
- Recurring maintenance costs
- Provision of pastoral leases on areas of Reserve ceded to Company under the mining tenure
- Grant of lease at Weipa Mission Station for Mission compound to preserve historic setting of Mission and enable chaplaincy and welfare work to be carried on for white and coloured population.
- Provision of houses in the township for carefully selected aboriginal families, on the same favourable terms as white families.
• Guarantee of Port and Airfield facilities at Weipa and Mapoon.

• Preservation of hunting and fishing rights on continuing reserves and their water borders.

• Preservation of Aurukun, Mapoon, Weipa compound and cattle outstations situated on mining tenure as Native Reserve subject to present provisions of the Act for the protection of the aborigines.

• Guarantee of labour preference for aboriginals of Reserves on an agreed basis.

• Annual consideration of the Company of certain Scholarships for higher education for suitable scholars.

Up to the present, unanimity in negotiation [between the Qld Govt, mining company and missions] has been reached on the following points:

(a) Neither Departments of Health and Home Affairs nor the Queensland Committee on Aboriginal and Foreign Missions would raise objections to mining lease being granted subject to certain safeguards.

(b) All were agreed that it would be in the best interests of the aborigines at Weipa for the present site to be ceded to the Company. Present thinking of Company was that Jessica Point area was logical site for port, township and airport.

(c) Under questioning Mr Mawby unhesitatingly assured the Conference that the Company felt obliged to assist the Mission to lift standards of living of all Mission Stations in consonance with new standards to be introduced into the reserve by the erection of a new village, provision of water and electricity and in assistance to other Missions such as Aurukun.

(d) It was agreed that no difficulty would be raised in relation to exclusive pastoral rights for the native people. The Government could grant the 100 year mining tenure applied for; the Company could designate each decade the area required for mining, thus freeing the rest of the area under mining lease to the Mission for pastoral pursuits.

(e) The white inhabitants of the township would require some area of land in the environs for freedom of movement for hunting etc.

(f) The Company would be prepared to make houses available within the township to aboriginals recommended by Government and Mission in conformity with their policy.

In the thinking of the Committee and the Department of Native Affairs, the majority of the Weipa natives should be transferred from the present Weipa site. Aurukun must also be built into a first-class Mission calculated to condition the people spiritually to the new factors penetrating the reserves, to raise living and educational standards so that skill of the aborigines in homecraft, hygiene and white men's trades might bring them closer to absorption within the new social conditions that will exist in a decade's time (Board of Missions 1957:MLMSS1893 MLK2569).
This document is particularly interesting in that it corroborates the recollections of Weipa Elders, including Joyce Hall (now deceased) who told me in 1990 that one of the big injustices was that Aboriginal people had been told that the land would remain theirs and that areas mined would be rehabilitated after mining and given back to the Aboriginal people but they had now found out that the government was keeping it (i.e the land reverts to Crown Land not the reserve or DOGIT).

Around the time that the Presbyterians were negotiating the closure of Mapoon and the possible closure of Weipa, the Anglican Church was also negotiating to withdraw from Lockhart. The days of mission stations were drawing to a rapid close.

7.5 Conclusion
The mission period has been largely overlooked as an unfortunate aspect of Aboriginal cultural experience, which was responsible for the loss of traditions and culture. Few of the mission sites have been maintained and several have been deliberately destroyed, resulting in a convenient erasure of the physical heritage of the period. However, in northern Cape York the mission stations continued into the early 1960s. Therefore for many people 40 years and older, life on a mission was part of their life experiences. These experiences contribute to their identity and that of their communities.

The mission period also provides an opportunity to study the transformation of Christianity by Aboriginal people into an Aboriginal cosmology as well as the process of cultural change in ceremonies and practices. For example, the adaptation of Bora ceremonies at Lockhart to accommodate Christian belief systems or perhaps the Christian belief system to accommodate Bora (Thompson 1988). House opening ceremonies in Edward River (Taylor 1988) and Aurukun and tombstone openings in Injinoo also provide examples of the incorporation of Christian elements into traditional ceremonial
activities. In all of the missions it was necessary to maintain traditional fishing, hunting and gathering skill for the day-to-day survival of the family and in some instances these were developed into large-scale economic enterprises. Custodial practices in relation to land and resources continued in many places with increase sites and ceremonies still widely known and practised.

An understanding of the history of this period is necessary to understand the character of the present day communities in Cape York. Through tracing the cultural continuities and transformation one can provide a much more dynamic view of the Aboriginal heritage of this period.
Chapter 8

WINDS OF WAR AND TIDES OF CHANGE

8.1 Pioneers, Soldiers and Adventurers:

It was never the same after that first old man. The strangers would come and play mischief with the people, but they always went away in the end. Even the first old man went back where he came from into the sea. But his son stayed. He made another strange camp at our spring close to the people’s ceremonial ground and called it Lockerbie. It was strange; perhaps he sensed our presence selecting our spring, making inroads into our scrub. At first we let him come building his small dwelling. But then he began taking over the land, making it obey his will and bending it to his way. The scrub grew smaller and the spring water no longer spilled free for the people. The stranger planted trees: mangos, limes, cassava, tea, and rubber.

And here so many years later the marakai woman was tracing his steps. Into the scrub she ventured, too fresh to be afraid. Perhaps we could have fun with her. But wait, she had been here before! You could see by the way she glanced quickly into the shadows that she knew us now. Some of the people had told her about our ways...but did she really know the rules. This was our scrub and those who entered were in our power unless they knew the language that spoke to all of us and even then we might choose not to grant safe passage. Many of the people had ventured here in the past. Sometimes we would confuse them and lose them in the scrub. We could play tricks with their minds, which would keep them lost for days. Yes, let’s lead her this way, to where the track disappears.

It was 1989 and my fourth trip to Cape York, I had planned to record the site of Lockerbie, but things as usual were not going to plan. I had brought a theodolite with me but as was my luck in this strange country, it was not working. Now I would have to wait until another one was flown up. I could almost accept that as Mrs Sagigi would explain, the short people had a hand in this. Every field trip since I had commenced this project I had had problems with technical equipment. Cameras, tape recorders and now theodolites! Before each field season these things would be carefully tested and cleaned but invariably these would fail me when it came to the crunch in Cape York. It is common knowledge amongst the communities of northern Cape York that the various mischievous spirits such as the short people of the scrub and the red devils of the coastline and islands, take great delight in interfering with gadgets, especially anything electronic or technical.
While I was waiting I decided I would go and look for Jardine’s rubber trees that were reputed to still exist inside the scrub behind Lockerbie. I couldn’t quite suppress the slight shiver of nervousness as I passed into the cool depths of the tropical scrub. This is another of the haunts of those short people. Shielded from the forest by my 4WD I plunged on down the track which ran clear and fresh until all of a sudden it petered out and I found myself stuck, jammed tight between two trees which did not look quite strong enough to hold me but obviously had been underestimated. My companion Kerry Navin and I got out and surveyed the situation. The saplings would not budge! This would be a long and hot job as we had left our axe back at camp. The only likely tool we had was a small folding geo-spade.

I called out into the forest: “I sabbee yupla!” and then I called the words I had been taught and, not knowing the language of the area I explained in ‘Broken’ what I was doing here. Kerry thought I had gone quite mad but I shrugged, better safe than sorry. To banish the last vestige of nervousness we started to chop down the tree to sound of Motown at full blast singing “Good Lovin’”. Had we been accompanied by Injinoo people they would have pointed out that we were breaking the rules by drawing the attention of the short people to us with loud music. It took a long time but we got out without further incident.

