



Yamani Country

A Spatial History of the
Atherton Tableland,
North Queensland

Sandra Pannell

with contributions from
Ngadjon-Jii Traditional Owners



Rainforest CRC

Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Management

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Sandra Pannell

Rainforest CRC, James Cook University, Cairns

with contributions from Ngadjon-Jii Traditional Owners

Emma Johnston, Ernie Raymont, Jessie Calico,
Yvonne Canendo, Warren Canendo, Trevor Johnston,
Billie Jean Johnston and Stanley Morta



Rainforest CRC



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(Top) Painting (detail) by Warren Canendo, depicting the creation of the volcanic cones known as the 'Seven Sisters'. Image: Roger Wilkinson.

(Centre) Aerial photograph of Malanda. Image: Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

(Bottom) Painting by Warren Canendo, depicting *Djura Djilam* (Mt Bartle Frere), regarded as the spiritual 'home' of the Ngadjon-Jii people. Image: Roger Wilkinson.

January 2006

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This document contains language and expressions that some readers may find offensive.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Rainforest CRC. While every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of printing, the Rainforest CRC does not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People should be warned that this document contains images of deceased persons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From a personal perspective, this volume has its origins in the mid 1990s, when I first met many of the Ngadjon-Jii people whose words and stories appear on the following pages. It was on this occasion that I met Auntie Emma Johnston, her children, Trevor Johnston and Yvonne Canendo, Uncle Ernie Raymont, Auntie Jessie Calico, Auntie May Morta and her sister, Ena Gertz, and some of the younger generation of Ngadjon-Jii people, Warren Canendo, Billie-Jean Johnston, Eliza Morta, and Vanessa Gertz. To these people, and the other Ngadjon-Jii people who taught me something about the tangled histories of the Tableland, I am deeply grateful.

It was at our initial meeting on the shores of Lake Eacham that I first heard about *Yamani*. Seeing a strange ripple in the water, Auntie May Morta, now deceased, looked at the dark surface of the lake and talked about that “old *Yamani*, too big for a snake, too big for an eel”. I was to hear and record many more stories about *Yamani* in the years that followed, as we talked about and travelled around Ngadjon-Jii country as part of research for a Native Title claim. In the course of these conversations with Ngadjon-Jii people, some of which took place sitting around the kitchen table at Yvonne’s place in Malanda, while others occurred in rainforest pockets and cleared paddocks around the district, it became apparent that the places we visited with memories and a motor car were complex cultural constructs. It also became clear that to speak and write about the spatial history of Ngadjon-Jii people and their country required a different setting than the one provided by the legal parameters of Native Title.

In late 2002, we sat down once again and talked about a different kind of project to record stories about country and kin. These stories appear throughout this document in the form of excerpted transcripts of the original digital audio recordings. Some of our conversations and travels in the ensuing period, 2003-2005, formed part of a research project funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre (Rainforest CRC). I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement received from both of these organisations. Special thanks are due to Birgit Kuehn and Shannon Hogan at the Rainforest CRC for their untiring efforts and enthusiasm in preparing the volume for publication.

In researching this book, I also spent some time exploring the archives of the Cairns Historical Society. I am thankful to the many volunteers at the Society who offered help and assistance on these occasions.

In the two years spent researching this book, a number of Ngadjon-Jii elders have passed away. The loss of Uncle Henry Robinson, Auntie Jessie Calico and *Bundji* Trevor Johnston was deeply felt by the Aboriginal community on the Atherton Tableland. In preparing this volume, I reviewed some of the digital videotapes we had recorded, featuring Auntie Jessie and Trevor. While saddened by their deaths, I was also reminded of their determination to make sure that another kind of history was told about the Atherton uplands. This book is a realisation of that determination, and is dedicated to their memory and spirit.

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NOTES ON ORTHOGRAPHY AND KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

For the sake of linguistic consistency, I largely follow R. M. W. Dixon's orthography for the 'Dyirbal' language and its six constituent dialects, including 'Ngadyan' (1972). According to Dixon, the phonological features of Dyirbal are:

	(Unmarked) lingual	Front (marked) lingual	Back (marked) lingual	Labial
Stop	D	ɖ	G	b
Nasal	N	ɲ	ŋ	m
Liquid	L	R	ɽ	
Semi-vowel	W	Y	W	w
Vowel	A	I	U	u

In the available anthropological and linguistic material, a number of different orthographies are used to record the term 'Ngadjon-Jii'. Norman Tindale, for example, identifies fifteen alternative terms to describe this group of Aboriginal people (1974: 183). In his earlier writing, R. M. W. Dixon describes the language spoken by Emma Johnston and her family using the terms, 'Ngadyan' (1972) or 'Ngadjan' (1976). Dixon identifies the group itself with the labels 'Ngadanjdji' or 'Ngadyandyi' (1980). In later writings, Dixon tends to use the terms 'Ngajan' (1982, 1996) and 'Ngajanji' (1980) when respectively describing the language and the group, although 'Ngajan' is frequently employed as a gloss for both in his 1996 publication on 'Dyirbal Song Poetry'.

