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**A Modern History of the Gugu Badhun People
and their Country**



**Thesis submitted by
Robert Andrew JAMES BSocSc (Hons) JCU
In May 2009**

**For the degree of Master of Indigenous Studies (Hons)
In the School of Indigenous Australian Studies
James Cook University**

Statement of Access

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Statement of Contribution of others

AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) provided funding for the early travelling and much of the digitisation of video tapes done by Dianna Hardy. An ARC (Australian Research Council) Linkage Grant provided further travel costs and a half-time salary for a year.

Ralph Rigby was the camera operator for some of the early interviews. Agnes Hannan both conducted and recorded several interviews. Other interviewers were Sue McGinty and Paul Turnbull. A group interview conducted by me in the studio at SIAS (School of Indigenous Australian Studies) was filmed by Ben Southwell and Bradley King. The remaining nine interviews were conducted and filmed solely by me.

Dianna Hardy digitised the early interviews and Bradley King the later ones. Bradley also transferred the interviews onto DVDs, and extracted some of the photos from videos used in this thesis, though most were extracted by me. Kylie Wilson assisted me with the covers of the DVD containers.

All of the notes and transcriptions from interviews used in the thesis were my own work.

SIAS has provided administrative and technical support. Agnes Hannan, Bradley King and Ralph Rigby were all SIAS staff .

Acknowledgements

My interest in history arose from a school teacher from Swinburne Boys Technical School in Melbourne in the early 1960s, remembered only as “Mr Roberts” or “Birdbrain” and from my late parents, Pat and Paul James. My first contact with Indigenous history was through attending Noel Loos’s classes at JCU where I finally realised my long-held desire to study history, due largely to the support of my late partner, Liz Burch. Sandra Cook, my partner now and since my studies stalled with the death of Liz, helped me through my honours and brought to my attention the research job advertised to complete the research for these projects. Her support was and is invaluable.

Since my involvement, great support has come from all interviewees, who enthusiastically recorded their stories, and the Gugu Badhun community generally. Yvonne Cadet-James has been my Indigenous mentor and has been an enthusiastic supporter of both the research and my writing of it.

My supervisors Sue McGinty and Russell McGregor have shown much forbearance as I have struggled to devote enough time to the study, with life-changing events in my life taking their toll on my focus.

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Warning of mention of deceased persons and offensive language

This thesis contains material which may be distressing for some readers.

It includes photographs and the names of **deceased persons**.

Also contained is **language which may offend**.

Abstract

The Gugu Badhun people are owners of the land of the upper Burdekin River of north Queensland. Dispossessed and then integrated into the pastoral industry, they later moved off country to engage with the mainstream economy and society, motivated especially by a desire to educate their children and secure well-paid employment. Their stories form the foundations of this history, which the Gugu Badhun themselves have requested to be written. The research was largely based on extended video and audio interviews of individual and family stories, supplemented by library, archival and literary research. The thesis traces the history of the Gugu Badhun from their first contact with European intruders, through their violent and non-violent relationships with colonists, the choices they made in raising their families, to their movement away from their country. Finally, it examines how continuing connection to family and country is now affirmed through regular visits to their ancestral lands.

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Abbreviations

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ARC	Australian Research Council
JCU	James Cook University
QSA	Queensland State Archives
SIAS	School of Indigenous Australian Studies [at JCU]

Glossary

Agwamin	North Queensland Aboriginal group to west of Gugu Badun.
Cudjalla	North Queensland Aboriginal group to south of Gugu Badun.
Djabugay	North Queensland Aboriginal group to north of Gugu Badun.
Girramay	North Queensland Aboriginal group to north of Gugu Badun.
Girringun	Aboriginal Corporation, representing Gugu Badhun and other groups.
Gudjal	Another spelling of Cudjalla/Kudjala.
Gugu Badhun	North Queensland Aboriginal group, the subject of this thesis.
Kudjala	Another spelling of Cudjalla/Gudjal.
Mbara	North Queensland Aboriginal group to west of Gugu Badun.
Migaloo	General north Queensland word for “white” non-Indigenous person.
Ngadjon	North Queensland Aboriginal group well to north of Gugu Badun.
Njawaygi	North Queensland Aboriginal group to east of Gugu Badun.
Wamin	North Queensland Aboriginal group to west of Gugu Badun.
Warrungu	North Queensland Aboriginal group to north of Gugu Badun.
Warrgamay	North Queensland Aboriginal group to east of Gugu Badun.

Language Usage

As this thesis is based largely on interviews with the intention to represent the voices of the interviews, the spoken interviews have been reproduced with minimum alteration into writing. The quotations therefore contain the language spoken for listening rather than reading.

Both written and spoken sources contain some archaic language (and spelling), including some language considered offensive among many people in current times.

Tribal names often have varying pronunciation and spelling. When quoting written sources, I have not changed the spelling. When quoting oral sources, I have endeavoured to use the most common spelling that I have been able to locate in Aboriginal or academic literature.

To give distinctive voice to interviewees, I have used Italics when quoting them, thus highlighting the first-hand nature of that data.

I have also uses italics when naming pastoral stations.