19 These are not the red devils of some stoney coastal areas who are partially covered in shells and of a non-human appearance. The Lockerbie scrub is the province of short people (see Chapter 4) who are not so malevolent but definitely not to be trifled with.
Plate 16: Tangled up in Lockerbie Scrub

Lockerbie was, according to local accounts, a sort of experimental farm, established by Frank Jardine. The permanent spring at Lockerbie which is now marked by a large stand of bamboo, provided water for his orchard, and the soils were better than the sands at Somerset. A visitor to Lockerbie on 25/7/1896 found corn, pineapples, bananas and pawpaw growing there (Jack 1921:342). However, I have been unable to find any official records of a lease dating back that far.

Lockerbie is also significant as one of the places where Wymara fought a running resistance fight. Ann Hall claims that Wymara came from down the east coast. However the Mapoon Mission register of Births, Deaths and Marriages notes the marriage of Wymara Snr aged 60 and a widower married Betty Fletcher, spinster of Mapoon, in 1940 and it lists his occupation as a gardener at Cowal Creek and his tribal affiliation as Seven Rivers (MLMSS 1893 MLK 2544 CY 3568). Using the shelter of the rainforest, Wymara was able to mount forays into Lockerbie and
steal flour, horses and other items. Ann Hall, the daughter of Dick Holland and sister of Stan Holland (both of whom ran cattle in the area for a time) who used to live at Lockerbie, claims that by his old age both Wymara and Jardine felt a ‘sort of respect for each other’ 20. This sentiment appears unlikely and out of character for Jardine. It is also unclear how Mrs Hall could have possibly have had memories of this, as Frank had died before she had arrived in Cape York. It is more likely that these memories emanate from tales that she heard from her father who had been in the area for some years and which had been softened by the passage of time and through translation into stories suitable for children.

Another Aboriginal person who never became resigned to Jardine’s presence was Kaio. Kaio is described in Ion Idriess’s novel ‘My mate Dick’21 (1962). Kaio is described by Idriess as ‘… an old rogue or Aboriginal patriot, whichever way you look at it’ (Idriess 1962: 11) and referred to him as ‘Kio [sic] the cunning’. He reports that Kaio was a constant threat to Frank Jardine. Idriess’s first meeting with Kaio was on his trip northwards after escaping from police custody over 400 miles from home.

During the construction of the telegraph line Frank Jardine discovered some good cattle country around the Ducie River and established Bertie Haugh as an out station there (Jack 1921:342).

8.2 Neighbours in the Wilderness

In reading contemporary and post contemporary accounts from white settlers in Cape York one is struck by the consistent images of ‘pioneer, isolation, lone frontiersman, hardship and danger’. While there is no doubt that life would have lacked the convenience of the cities it is surprising to note how far from reality these images were when applied to this northern most tip of Cape York.

20 Ann Hall pers comm. 198? Anne is the daughter of ‘Ginger’ Dick Holland who worked at Lockerbie with Frank Jardine in the latter years of Jardine’s life.
In particular one must remember that the Torres Strait and for some time Albany Passage were major world shipping ways and most boats which passed through this area would have stopped to trade news and supplies. In addition, once Somerset was established, other entrepreneurial types were drawn to the area. One of these was Jack McLaren who established a coconut plantation on the west coast not far from Somerset. He wrote an account of his sojourn at Utingu called ‘My Crowded Solitude’ (McLaren 1926). The title of his book could be taken to mean the solitude of a white man amongst the indigenous population or a contrast between his expectancy of solitude and the amount of sea traffic and visitors that this brought.

Certainly on reading this book one does not realise that at the time that it was written, Frank Jardine and his family were near neighbours to the North at Somerset, Alice Jardine was living at Pyra and that the telegraph station22 and the resident operator and his family were only a few kilometres north along the coastline. Cyril T. Dick Holland (known as “Ginger” Dick Holland) was also resident in this area by 1913. Reality, then, belied the romantic claims of McLaren that “neighbours were non existent” (McLaren 1917).

Amazingly McLaren embarked on his venture apparently with no other labour or assistance because he assumed that the local Aboriginal people would work on his plantation. It doesn’t seem to have occurred to him to discuss this with them prior to his arrival with his equipment and coconuts, nor did he enter into labour agreements with them, as, for example, Hugh Giblet did in the Lloyd Bay area (Chase 1988). It appears that unlike Jardine, McLaren was able to develop a reasonable working relationship

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21 The title is a reference to another Cape York character, Dick Ahern, a gold miner from the Wenlock gold field during the 1930’s.
22 The Telegraph stations at Paterson and McDonnel were built in 1886 and were opened the following year.
with local Aborigines. He depended on them for the success of his venture.

More [Aborigines] showed up later and proved very helpful. They had a useful knowledge of axe work, and their intimacy with the characteristics of the local bush was of great value. Of trouble with them I had very little. At first some of the older men were inclined to resent my taking their land, but a little diplomacy soon fixed matters. Most troubles with blacks can be got over by the use of discretion. In all the years I have been at Utingu- the native name of the place I selected for the plantation - I have never known them to steal anything (McLaren 1917).

The picture presented is a very different one than that painted by Jardine who at various times justified his actions on the basis of claims to have had cattle and equipment stolen from him. McLaren also met Kaio who reportedly caused Jardine so much trouble and found him a skilled bushman and reports that he was originally gaoled for a tribal killing which was within traditional law (1926:53).

Although it is hinted at but not explicitly discussed in his book, McLaren had a relationship with an Aboriginal woman. The Mapoon Mission Register of Births Deaths and Marriages records that in 1940 a Nicholas Wymara, bachelor of Cape York whose parents are listed as Jack McLaren and Annie got married to Marjory Warwick, spinster from Mapoon. It may have been his willingness to engage in physical work with the men, combined with his relationship with Annie that helped to establish what appears to have been a more congenial relationship than that of Jardine.
It is interesting to note that of the 25 acres of coconut trees planted by McLaren few remain today. McLaren held this land as joint tenant in common with William John Graham. The latter does not appear to have ever resided at Utingu. The land was held on the basis of a 20-year agricultural farm lease\textsuperscript{23}, which commenced in 1914 (even though McLaren claims to have got an official lease in 1911 McLaren 1926:26) and was cancelled on the 20-1-1926. McLaren and Graham's lease was over portions 3 and 6 County of Somerset, Parish of Seymour.

McLaren's account of his time at Utingu is frustrating in its lack of detail and tantalising with the insights it sometimes reveals. For example, he never says what name the Aboriginal people called themselves although it appears likely that they were the remnants

\textsuperscript{23} Qld State Archives LAN P489 Torres 1-7
of the Gudang. It is clear that they were separate and often in
dispute with what he calls the ‘bush-tribe’ people who presumably
were remnants of the Yaidagahna. McLaren gives an interesting
account that frustratingly lacks detail about a visitor from this tribe
who incited the people at Utingu to strike. One wonders whether
this was Wymara who was active in the area and as has been
noted apparently involved in long guerrilla battle with Frank Jardine.
McLaren describes this man as being a visitor from another coastal
tribe brought back by the people to Utingu. Sometime before
McLaren left Utingu, Ginger Dick Holland arrived in Cape York; in
fact one wonders if he was one of the visitors mentioned by
McLaren in his book (perhaps the crusty gold prospector) that
stayed at his house. Holland stayed a mere two years in the area
when he departed to serve in World War I. He did not return to
Cape York until 1931 when his family accompanied him. He left
again during World War II and did not return until 1953 (People
magazine 1953:12-13).