As these comments indicate, inconsistency appears to mark the anthropological and linguistic record regarding the nomenclature used to describe Ngadjon-Jii people and their way of speaking. In keeping with Ngadjon-Jii people's use and orthographic practices, and to avoid the confusion in the written record about 'tribal' and language names, throughout this volume I use the appellation 'Ngadjon-Jii' to denote the people, their language, their country and their culture.

As Dixon reports, Ngadjon-Jii people, like other Dyirbal language group speakers, acknowledge a number of kinship relationships and categories (Dixon 1996). While Ngadjon-Jii people are familiar with this Indigenous system of kinship classification and terminology, they also use English terms to gloss some of these egocentric kinship relations. It is important to realise here that Anglo-Australian kin terms, such as 'Auntie' or 'Granny', are not consistent with Ngadjon-Jii kin categories where, for example, four sets of 'Grannies' are terminologically distinguished (i.e. *bulu* [FF], *babi* [FM], *gumbul* [MM], *ngargi* [MF]¹). Ngadjon-Jii people also use Anglo-Australian kin terms socio-centrally as honorifics for men and women who are regarded as 'elders' or as being somehow 'senior' to the speaker. Throughout this volume, I follow this practice and refer to individuals, such as Emma Johnston and Ernie Raymont, with the appropriate anglicised term of respect.

¹ In line with anthropological convention regarding the study of kinship systems, the following abbreviations and glosses are used: FF (Father's Father), FM (Father's Mother), MM (Mother's Mother), and MF (Mother's Father).

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CHAPTER ONE – THE LIE OF THE LAND

The strangest place in this looking-glass world is where we stand looking into it but fail to see ourselves mirrored there, glimpsing instead the strangeness of our origins. – Paul Carter, Living in a New Country

Auntie Emma Johnston, now in her late eighties, is looking at an old black and white photograph taken some time around 1900 (Figure 1). It depicts a group of Aboriginal men and women in a clearing. Some of the men are standing, holding decorated shields and spears, and adorned with white cockatoo feather headdresses and pearl-shell pendants. Others in the group are sitting, long wooden swords and grass baskets loosely held on their laps. In the background a tangle of rainforest trees, though it is apparent that some have been thinned and even removed. Although the photograph labours to give such an appearance, there is nothing pristine or pre-contact about this scene. The caption on the photograph reads 'Bellenden Ker Blacks', though Auntie Emma knows better than this. Carefully reading the designs on the shields and the ritual cicatrices on the men's bodies, and noting the other forms of material culture displayed in the photograph, Auntie Emma declares the people in the photograph to be "Ngadjon-Jii, my mob".

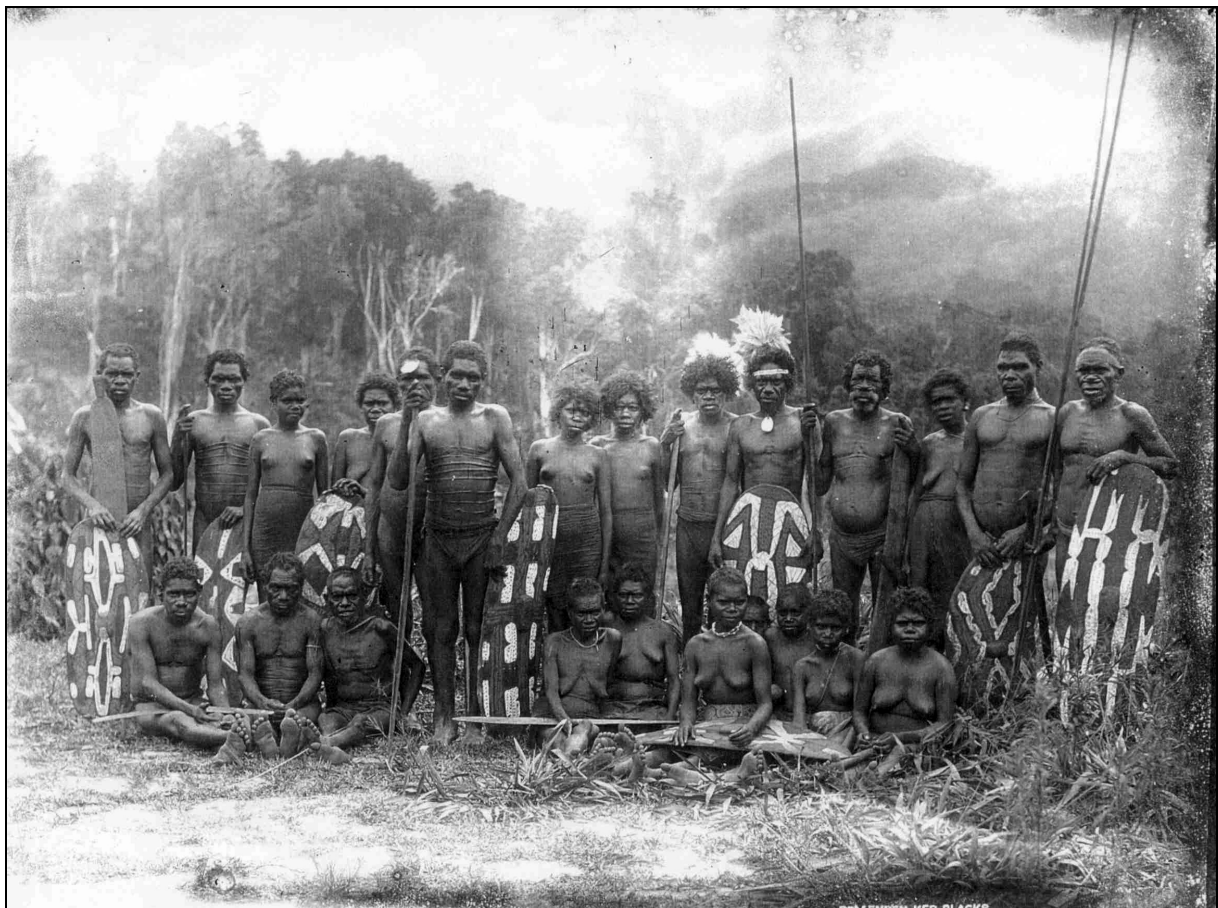


Figure 1: 'Aboriginal group, Bellenden-Ker, with shields, spears and boomerangs' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

This moment, mediated by an early European photograph and the cultural memories of the oldest Ngadjon-Jii person alive today, succinctly captures the history of Indigenous and settler encounters in the rainforested environments of North Queensland. It points to the kind of cultural assertions and misunderstandings that have characterised these encounters. It also directs our attention to how things have changed. The Ngadjon-Jii descendants of those people captured by the shutter of colonial history continue to live on their traditional lands in what is now the Eacham Shire. The rainforests that formed the backdrop to the staged display of Aboriginal culture in the photograph have gone or exist now as remnant pockets throughout so much of the Atherton Tableland. While large swathes of rainforest have fallen, lost forever in the meticulous clearings of history, the memories of these historical events have not been lost. The cultural journey from the vista of an old photograph taken around the turn of the twentieth century to the new landscapes of this millenium forms the substance of this book.

Yamani Country has its physical locus in the rainforested uplands of Far North Queensland. From the perspective of many ecologists and conservationists these days, the rainforests of Far North Queensland are near mythic landscapes – reflecting the diversity and evolutionary history of non-human life. The relatively recent social construction of these spaces as a ‘pristine wilderness’ was elevated to the status of universal scientific fact when the Wet Tropics were listed in 1988 as a World Heritage Area for its ‘outstanding natural values’. The process of ‘securing the wet tropics’ was marked by ‘intense political battles’ throughout the 1980s, with these contests often characterised in the media in terms of “conservation versus development; forests versus timber” (McDonald and Lane 2000: 3). However, as McDonald and Lane point out, the politics of protecting the ecological values of the region was in fact “far more complex” than these simple dichotomies suggest, and arguably started more than a hundred years ago with the advent of European settlement in the region.

Yamani Country explores some of the complexity and history alluded to by McDonald and Lane. It focuses upon the environmental history of the Malanda district of the Atherton Tableland, located in the heart of the Wet Tropics bioregion (Map 1). In researching this book, I became aware that there is not a single history for this area, but a plurality of histories, and that some of these stories, like the natural history of the region, have already been told and continue to be told over and over again. While others, such as the cultural history of this upland area, are not as well known, or are hinted at through the silences and absences in the written record. In many ways, these latter histories and the people they speak of can be regarded as the ‘lost subjects’ of North Queensland’s colonial history (Carter 1999).

I also came to see that the view of the Wet Tropics as a region of “outstanding scientific importance” (McDonald and Lane 2000: 3) contrasts, and at times competes with, other perspectives which see these forests as ancestral spaces, reflecting social histories of struggle and survival. I am referring here not to the Indigenous occupiers of these forests *per se* but to the Europeans whose forefathers came and cleared the ‘scrub’ of the Atherton uplands. In the textual and photographic narratives of the “hardships and lifestyles of the early [European] settlers” (Cairns and Johnston 1985), Aboriginal people appear as peripheral figures in the agricultural landscapes produced by these pioneering stories. Indeed, it seems from these images of the ‘promised land’, as the Tableland has often been called, that as the trees fell the Aboriginal occupiers also fell out of the picture. In focusing on the edges of this pastoral image, *Yamani Country* attempts to portray a more complex cultural story about the social relations, which are reflected in the landscapes we see today.