Anne Hall (nee Holland), his daughter, claims that ‘Ginger’ Dick
Holland worked as Frank Jardine’s partner and that as a result of
this ‘partnership’ Jardine bequeathed Lockerbie to him. Such a
bequest does not appear to be documented and would appear
surprising if true considering that Holland had only spent 2 years in
the area and had left some 4 years before Jardine died. Actually
Cyril Thomas Holland did hold a pastoral lease at Laradeenya.
His son Stanley William Holland whose address was given as Red
Island Point, held leases at Cody Hill and Richardson. The latter
was further down the Cape and in 1952 was transferred to
Roderick Clever Heinemann and is now part of Bramwell Station.
The lease for Cody Hill (Holding number 4707) was issued to
Stanley William Holland on the 1.7.1949 and was due to expire on
30.6.1982 however it was resumed for ‘Departmental purposes’, to
create the Northern Peninsula Area Reserve, on 26-3-1966 (QSA

24 Qld State Archives c/331-593
DUP A/47706 Cody Hill Register Entry). It is likely that there was much more interaction between the white settlers than one is led to believe in McLaren’s romantic account of his sojourn at Utingu.

8.3 Northern Cape York in World War II

World War I caused scarcely a ripple in northern Cape York. It is likely that the Aboriginal inhabitants of the area were unaware that Australia was at war. World War II, however, brought the action right to the doorstep. This time war brought permanent changes to the Cape, partly because of the legacy of infrastructure left by the departing forces, which made the area more accessible. With improved infrastructure came more travellers and greater government intervention. As elsewhere in the country the post war economy spelt the end of many rural ventures including the mission stations and the pearling and beche-de-mer industries, which never regained their pre-war status.

After the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific in December 1941, the Japanese offensive developed southward towards Australia along two main lines of advance. The first was from Malaya, through what is now the Republic of Indonesia, towards the Northern Territory and North Western Australia. This advance reached what is now West Irian (then Dutch New Guinea). This eventually precipitated the Allied response, which included the occupation and the defence of Merauke, a response that was organised and supplied from North Queensland. The second advance began from Truk, in the Caroline Islands, on to New Guinea and to the British Solomon Islands protectorate, and probably posed a more direct threat to North Queensland Wilson 1988:5).

So many years after the end of the war there is still debate on whether or not the perceived threat of invasion to Queensland was

25 For more details on Australia and its role in World War II see ‘Australia in the War of 1939-45’ edited by General Gavin Long and produced by the Australian War Memorial. It comprises 5 series of various publication dates.
ever real. Some sources maintain that in reality Australia was never under any real threat of invasion and was only a target in so far as it may have been necessary to eliminate key military targets. However in hindsight it appears more likely that North Queensland was saved from attack by the debate that diverted the Japanese High Command. The Japanese High Command was divided into Navy/Army loyalties and opinions. The Navy favoured the immediate invasion of Australia; the Army felt that this would overstretch its resources. At an Imperial conference held on March 1942 it was agreed that the focus would be on capturing New Guinea including Papua. From this vantage, air supremacy could be established over North Queensland and the Coral Sea.

Whether or not Australia was ever under direct threat of invasion or not as the war moved closer and New Guinea was attacked North Queensland became the most important Allied base in the southwest Pacific area. It remained important until 1944-5 when the war moved away from New Guinea.

Australia was in an extremely vulnerable position. The United Kingdom was fully committed in Europe and the Middle East and fighting desperately to keep sea-lanes across the Atlantic open, therefore Australia could expect little help from them. In mid March 1942 the United States of America agreed that it would take primary responsibility for the Pacific Area, including Australia and New Zealand.

Luckily, the need for the Japanese forces to consolidate their gains plus the foray of the Japanese Navy into the Indian Ocean in April 1942, allowed some breathing space for the Allies and by the time the Japanese advance resumed in the New Guinea/ Papua area in late April some of the AIF had returned to Australia from the Middle East and the American ground forces and substantial air forces had been committed to the Southwest Pacific. Those forces were initially based in Australia.
At the time of the Battle of the Coral Sea, there were many unsolved logistical problems for the forces in Australia, particularly the air force. Of these, long distances combined with a relative lack of infrastructure, was probably one of the greatest (Craven and Cate 1983:423-424; AWM 54 243/6/54; AWM 54 628/2/1; Casey 1951). This created the problem of transporting and storing large quantities of high-octane fuel when all the bulk storage facilities were located in the South of the continent, for example. Rail gauges were not standard and road infrastructure in the north was non-existent. The only solution was transhipment over water (at a time when a shortage of shipping was another of the problems facing the allied forces) with exposure to the possibility of enemy attack and requiring a large supply of fuel drums. The evidence of this can be seen in large dumps of rusting fuel drums scattered around the Peninsula.

Heavy Japanese attacks on coastal north Queensland remained a distinct possibility until the USA and the Australian strategic victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea (4-11th May 1942). The Battle of Midway early in June 1942 (see Craven and Cate 1983:451-462 for an account of the battle), severely reduced Japan’s aircraft carrier force and probably meant the end of the real invasion threat for Australia. This was not known however at the time, in fact the term 'strategic victory' is a very much a view from hindsight. At the time however the Battle of Midway did not look anything like a *victory* for the allies. The issue was not really clear until by early 1943, the Japanese had been defeated at Milne Bay (near the southeast tip of Papua New Guinea); on the Kokoda Trail (Northeast of Port Moresby); and at Gona and Buna (east of Kokoda on the east coast of PNG), with a parallel American victory in the southern Solomon Islands around the Guadalcanal Island.

In 1942, North Queensland felt threatened and exposed (Wilson 1998). As the apparent balance began to swing in the favour of the Allies, with increasing numbers of troops, aircraft and war materials
reaching North Queensland, the area began to reach its full potential as a forward operational base. Most combat contact was through the air forces. American and Australian aircraft based in North Queensland, patrolled and fought over vast areas under Japanese control. Townsville and Mosman were raided briefly by night, while Horn Island received a number of daylight attacks. North Queensland ports and bases supplied the nearby Papuan and New Guinea battle areas. Ships using the northern naval facilities were operating in the dangerous waters of the Coral Sea, opposed by Japanese air strength based in Lae and Rabaul.

From the end of 1942, the focus of the war or at least the immediate threat of attack, began to move away from North Queensland, which slowly changed a forward operational base to a replacement, repair, re-enforcement and retraining base.

8.3.1 Relationships between the Defence Forces and the communities of Cape York

The war years were an interesting mass of contradictions. For the first time Aboriginal people in the area met white men en masse who did not necessarily regard them as inferior. There are some detailed accounts of the relationship between Torres Strait Islanders and the army and analysis of the political and social change that ensued (Beckett 1987:84-5). However, relatively little is recorded about the relationship between Aborigines and servicemen on the northernmost mainland. This is despite the fact that there were several large bases on the mainland and in some areas there must have been regular contact with the various defence personnel (for example Goody Massey talks about camping near Mutee Head and the friendly soldiers). It seems clear that there must have been trade and other relationships established and in some areas it is likely that the servicemen became, to some extent dependent on Aboriginal communities for supplies of fresh
food. For instance a confidential report of the early construction progress on the Higgins Field landing strip notes that ‘rations were extremely poor. Some native fruits and vegetables were purchased locally from a nearby Aboriginal village to help supplement the diet’ (Official American War Records of WWII. Base 2 the Bayonet of Australia Vol1: 28). This was particularly the case with radar stations, which were often remote and poorly resourced and only intermittently supplied and often distant from other allied resources. 