In developing this volume, it soon became clear that the various landscapes of the Wet Tropics are as much fashioned by social forces as they are by natural ones. Critical to the production of these landscapes is the role that narrative and storytelling plays in mediating human-environment interactions. These stories, while focused upon local places and people,

are more than just recollections about certain localities or individuals. These local histories reveal experiences that also happened elsewhere in Australia. Stories about Aboriginal dispossession, for example, are not unique to Ngadjon-Jii people or to the Atherton Tableland. These histories provide an important local focus to themes and events that are part of a larger-scale, national discourse.

This book explores the complex, and at times, tragic historical topography of the Malanda region. Local histories paint a vivid picture of the varied nature of Aboriginal engagement with the settler population in this area. This is not a simple tale of Indigenous resistance and European conquest, or necessarily one of widespread environmental degradation. Rather, these histories speak about the ways in which landscapes and identity are co-produced through the intersecting rituals and customary practices of Traditional Owners and Europeans alike. This said, it is important to recognise here that the co-production of these cultural landscapes and social identities is inherently colonising, not only of people but also of the environment. The effects of these colonising moments are histories of people and place, which defy the all too-easy imposition of simple dichotomies and empty stereotypes – ‘noble savages and ignoble settlers’. This volume attempts to recognise some of the social and environmental consequences of these varied, and often hidden, histories.

ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORIES OF SETTLED AUSTRALIA

Until recently, the environmental story of settled Australia was largely told through the use of scientific narratives. Landscape histories were usually geological ones, or consisted of accounts focused upon longer-term evolutionary processes. And yet, by the 1970s it was clear that the environmental history of this continent was far more nuanced than science and scientists alone could depict. Moreover, the environmental issues associated with changed and often degraded landscapes could not simply be resolved by the application of scientific knowledge itself. In the past couple of decades it has also become apparent that there is a need to know something of more recent histories and past experiences in order to counteract what Stephen Dovers calls the “*ad hocery* and amnesia” (2000: 4) so often associated with environmental policy and management. Hand in hand with these emerging realisations was the development of so-called ‘new’ approaches to environmental management, which emphasised community involvement and recognised the interests of multiple ‘stakeholders’. With the blossoming of community-based, environmental management initiatives, such as the ‘Landcare’ groups that emerged in the 1990s, came the need to bring together ecological histories with more human ones. The ensuing interplay of local oral histories with the methodologies of the natural sciences not only humanised alienating scientific discourses but it also served to relativise the alleged universality of these latter approaches. Oral histories in this context are not simply a case of people reconstructing their past in terms of the present. As Stephen Dovers suggests, the environmental histories created from this intersection of historical and scientific sources are about how “we reconcile the past and present into a story informing future action” (Dovers 2000: 2). Environmental history envisaged in this way goes beyond mere chronologies of people and events. These accounts about the production of landscapes revolve around the power of stories to not only inform the kind of discussions we have about the places we live in, but to also bring about change in the way we interact with these spaces.

In the past couple of decades, environmental histories have been written for many regions in Australia (see Dovers 1994; Rolls 1981; Rosen 1995; Seddon 1994) and for many environment-based industries, such as forestry (see Carron 1985; Dargavel 1995). Notwithstanding the importance of recent environmental histories as a corrective to the old world histories of environments and events, there is still a sense in many of these ‘new kinds of history’ (see Seddon 1994) of history unfolding against the backdrop of the physical environment or of geographical space as the stage upon which significant actions take place.

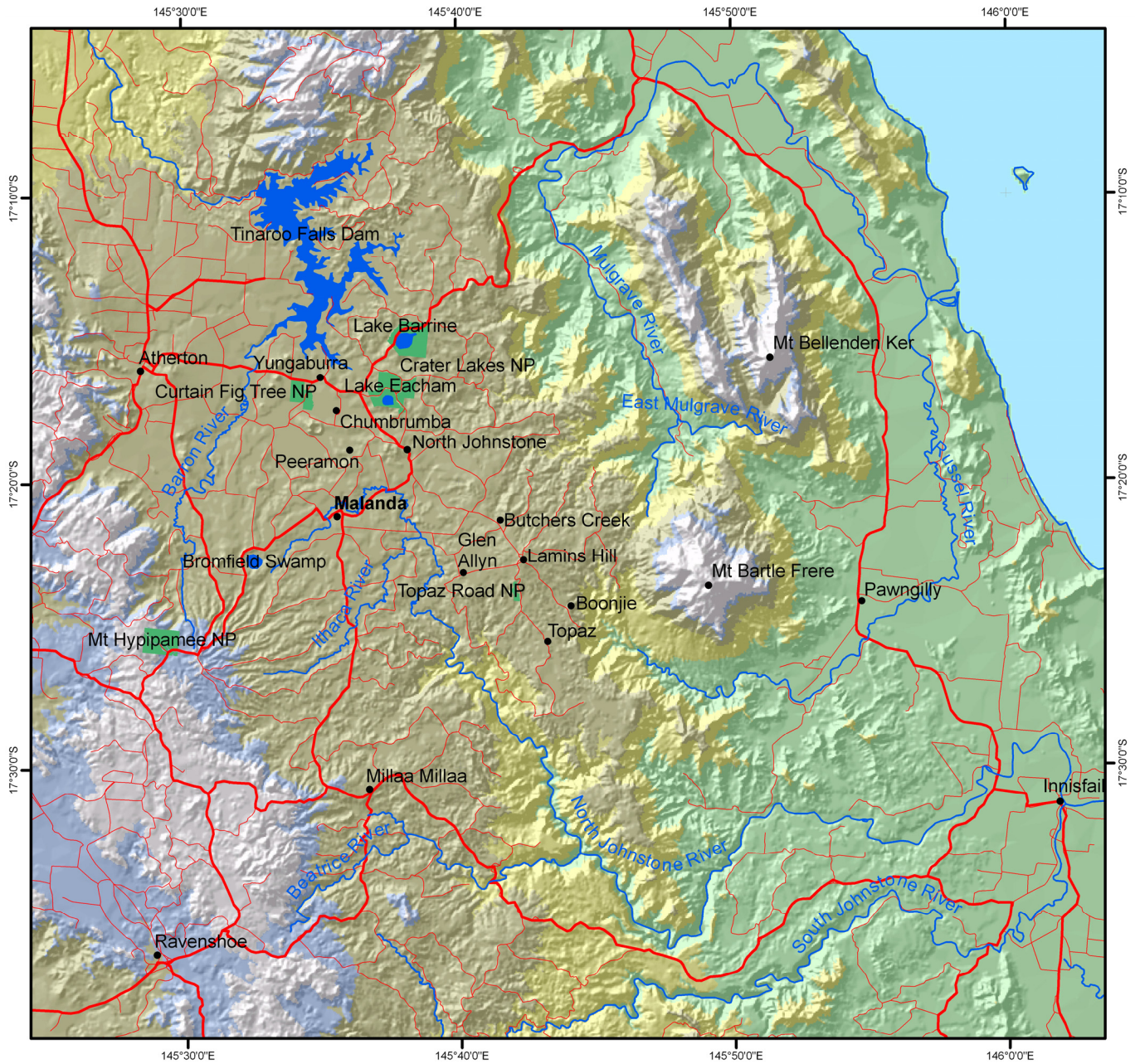
TOWARDS A HISTORY OF CULTURAL SPACES

In 'The Road to Botany Bay', the historian, Paul Carter, provides us with another way of looking at the spatial history of Australia. Carter's focus is upon 'cultural space' and not the 'geographer's space'. For him, spatial history "begins and ends in language" and it is this that makes it history and not geography (Carter 1987: xxii-xxiii). As Carter states, "we are well supplied with historical geographies, but these share the diorama mentality: they take it for granted that the newcomers travelled and settled a land which was already there" (ibid: xxi). In many respects, Carter's approach to the history of cultural space enables us to understand the invisibility or marginality of Aboriginal people, not only in 'imperial history' but also in so many environmental histories. As Carter points out, Aborigines were not physically invisible to the European settlers, but only incapable of being seen by the "selective blindness of a cultural discourse" (ibid: xx).

As the previous discussion suggests, this volume draws its inspiration from Paul Carter's work, *The Lie of the Land* (1996), and his many other works exploring the spatial history of Australia (see Carter 1987, 1992, 1999). Like Carter's volume, the title of this chapter labours with the idea of landscapes as "cultural networks of names, allusions, puns and coincidences" (Carter 1987: 7). The title also confronts the reader with darker possibilities, the 'lost surfaces' (Carter 1996: 6) concealed beneath colonial history and trampled upon in the process of transforming the rainforested uplands of North Queensland into a "passive planisphere" (ibid: 9). It is possible to recover these 'hidden histories' and challenge the 'lie of the land'. This volume takes the first steps towards this somewhat daunting task of rethinking the ground beneath our feet, the spaces in which we move, the places where we live. In bringing together Indigenous and settler spatial histories, my aim here is not just to replicate local experiences of confrontation and confoundedness. Rather, my intention here is to unsettle those comforting vistas, which seem to lie at the heart of contemporary facts and fantasies about Aboriginal and settler landscapes.