March 16   Arrived Archer Bay. Welcomed by Missionary and natives. Selected camp site and camp struck inside Northern Point of Archer Bay.

March 17   Mission natives helped unload approx. 100 tons of equipment via two boats lashed together

(Series 64 # 311 Radar Station ARCHER BAY –Aurukun. See Appendix E).

Similarly, passing remarks in unit histories note that Aborigines provided assistance to Allied Forces when on the 22nd February 1943 a Beaufort crash-landed at Mapoon on the west coast. A ship was sent from Horn Island to rescue the crew. The war diary of 25th February notes

08-11 berthed Horn Island at 1210 hours after a rough trip from Mapoon. Rescue carried out without mishap. Hospitality, received by personnel from the Mission Station was excellent (Ball 1996:219).26

In most cases the larger bases, airstrips and other infrastructure required to mount the war effort were situated close to existing Aboriginal missions or settlements, for example Iron Range airfield and Higgins Field. However, official correspondence relating to the construction and siting of these facilities (AWM 64 16/1; AWM 60 168/2/59 and AA Series MP729/6 Item 16/401/631) does not refer to the existence of these communities and the location of neighbouring communities is not shown on plans and maps drawn by the defence forces. It is likely that the co-location of these facilities with Aboriginal communities was not accidental. After all, these communities had existing services and infrastructure of sorts,

26 Extract from official diaries of the RAAF #28 Operational Base Unit at Horn Island in Torres Strait Force (Ball 1996).
such as jetties, landing strips and telecommunications, which could be utilized to unload and construct additional facilities. In general the RAAF history sheets for radar installations contain more references to interactions with Aboriginal people than can be found in army references and even these are scanty. It would appear that the more remote and isolated radar stations which were not close to other defence force units for example #313 Radar Station (Mornington Island) and #320 Radar Station (Mitchell River) had a greater dependency on the Aboriginal people at the nearby missions for both provision of food and labour than did those that could call on army labour (see Appendix D).

During the period of my research in the area, whenever I came across people who had served in the area I questioned them about relationships or contact with local Aboriginal people. However, I was usually met with the answer that they had all been evacuated. While this was true of Hammond Island (Esileena Nawia and Melita Lutta talk of being forced to move to Moa during this period Tape# 1991/4), Horn and Thursday Island it was not the case elsewhere in the Torres Strait nor on the mainland. On Thursday Island all non-serving personnel were evacuated south (AA Series A518 Item# FK16/2/1), as were the women and children of Hammond Island. Hammond Island at that time had a Catholic Mission operating which included an orphanage. These people were all evacuated to Cooyar. Most of these children were not returned at the end of the war but appear to have divided between various other places (QSA A/15996 Mission Schools 1938-41).

It is likely that social interaction with local Aboriginal people was actively discouraged because of perceived security risks due to their unknown loyalties and relative freedom of movement. One government report notes that:

...Seven Aboriginals and half castes, some of whom have been previously employed by CCC [Civilian Construction Corp] recently returned from Mapoon Mission on the Gulf side of the Peninsula and were re-employed. It's understood that they freely discussed Australian
and US troop concentrations in the Wyper River area and there does not appear to be any form of restriction on the periodic movements of this type of itinerants (Marks nd: 31).

Further north on the mainland and in the Torres Strait there were often questions raised about the 'loyalties' of locals due to the long relationship with Japanese people in the pearlimg industry.

Much of the initial construction work was undertaken by the US Engineer corps, which had a large contingent of black Americans (Lee 1966: 603-4). Although the period of their involvement in the region was brief they must have been a source of conjecture and curiosity for Aboriginal people in Cape York. Here were black men in uniform acting and speaking like white men and yet official files once again fail to provide any insights, rather confining themselves to nonhuman details in official memorandums and reports such as:

The construction of the airfield [Iron Range], and the improvement of the access road to the port were undertaken by the 46th Engineer Regiment of the U.S.A.F.I.A as a directly controlled U.S.A.F.I.A project (A705/1 Item number 7/1/1484) 27.

One can speculate about Aboriginal impressions of the US 46th Engineer Corps, the black Americans. For many people in Cape York these black men who talked so differently must have been intriguing. After being told about them by Caroline McDonald but unable to find official accounts of their time in Cape York I had begun to doubt that the Engineers had been one of the black American contingents until I came across this reference:

16th August ... Two signal personnel were sent to Cape York with a 101 Set to provide communications with a U.S Engineers Company (Coloured Unit) which was constructing an aerodrome approx. twelve miles from Red Island Point (Ball 1996:195, see also Lee 1966) 28.

History says little about the relationship that developed between the missionaries; mission Aborigines and the Servicemen who often found themselves stationed at these isolated outposts. Hall (1987) describes the active involvement of some Aboriginal and Islander

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27 Memorandum from the Secretary of the Allied Works Council to the Director General of Allied works Qld. Australian Archives Mitchell A705/1 Item# 7/1/1484.

28 Extract from War Diary of the Signals corp in Signals (the Story of the Aust Corps of Signals 1944 as quoted in Torres Strait Force by Reg Ball 1996 p 195.
men in the war effort but does not for the most part go into the relationship between the services and the surrounding communities. In some cases while it is clear that missions supplied labour and food to servicemen Hall points out that:

While these mission histories mention the impact of the war years on northern mission stations, they leave many questions unanswered. The Mission histories are really the history of the white missionaries and the Aborigines merely the backdrop to their activities (Hall 1987:9).

At Iron Range, near Lockhart River Community, one ex-serviceman Bill Moran (who was a photo interpreter attached to S-2 in the 90BG at Iron Range) recalls borrowing an outrigger canoe and blasting fish with grenades. The resultant catch was shared with Aborigines who roasted them on the beach (Marks nd: 27). Every so often in historical accounts of the war in this area there is a fleeting mention of interactions with local Aboriginal people, often in circumstances where they are lending aid and even though few details are recorded such as names or conversations, it is difficult to believe that further social interactions did not ensue from these contacts. For example, one of the officers, Jim Trench, sent to pick a site for an airfield at Iron Range records the expedition, capturing the isolation and ruggedness of the countryside. The party had left their Rapide aircraft on the beach and was able to locate a suitable site after a long walk through the scrub, with the aid of a local miner, Jack Gordon. Trench recalls:

With the help of an Aborigine we made our way back to the Rapide by a far more direct way than we arrived. Without a word the Aborigine led us through a sheet of water about half a mile wide and about 5’ deep in the middle (Marks nd: 21).

8.3.2 Life goes on

As previously mentioned, all white residents of Thursday Island and the northern Cape York area were evacuated. A few white civilians apparently remained around the Portland Roads area near Lockhart. Only the Aboriginal people remained in the northern peninsula area and despite the unsettling presence of so many strangers and the world events unfolding around them, for many
Aboriginal people in Cape York life continued on much as it had been before. The Aboriginal population were used to the environmental conditions, which played havoc with the construction plans and health of the RAAF and the army. The Americans in particular were affected by the continuous rainfall. Dale Kruger US Service Squadron recalls:

...We had two closed trailers for a machine shop and we mostly devised or made our own shop buildings- at Iron Range it rained and rained so we had it pretty miserable...One time out of the blue there came 2 Aussies and 3 of the natives driving several ranch cattle through the jungle. We couldn't believe our eyes. Here we were in a war area and these guys didn't seem to care (Marks nd: 29).