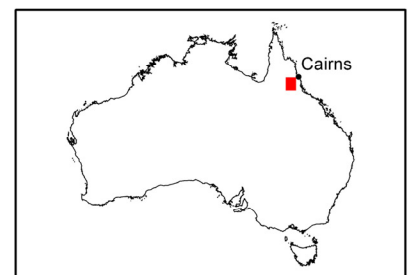
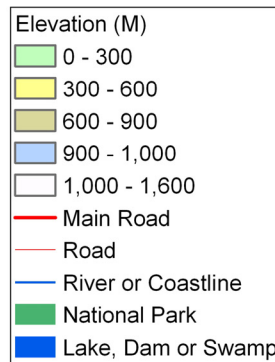
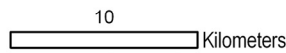
Throughout this volume, the stories, narratives, and anecdotes that I draw upon function less as illustrations and more, to paraphrase Stephen Greenblatt, as "disturbance[s] that require explanation, contextualisation and interpretation" (Greenblatt 1990: 5). The sources for these 'disturbing' accounts are varied. Like conventional history, I rely upon the written record to piece together the spatial history of settlement in the district of Malanda. These writings, as Paul Carter points out, are not about history *per se* but are in themselves historical enactments. A point also recognised by Theodore Adorno when he stated that, "history does not merely touch on language, but takes place in it" (Adorno 1978: 218). Settler accounts for this region date from 1885, with dairies and reports of gold-prospectors and government-backed explorers, and include the observations of pioneering families in the district, the celebratory compilations of local shire councils and historical societies, and a number of academic theses on European conquest and settlement. In all of these writings can be found varied references to 'the Aborigines'.

The descendants of these 'Aborigines' today refer to themselves, their culture, their language and their country as 'Ngadjon-Jii'. Ngadjon-Jii country includes the Tableland townships of Malanda, Yungaburra, Peeramon, Butchers Creek, Topaz, and Tarzali, and also extends east to encompass the highest peak in Queensland, Mt Bartle Frere (Map 1). Since 1910, most of Ngadjon-Jii country has been included within the local government boundaries of the Eacham Shire Council. European incursions into Ngadjon-Jii country date from Christie Palmerston's 1885 gold-prospecting expeditions from Herberton to the Barron Falls and, in 1886, from Innisfail (then known as Geraldton) up the Russell River to its headwaters. Permanent European settlement commenced in 1907, when land in the vicinity of Malanda was "opened up" for selection. What remained of the rainforested homelands of Ngadjon-Jii people has, since 1921, gradually been gazetted as national park or various kinds of reserves.



Rivers, Lakes, Roads and Localities supplied by AUSLIG (1996)
 Elevation supplied by Wet Tropics Management Authority (1996)
 National Parks based on Estate version 10.3 supplied by EPA (2004)
 Coastline derived from GEODATA 9 Second DEM Version 2.0 (2000)

This map was compiled and supplied by Trevor Parker CSIRO Tropical Forest Research Centre Atherton September 2005



Projection: Geographic
 Datum: GDA 1994
 Spheroid: GRS 1980
 Units: Degrees



Map 1: The Malanda District of the Atherton Tableland, North Queensland (Map: Trevor Parker, CSIRO Tropical Forest Research Centre Atherton).

In researching *Yamani Country*, I travelled with Ngadjon-Jii people through their traditional homelands, listening to and recording some of their stories of place and people. For Ngadjon-Jii people, their identity and their sense of locality is produced through and centres upon *talk* – the stories they tell themselves and each other in their day-to-day personal interactions. The importance of talking in place, about place, highlights the situated and contextual nature of Ngadjon-Jii conversations about country. As Daniel Vachon points out, country is a “place to face experience” (Vachon 2005). In aspiring to piece together a cross-cultural history of the region, I sat down with Ngadjon-Jii people, and together we examined and talked about the many texts and artefacts produced by settler society (photographs, testimonies, theories, and so on) regarding their lands, their culture and their ancestral heritage. Among the many comments generated during these discussions were Ngadjon-Jii people’s views on “the limits of white history” (Carter 1987: 349). These reflections, as well as my own, on the near absence of Aboriginal people in settler accounts are an integral element in the deconstruction and dialectics of this spatial history. The history of cultural spaces that follows is not intended to imitate the history that Ngadjon-Jii people tell themselves, rather it attempts to evoke their historical experience of these spaces.