Aborigines from Lockhart and Cowal Creek, for a time at least, dispersed into the bush after the bombing of Horn Island. This was in part a response to the direct threat of attack but also a necessity born of the lack of government rations, which had previously augmented their diet. One government report records in relation to the Lockhart community that,

...Owing to the failure of Government rations to arrive a short time ago a large number of natives have again 'gone bush' for sustenance in the area (McDonald in Marks nd: 31).

At Injinoo there were mixed reactions to the influx of people from the war. Several of the men served in the war working on pilot boats and coast watch but most did formally participate. The Aboriginal elders are reported to have been concerned for the people, especially as there were a couple of instances of nearby aerial shooting. However the young undoubtedly enjoyed some of the excitement.
Caroline 'Samurai' McDonald (nee Tom) was 20 years old when she married her husband Jerry McDonald. They had a house at Red Island Point near the big almond tree, and worked at Lockerbie where Jerry was a stockman. Samurai helped Mrs Holland with the cooking. Together Jerry and Samurai travelled out mustering stock. They supplied meat to the army. She recalls (Taped interview # 1988/4) that the Americans came only briefly to build the jetty, road and airfield and then they left and it was Australians who replaced them. The Australians were friendly and people used to like to yarn with them.
One of the things that Samurai remembered about this time was the excitement of the dances and the first picture theatre, which operated at Higgins Field. Every Friday, Badu and Murray Island men stationed at Mutee Head would walk come down to Cowal Creek. Young people enjoyed the excitement that these activities brought to their lives but older people were not so enthralled with the changes that these strangers brought with them. The old people were frightened of the noise of gunfire and so the people of Cowal Creek moved back ‘inside’ the scrub but only for a day or so.

8.3.3 Aboriginal involvement in the Armed Forces
At the outbreak of the war the Aborigines were discriminated against in terms of jobs and working conditions (See Beckett 1987). Hall (1987) highlights the dilemma faced by the armed forces, that is the need for manpower vs taboos against Aborigines enlisting. The war also had another indirect but nevertheless significant effect. It meant that finances were directed away from McEwens policy for advancement of Aboriginals towards rearmament. The Commonwealth government now had a chance to put assimilation policies into practice in the armed forces. Throughout the war the services remained torn between their desire to maintain the 'stability' of the Services by excluding the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders from enlisting and their desire to tap this manpower, to exploit potential military skill, such as bushcraft, local knowledge and survival skills.

Hall points out that by 1941, the army had begun an aggressive recruitment campaign which saw the enlistment of over 800 Torres Strait Islander and Aborigines for the defence of the Torres Strait (AA Series MP742/1 Item#247/1/194; AA Series MP508/1 Item#247/705/56). This was despite the army’s official policy of opposing Aboriginal enlistment. However, the Army’s concern with preserving the status quo in the area resulted in the adoption of various discriminatory practices against its Islander and Aboriginal
soldiers. Despite armed forces policies isolated Aboriginal men did serve in the regular forces. One Cowal Creek man served in the Middle East, Mr Solomon Woosup (uncle of Mrs Samurai McDonald and father of Mr Snowy Woosup).

Plate 19: Torres Strait Light Infantry in training. Photo T117218 Courtesy of the John Oxley Library

Wilfred Bowie was around 19 years old when news of the war began to effect life at Cowal Creek. He was employed by the army in the boat patrol engaged mainly in transporting supplies and equipment between the mainland, Thursday and Horn Island. Wilfred recalled (interview Tape # 1988/3) that although the Americans built the main road, wharf and the jetty at Red Island Point they then 'went home' (actually north to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea) and the Australians took over. It was once the Australians were settled in the area that Aborigines had most contact with the soldiers. Every weekend they would have dances with both 'inglis and ilan dans'. There are corroborating references to 'native dancing' in the operational records for the Mutee Head
radar station. For example an entry for February 1945 notes that the 'Commanding Officer invited by Lieutenant Lane to see the natives dancing at the mission-Cowal Creek' (see Appendix D).

A group of 'Island boys' were based at Mutee Head. They were involved in building the road and camps at Jacky Jacky, reporting planes sighted and trading fish. Wilfred's youngest sister was a nurse on Thursday Island during the war and he had an uncle (Solomon Woosup) in the Middle East.

Phillip Wasaga was 22 years old when he joined the Army. He rose to the level of Corporal before leaving. He helped build the water reservoir at Bamaga and Higgins Field air base. He recalls that both American and Australian forces were involved in building Higgins Field camps and an underground hospital at Goode Island. In an insight into the darker side of the occupation of Cape York, Mr Wasaga claims that he was drafted into the army. "If you did not volunteer there were guards with guns that shot you!" (Tape # 1988/3). Conscription of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people was not official practice and was certainly inconsistent with army policy. Mr Wasaga's story though provides some insight into the pressure and fear through misinformation that were felt by Aboriginal communities in the area and it is possible that local white authority figures 'encouraged' active co-operation/enlistment in this way.

Thomas Silas Woosup (Tape # 1988/3) was 10 years old at the time the War came to Cowal Creek. His father, a Seven Rivers man, was in the water transport unit and stationed on Thursday Island. He recounted the popular belief that the Japanese did not bomb Thursday Island because a Japanese Prince had died there. A searchlight was installed on Cowal Creek football field so that people could watch for enemy planes. He reports that there was an underground hospital at Higgins Field as well as underground wireless operations. It was a repeated story amongst people who...
had been around during the war that there were extensive underground installations around Higgins Field but it is generally accepted that these were filled in with army debris, although it is unclear whether the bulldozing was done by the Department of Native Affairs or the army. The former is likely given their propensity for bulldozing other places such as Somerset and Blue Valley. This was usually done to prevent people from moving out of the communities and squatting in these structures. Regardless the area around Higgins Field must be viewed as having high archaeological potential for research into the World War II period.

8.4 Conclusions
The war was another watershed for change in the northern Cape York and Torres Strait area. Prior to that the far north had been largely dominated by a small coterie of white station owners (Frank Jardine, Ginger Dick Holland, Stan Holland, Jack McLaren and the Telegraph Station personnel). The recorded history of the area is dominated by their exploits and against this background Aboriginal people are seen variously as a potential labour force or as an irritating impediment to development. Closer scrutiny however, reveals that the Aboriginal people of this area had a strong will to survive and a desire for independence which is signalled by the establishment of Cowal Creek, and the continuing resistance of key figures such as Wymara and Kaio. Further south the missions had consolidated their positions and control over peoples lives and most had also developed successful enterprises.

Following World War II the situation throughout Cape York was markedly different. Many of the Europeans and Japanese from the area, who had been evacuated or interned, did not return. For many there was nothing to return to as the armed forces had taken over, used and often destroyed property and business premises. The previous trade and economy no longer existed. The missions were all closing their operations and the government determined to take over the active management and control of the area. Soon
after the end of the war the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) Reserve was established. And yet there were also undercurrents of unrest amongst indigenous peoples of the region. In the Torres Strait particularly, people began to more actively question conditions of employment and the amount of government regulation (see Beckett 1987:62).

The physical changes to the landscape of northern Cape York have proved more ephemeral (see Chapter 11). Most of the sites created by the armed forces have been reclaimed by the tropical vegetation and suitable materials have been recycled. The more permanent physical legacy of the period such as the jetties and air fields have been totally incorporated into the lives of the people to the extent that they do not retain a noticeable identity as World War II monuments.
Chapter 9

BIPOTAIM

We are the short people. Red devils occupy parts of the adjacent stony coast but our home is here in the sand dunes and forest. Before the Marakai came to our land the people were plentiful and they roamed the land. They understood the land and called out in the language of the country to seek permission, as they should. Many of the people lived at Putta Putta and Sandago. Their fires flickered, bright stars in the blackness of the night dunes. Freshwater springs yielded life-giving water. The reefs provided crayfish, billum and jarum and behind the dunes the people encouraged the man and woman yams and the fruit trees to grow. The people did not want for food and they were happy and belipul.

Sometimes we would see canoes coming down the coast from Muralag and Nurapai. We would watch as they stealthily approached to attack the people and steal their wives and daughters but these attacks were few and if the people saw them in time they would run to the lakes where the spirits are strong and the spirits would shelter them. The marauding parties were never game enough to venture there, the opportunity for ambush and counter attack were too great.

The people also moved to the lakes when the weather turned fierce. There they sheltered from the wind, which would turn the dunes into a blinding fog of stinging sand. We would watch as they mended their tools. The lake country belongs to us but we recognised the language of the people when they called to us. Long ago at the start of time we had taught the people how to call out when they entered our country.

Times change! Diskaintaim we stand guard over the bipotaim sites left by the people. Their tools lay forgotten. Their spirits still gather on the western shore of the lake. Occasionally the strangers enter in their machines but we do not show ourselves. We lie in wait for the unwary who will trespass in our country without observing the rules. From time to time we amuse ourselves by getting them lost. We make their ‘head go round’ and they sometimes wander for days before we release them. Sometimes we stalk them, letting them feel our presence as a shiver down their spine so that they break pace and run in a panic. We will not allow harm to our places or those still occupied by the spirits of the people, these must be protected.

In the shadowy half-light of evening we watch the shades of the bipotaim spirits as they go about their chores, and it is almost as if the strangers had never come!

9.1 Prehistory as Part of a Continuum

‘Bipotaim’ literally translated ‘the before time’, is the expression used to describe the days before people’s living memory and experience (see Chapter 4). This includes all the events which led to the formation of the landscape - the time of the spirit ancestors.

In northern Cape York, particularly Weipa, Injinoo (formerly Cowal Creek), Mapoon, and Umagico, the effects of removals and general
dislocation have resulted in many events and associated places which occurred earlier than say a generation before white invasion being relegated to the bipotaim\textsuperscript{29}. For example, the stone arrangements at the tip of Cape York and nearby areas are described by Injinoo people as belonging to bipotaim. There is to my knowledge, no one alive today who has a direct knowledge of how these places were used but they can understand them within the context of similar places elsewhere in their country and they recognise them as being part of their ancestral past, bipotaim.

Bipotaim relates back into what archaeologists might call the prehistoric record or the pre-contact and beyond that again into the genesis of the earth itself. However, unlike Western concepts of ‘prehistory’ and ‘antiquity’ bipotaim is active in the present in that the spirits at bipotaim sites can effect human activities in the present and therefore work to modify the current events. The archaeological sites at Putta Putta (see Figure 2) relate to the bipotaim and such places are often described as belonging to the bipotaim people. Putta Putta has also a more recent connection to pastaim (see Chapter 5) when the Jardine brothers first settled nearby and even bufor deiz when people alive today still utilized these sites and recall events and incidents from their youth. One of the known massacre sites occurs in this area. The coastal area adjacent to this place is still used for seasonal camping and is an important fishing place. In fact public access to Putta Putta site has only really been curtailed since it has been recognised and protected by the community as an archaeological site in recent years. Other areas used by the community nearby have not been set aside in this way but still show evidence of archaeological material and are also understood to be occupied by the spirits of the people who lived there before. In this way Putta Putta demonstrates continuum of time from the most ancient days of the bipotaim,

\textsuperscript{29} This is consistent with the use of the word ‘bipotaim’ in the Torres Straits which Anna Shnukal notes ‘commonly refers to the period before the coming of the light’ in Broken: an Introduction to the Creole language of the Torres Strait, pub ANU 1988
through to pastaim the historical past, and into the bufor deiz of people’s actual experience and into the present day or diskaintaim.

There are many places that are evidence of bipotaim. Whereas in western society we might interrogate the past asking numerous questions about how and why things may have been, Aboriginal people in northern Cape York do not display a comparable curiosity about bipotaim but rather an acceptance. That is not to say that there is not an eagerness to hear the stories describing bipotaim events of people, but once told, the details are taken to be self-evident. For instance, if a place or landscape is ascribed to events in bipotaim people rarely exhibit curiosity about material components such as artefacts. The fact that the landscape or place exists is proof of the veracity of the story. If artefacts are present this is taken to be no more than expected, given the truth of the story. If artefacts are not present, this is immaterial and it is likely that the spirits have chosen not to reveal them to you. It is assumed that such places are still inhabited or at least watched over by spirits of bipotaim people. When as an archaeologist I have seen artefacts not previously noted by people it is often remarked that the spirits must like me (meaning they ‘approve’ of me and my purpose) and that is why they are showing me things. Therefore there is an interesting interaction between the act of discovery by the archaeologist and the act of revelation by the spirits, which is in itself evidence of the continued activities of bipotaim in the present.

Bipotaim places include sites that are obviously of a ceremonial nature. For example Ida Point near Evans Bay where there are extensive stone arrangements comprising large peaked and elliptical stone arrangements; the tip of Cape York were there are large stone circles and Peak Point which is an important story place associated with the increase of turtles. They also include places which evidence occupation such as Putta Putta campsite, Murine stone quarry and campsite, Roonga campsite (see Greer 1995), the Pudegah (Evans Bay) campsite that was a trading place.
between mainland Aborigines and Islanders (Moore 1979) and the large shell mounds at Weipa (Wright 1971). People rarely express surprise when one points out an archaeological site that was not known to the community as it is accepted that this must be a ples blo dempla bipotaim people.

The concept of bipotaim is best described as a tapestry arising from the beginning of creation that forms a backdrop into which, the threads of pastaim and diskaintaim are woven. Unlike western linear concepts of time, the bipotaim does not stop at pastaim but exists alongside it. Therefore, beings from bipotaim can affect/interact with people today at certain places or in certain circumstances. The landscape is the constant around which time, people and events unfold, converge and separate.

Often I have found that a place, which is known to be important to the bipotaim, also contains archaeological evidence, even if that evidence has not previously been recognized by people as belonging to the bipotaim. Obviously such places are important verifiable evidence of cultural continuity. One such place is the series of lakes that string along the East Coast behind the dunes. Several of these are quite extensive and they are known as dangerous places and not just because of the crocodiles that lurk within. These are the lakes reported by Greer to be an important stori ples in the Wamera Story (Greer 1996). A number of archaeological sites are present at these lakes.