The recollections, which are at the core of this volume create, articulate and, at times, manipulate what E. V. Daniel identifies as “epistemic and ontic realities” (Daniel 1990: 27). That is, they provide people with a way of ‘seeing and being’ in the world, and often effect significant transformations in this world. Liisa Malkki, writing of the ‘mythico-historical narratives’ of Hutu refugees in Tanzania, identifies this narrative process as ‘worldmaking’ and suggests that ‘making’ the world through narrative and narration is sometimes an oppositional process concerned with ‘remaking’ “the moral order of the world” and ‘recasting’ identity and history. Malkki not only highlights the constitutive role of narrative in the formation of identities, histories and ‘nation-ness’, but she also points to how narratives represent “vital form[s] of social action” (Malkki 1995: 105).

In what follows, I explore how these and other recollections are both constitutive of, and act to mediate, the social experience of space. In bringing together Ngadjon-Jii and settler recollections, I am also interested in how the very juxtaposition of dissimilar narratives can provide us with “new perceptions of the obvious” (Taussig 1992: 45). Finally, I also want to suggest here that the stories people tell themselves about themselves and about others can be viewed as more than just meta-social commentaries about events enacted elsewhere in space and time. I argue that these spatial stories have the power to both actualise and re-fashion events, social relations and categorical orders, in the process recalibrating contexts and meanings. In the following chapters, I examine how stories, as forms of social action, have both reflexive and very real consequences (cf Geertz 1973).

CHAPTER TWO – YAMANI

It is a sacred one, the water at Lake Eacham. I won't go and swim in it, because it is too sacred. It's got a Yamani. – Auntie Emma Johnston

On the outskirts of the Tableland town of Malanda, we stand and admire a mosaic-tiled mural – the product of a community Millennium project (Figure 2). Erected on the edge of a patch of relic rainforest, the mural also demarcates all that remains of what once was, until as recently as 1907, a vast and verdant land. In a fitting, and somewhat ironic statement about white millenarian activities, the mural depicts the Ngadjon-Jii account of the creation of the very country we are standing on. The mural, like the landscape around us, is the work of both Ngadjon-Jii people and Europeans, a co-production that both captures and belies the last hundred years of Aboriginal-European engagement and disenchantment.



Figure 2: Mosaic-tiled mural depicting the creation of the Crater Lakes and the surrounding country, Malanda Conservation Park (Photo: Roger Wilkinson).

Pointing to and touching the various features, Warren Canendo (*Wundadjila*), a Ngadjon-Jii man in his mid thirties, and one of the artists who worked on the mural, explains:

Here's the kangaroo. Those young fellas were trying to spear that kangaroo. But they missed and hit a flame tree. That's a sacred tree for Ngadjon-Jii mob. Those young fellas not supposed to be out hunting. They'd just gone through

Law. Their elders told them they had to stay put, not go hunting. But they didn't listen. When they pulled their spear out, a grub fell out, a witchetty grub. They started cutting down that tree to get more grubs. When they cut down that tree, the ground began to shake. Those two fellas had made that Yamani angry. Then the sky grew dark, then all these people here, back at the camp, the earth went from underneath them, sucked them in, whoosh, they all got drowned. Where they were camped became Lake Eacham, Bana Wiingina. These are all the volcanoes. The Seven Sisters.

The mural graphically depicts how two newly initiated men broke important cultural taboos and the earth-shattering consequences of angering the rainbow serpent or *Yamani* that is said by Ngadjon-Jii people to inhabit many of the waters of the region². In this respect, the mural stands as a vivid reminder to all about the morality of dwelling in place and alerts us to some of the dangers of living in a sentient landscape. Deborah Bird Rose refers to this Aboriginal view of country as a “place that gives and receives life”, as a ‘nourishing terrain’ (Bird Rose 1996: 7).

The mural also reminds us that landscapes are formidable and yet fleeting achievements, which bring together complex cultural and natural forces. As the linguist, R. M. W. Dixon observes, the account of the origin of the crater lakes on the Atherton Tableland is a “plausible account of a volcanic eruption” (Dixon 1991: 41), which, according to scientists, occurred some thirteen thousand years ago. In one of the versions recorded by Dixon, his Ma:Mu informant, George Watson, stated that when the eruption occurred, the country around the lakes was “not jungle – just open scrub” (loc. cit.). The work of the palaeobotanist A. P. Kershaw confirms this view, suggesting that the rainforest on the Tableland is only about 7,600 years old (Kershaw 1978, 1980). A conclusion that certainly challenges the recently popular depiction of the rainforests of the Wet Tropics as primeval stands dating from the dawn of time.