Wamera was a boy who left his mother after accusing her of greediness in keeping the best yams for herself:

The boy dug up a water vine and went underground at Inangapudan [Fishbone - near Jacky Jacky Creek], dragging it with him. He passed through the earth like a corkscrew or fence-post digger, emerging at a number of spots. At such points a pool of water was left behind...This story explains the creation of the many lakes and waterholes along the east coast. Finally the boy emerged at Payra near Somerset, and as he passed he formed the Albany Passage which separates the mainland and Albany Island" (Greer 1996:113).
9.2 What happened in the bipotaim?

In the bipotaim, the landscape as we know it today was created. This was not a cataclysmic event but the ongoing effect of beings and their interaction with the physical landscape. I know of no accounts of bipotaim in northern Cape York that deal with the formation of the land mass itself. There appears to be rather, an assumption that it was there before people, although not perhaps before the short people or the red devils as these were also here before people (see for example Laade 1967:91-94 who records McDonnel River peoples stories and McConnel 1936). Thompson discusses the complementary accommodation of Bora and Church in Lockhart and points out that:

> Traditional religious beliefs begin in a created world in which totemic ancestors formed features of the land and imparted their traditions. These ancestral beings had unique powers but they are not conceived of as divine in a theistic sense (Thompson 1988:273).

Hence in the story of Wamera the land already existed but as a direct result of Wamera's actions the water bodies were increased with the creation of a series of lakes and springs and the Albany Passage, as well as the incidental creation of a least one island (Albany Island). Greer (1996) has suggested that this story might be a description of rising sea levels and the creation of the Torres Straits. This gives the bipotaim a depth of greater than 6,000 yrs B.P.

It is not surprising in an area where European invasion and subsequent interventionist policies have had such a great impact, that stories of earliest creation of landscape features may not have survived. It is not possible therefore to draw any conclusions therefore about the maximum time depth of Aboriginal occupation in the area beyond that it appears to date to at least sometime prior to 6,000 B.P as people were present to observe and explain the effects of the rise in sea level. Few radiocarbon dates have been undertaken in Cape York and no deep archaeological chronology has been developed for the prehistory of the area (but see Wright 1971 and Moore 1979).
Several other *bipotaim* accounts add weight to the notion that Aboriginal people in Cape York observed changes to the coastal landscape. One such story is that of Shiveri (pronounced Chiviri in Injinoo) \(^{30}\). McConnel (1957) recorded this story and compared it to stories of Kwoiam from the Torres Strait concluding that the stories related to one individual. In this story Shiveri creates the Islands and sandbars of the Torres Strait as he travels to Mabuiag Island from Old Mapoon on the West Coast of Cape York Peninsula.

Below is an abridged version of the story as she recorded it,

Once Shiveri [sic] and Nyunggu lived at Langanama (Janie Creek) [near old Mapoon]. Shiveri's home was on the north side of the creek and was called Mbranyapwana (sandbeach). Nyunggu lived on the south side of the creek at Kuringa...

Shiveri was always making dances. He did nothing but dance-morning noon and night. When the sun grew hot, he would spell, then begin again and dance all evening till midnight...

Shiveri made a drum out of pandanus tree wood with a hollow stem and another out of messmate wood so as to make both soft and loud sounds. He put an iguana skin over the ends of the drums and beat them. He himself beat the drum with his hands and sang. He made many songs. The dance was called kwa.ra. When Shiveri went to Mabuiag [sic] Island he took this dance with him and showed it to the Mabuiag people. The Mabuiag people now have a dance, Kwoiym's [sic] dance, which resembles Shiveri's dance, in that both are seagull dances. Shiveri had a bow and arrow, he was the only man who had one. Shiveri made canoes. One of these capsized and may be seen now by the edge of the water on Shiveri's side...

The daughters of Nyunggu wanted Shiveri, so they made signs to him across the river. He replied with signs that he would come over. So one day he went over in his canoe... [he] put them in his canoe. Then he pushed off. He just gave one push with his paddle and the canoe went straight down the creek and out the mouth and up the coast. It went of itself. The hole which this paddle made as he pushed off is the well that is there now One girl had a sore breast. Shiveri left her at Red Point (opposite Crab Island) He left the other one behind at Red Island because his canoe smashed there. Then Shiveri just took one step out over the sea and an Island came up, then another step and then another island came up and so on. Wherever he put his foot a sandbank or an island came up. Thus he made the islands of the Torres Straits. He went to Mabuiag Island and taught them his dance there...

Shiveri made a song about all his children that he had left behind him on the mainland. The Mabuiag Islanders have a song which they say was made by Kwoiym and was brought to them by Kwoiym from the Tyongandyi [Mapoon people] (whom they regard as...)

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\(^{30}\) Mentioned in Greer op.cit p114. For full account see McConnell 1957. McConnell refers to this figure as Shiveri, while Donald Thompson spells it Siviri but people from Injinoo use the pronunciation Chiveri.
Nyunggu went after Shiveri and his daughters. But instead of going to Maubiyag Island he went right on to Papua and never came back. It is said that Nyunggu (the white pigeon) is there in Papua somewhere now. His spirit walks about there still. Now every year the pigeons leave their home and go to Papua to nest and their children come back every year to Kuringa...

Nyunggu gave his dances to the Papuan people. His songs were all about his children, the birds, the shells, whom he had left behind, and about the things he used to do when he lived at Janie Creek. He used sometimes to lose his canoe. He made a song about it... A song and dance belonging to the Papua natives on the Fly River is said. to resemble this song of Nyunggu (McConnel 1957 Totemic Hero Cults in Cape York Peninsula, North Qld Part II).

Kwoiam is the Torres Strait Islander name given to what McConnell has deduced to be the same culture hero as Shiveri. It is difficult to say just how similar the two stories are today and whether people in the region share this sense that the two heroes are actually one. The only full story of Kwoiam told to me was by Mrs Waiu Whap (1999). Mrs Whap however read me the story as it appears in Margaret Lawrie's (1970) Legends of the Torres Strait. The story is the Torres Strait Islander version of the legend and heavily anglicised. Aboriginal people do not tell the story of Kwoiam they speak of Chivrri and provide other details specific to his trip and events immediately adjacent to the mainland.

Below is an abridged account of Chiviri’s story told by Miriam Crow.

Chiviri came from Janie Creek near old Mapoon. He grabbed two cousins and travelled with them in a canoe to Gel Point. The youngest sister bin get sousou [breast] pain – so he left here at gel point. That’s the stone there now with the right sousou down and the left one still stannup.

He travelled up with older sister now to Entrance Island. That night they bin climb the hill and the girl looked kum bak and cried for her sister so he left her there.

Chivri go somewhere near Thursday Island. His canoe bin turn over there near Blue Fish Point [Hammond Rock?] you can see the canoe there. He swim from there go to one of the Islands and then to Poid [Moa Island]. He find a woman there. People blo that place bin fight with him and son of Kwoiam bin fight with him. People of Poid [Moa Island] bin hang him long tree but when they bin listen he turned into a bird-hawk (Miriam Crow pers comm. 1999).
While there are some discrepancies in detail between the story McConnell recorded and the version now told in Injinoo. The basic details remain constant. That is that he came from Old Mapoon area on the West coast of Cape York Peninsula and that he travelled up the coast creating landscape features as he went. He then travelled on to the Islands where he spent the rest of his life. This story is significant because it provides a very detailed account of cultural exchange where the transfer of tradition emanates from Aboriginal Australia and out to the Torres Strait and Papua. Not only did Chiviri create rocks and sand bars and islands, he invented the bow and arrow, canoes on the mainland, he invented the island drum and took it to the Torres Strait and he invented dances and taught them to the people of Mabiaug Island. The Mabiaug people recognise the cultural contribution of Chiviri and according to McConnell call the Tyongandyi (this is a traditional name for Mapoon people) brothers. Nyunggu also invented dances and taught them to the people of the Fly River in New Guinea. This is in stark opposition to current archaeological theories (as evidenced by papers presented in the Torres Strait session of the Australian Archaeological Association’s 1999 Conference McNiven unpub; Lilley unpub; Carter & Veth unpub), which are premised on cultural change and influence coming from the north and ‘impacting’ on Torres Strait Islanders and mainland Aboriginal people in the region.

9.3 Archaeological Evidence for the Bipotaim

There has been little archaeological investigation conducted on the northern Cape York mainland and those works which have been carried out were all small scale or test excavations which yielded little data (see Chapter 3).

Although bipotaim places are not reliant on archaeological material for confirmation and indeed many people do not readily recognise such material, there are several cases of archaeological material
occurring at known bipotaim sites. For example, the East coasts lakes. In addition, where archaeological material is brought to the attention of people in areas where they are unaware of any stories existing, this material is usually ascribed to bipotaim people.

There is a precautionary principle, which appears to be invoked in daily activities in the scrub or other places outside the village environment, which reinforces the role and importance of someone who is authorised to speak for country. That is, you may not know each specific place that is linked to bipotaim so you treat areas with the respect and caution. In places where you know there is such a connection. For example, dangerous country or areas you may be entering for the first time you must take a language speaker to ensure safety. In other areas it is desirable. In the latter case, introductory words and phrases can be used to introduce yourself and your purpose, and this may suffice. This applies to archaeological investigation. Investigation of certain sites known to be occupied by bipotaim people must only be attempted after careful consideration and formalised introduction to the spirits (see Greer 1996). At other places it may be sufficient to have a language speaker ‘call out’ or in some case ‘call out’ yourself. The purpose of this is not only to introduce yourself, but also to announce your intent. The implication being that the spirits may decide to reject that intent. The researcher therefore, is held by the community to not only be accountable to them but also to bipotaim people.

The questions that could be asked here are

- what has archaeology been able to contribute to our knowledge or understanding of bipotaim?
- Has archaeological work undertaken to date corroborated or challenged indigenous notions relating to bipotaim and the events which occurred then?

This is similar to the positive challenge posed by Harrison 1999

What are the prospects of archaeology being instrumental in developing and articulating new stories that provide a way of
understanding the trajectories of indigenous lives from the deep past to contemporary times? (Harrison 1999).

Certainly Greer (1995, 1996) sees archaeological practice and techniques as a fundamental intrusion into indigenous identity in the area. In describing her interaction with the community of Injinoo prior to, during and post excavations and her growing understanding of the relationship of the sites to the communities belief systems she found herself questioning the fundamental value of this line of research.

...while formal discussions were aimed at illustrating the value of archaeological work, informal discussions were having the opposite effect. I found that the more I learned about the community’s beliefs in relation to the landscape, the more challenged I felt about the archaeological interpretations and their potential value to the community. While the results of the excavations were interesting in relation to cooking methods, the use of beachrock as cooking stones and its possible storage and re-use, I felt that this had fallen short of my portrayal to the community of the potential of archaeological research to present a picture of the past. This was exacerbated by the fact that I now knew that the site was located physically and cognitively, within a strong cosmological framework. This uneasiness grew as these explanations became more personalised and particular (for example that the fireplaces were still used, albeit by the dead who occupied the site).

I began to wonder about the destructive element of what we were doing. In removing these ‘features’, were we perhaps also removing part of the story? This was especially worrying as those we had chosen were the largest and best preserved. Moreover, we were removing the physical evidence from which such stories were created. What were we offering to replace this? (Greer 1995: 138).

The only other archaeological work carried out on the mainland in northern Cape York has been the excavation of several sites by David Moore (1979) which have yielded recent dates for Evans Bay (Pudegah) and Red Island Point and excavations and subsequent investigations at the Weipa shell mounds (Wright 1971; Cribb 1991; Bailey 1991,1993). These excavations did not reveal evidence of the depth of time that people understand to relate to these places, however neither did they reveal evidence that significantly altered the communities’ outlook or understanding of these sites. It is clear that the investigations at these sites was not designed to inform community questions and therefore the results are seen as mildly interesting but largely irrelevant by the community.
The case of Weipa shell mounds is of more interest in the negligent controversy that it spawned. Stone (1989,1991) alleged that the Weipa shell mounds hitherto accepted by archaeologists (Wright 1971; Bailey 1977) as being unusual cultural sites due to their enormous size and extent (i.e up to 30' high and covering several hectares in extent), were a natural phenomenon caused by prehistoric turkeys scratching nests repeatedly in the same spot. A far-fetched theory and one formulated without having spoken to any local people or the archaeologist who had excavated them. He quoted as evidence, the lack of cultural material contained within the mounds, the homogeneity in shell size, the relative lack of soil/humic material and no extant local knowledge of the sites and their uses. This was quite extraordinary claim was not based on personal experience or familiarity with the sites, reference to the published excavation information which clearly refers to cultural material or discussions with local people many of whom have clear first hand accounts of the use of these mounds (e.g. Arthur Androm pers comm 1990).

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of this controversy was that it reached the status of an archaeological debate with full-page media coverage in Sydney and papers for and against flying backwards and forwards at various conferences (e.g. AAA Darwin 1990) and in the journals (Bailey 1991; 1993; Cribb 1991; Stone 1991). For the people of Weipa, the consequences were both more devastating and puzzling. Outside experts were carrying on a debate that challenged not only their understanding of their history and their relationship with the landscape but also questioned the credibility of their cultural tourism enterprise (Unigan Nature Reserve walk incorporated these sites – see Unigan a Guide 1988). It also called into question the validity of their traditional knowledge in their relationship with Comalco the mining company that operates on their traditional lands, who had also hitherto accepted these sites as cultural landmarks.
9.4 Emerging Research, Emerging Issues

While there may have been little archaeological work carried out in the region to date, which contributes to the understanding and interpretation of the bipotaim, there is currently a resurgence of archaeological interest in the Torres Strait. Papers delivered at the AAA conference held in Perth 1999 covered excavations and research being undertaken into topics ranging from the origin of agriculture in Torres Strait (Carter 1999 unpub); settlement expansion and antiquity and its relation to geomorphological and environmental events (Barham 1999 unpub); the nature and antiquity of male ceremonial sites (McNiven 1999 unpub); to the migration of peoples and culture from Papua to the Torres Strait and the possible migration of peoples and culture from the northeast to the Torres Strait. Clearly, these research projects have the potential to challenge Torres Strait Islander identity and moreover assume a one-way cultural transfer from north to south, which flies in the face of cultural evidence such as the culture hero myth of Kwoiam and Chiviri.

There are a limitless range and number of archaeological projects, which could explore the bipotaim in northern Cape York Peninsula. Community based projects will need to consider the potential impacts of research outcomes on indigenous identity in the region. The exploration of the connections between archaeological evidence and the bipotaim will be enhanced by a co-operative research team approach incorporating anthropologists, archaeologists and communities.
Plate 20: Hammond Rock