In more recent times, Ngadjon-Jii portrayals of the creation of geographical objects and the origin of fauna and flora are to be found hanging in public spaces, the very colonial-looking tea-rooms at Lake Barrine for example, or are presented as pivotal features of community places such as local council parks and gardens throughout the Malanda region. In some respects, this emphasis upon the visual and the picturesque serves to landscape not just country, but also culture. In other respects, it points to one of the many ways that Ngadjon-Jii people encounter and engage with a rapidly changing physical environment in a manner that enacts and retains this already Aboriginal cultural space. Here, country is not a setting against which stories are told or recalled. These stories are themselves enactments of country and it is through these and other means that country comes into being and is kept alive. This chapter explores aspects of this spatial experience. In saying this, I think it is important to point out here that what follows is not a ‘Ngadjon-Jii history’ of space. It does not purport to imitate or replace the kind of history that Warren and other Ngadjon-Jii people tell themselves. Rather, it is an attempt to convey something of the ordinary and extra-ordinary nature of the day-to-day spatial experience of Ngadjon-Jii people in the Malanda district.

² Dixon observes that among ‘Dyirbal’ language group speakers, which includes Ngadjon-Jii people, the “most important spirit was the rainbow, who it was believed could turn into a snake”. He also notes that Dyirbal speakers regard this spirit as dangerous and it was for this reason that “they would not leave the camp at night, or bathe in dangerous pools” (Dixon 1972: 24-25).

BARRINY

In late 2004, we visited Lake Barrine, one of the crater lakes featured in the Ngadjon-Jii mural. The lake, known to Europeans as early as 1889, has been a popular spot with tourists since at least the early 1920s, and the Edwardian-style tea rooms perched on the edge of the lake appear to date from around this period. At regular times throughout the day, boat tours are conducted around the lake, where the operator informs the passengers of the natural values of this watery setting. Little if anything is said about the Aboriginal significance of these waters or the surrounding countryside. This interpretive act is left to a single painting, tucked away on the downstairs walls of the tea-rooms, flanked by a jumble of pioneer memorabilia and the cross-sectioned stump of a giant rainforest tree. Brushed in eye-catching colours by Warren's cousin, Vanessa Gertz (*Gundja*), for those who can read it the painting tells the story of the creation of *Barriny* (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The creation of *Barriny* - Lake Barrine (Painting: Vanessa Gertz, Photo: Roger Wilkinson).

There is that black bird, that story-bird now, that Spotted Drongo. That's Lake Barrine, this here [pointing to another lake-like feature] is that swamp, not Hasties, the one up there behind Butchers Creek. On that dairy farm. Nan, what the name of that water? That's where that water moved from there now. Where that waterhole is, where that swamp there is now, years and years ago, back in the old Dreaming, it used to be real cold, and lot of storms and lightening must have hit a log and lit the log up for fire. All these birds were all cold sitting on the edge of the swamp. They see that big Yamani there and he's all warm. They all shivering because they cold. They used to fly down

there and try and get a bit of fire-stick to get warm and every time they did he would chase them away. And this Spotted Drongo came there one time. All the birds reckoned they were cold, and told him that the Yamani wouldn't let them grab the fire, and he said wait, wait until the Yamani asleep. Spotted Drongo grabbed that firestick, and as he was coming out of the swamp the Yamani woken up and got wild with him. He flipped his tail and when he did this he hit the back of the bird's tail and split it. That's how come got that fork in that tail of the Spotted Drongo. He managed to get up to the top with that fire-stick and all the birds were singing out, real happy they got that fire-stick. That Yamani got the shits with them mob, with those birds then and that is when he moved to Lake Barrine. Early in the morning. They reckon if you see it from an aeroplane you can see that the trail of the lava flow, where he come all the way to here. He went through the earth and made that track, and the water follow him here, and he bin come here, to Lake Barrine, he left early in the morning. Barriny, 'early morning'. When those birds woke up that water was gone, but they didn't worry because they all warm. They got their fire-stick.

Barriny, that's early morning, they reckon this lake going to move again. He was supposed to move from that road over there but they cemented it all down there and put the wall there. Nan and that reckon he's going to break that down and go. – Warren Canendo

At this point in Warren's narration, Emma Johnston, Warren's maternal grandmother, turns to me and somewhat surprises me by asking, "Do you believe that?" Before I can respond, Auntie Emma answers her own rhetorical question:

Yeah I believe it. I believe all the Murri stories. They reckon this water, the Yamani, going to move again. I don't think it's going to stay in one place. So my mum told me that. He not going to stay here [at Lake Barrine]. He's been here a long time, might be sick of this place.

Given the overlay of European architecture and the inescapable presence of so many ageing tourists supping on scones and tea, it is perhaps not so surprising that Warren's grandmother feels the need to challenge this comforting scene with questions about belief. In some respects, the idea of such extraordinary events taking place in an environment physically constrained and, in many ways, obliterated by a history of European settlement seems fantastic, even romantic³. And yet, throughout the district of Malanda, similar poetic⁴ happenings take place within the physical space of a dairy farm, occur nowadays in spaces called 'swamps', 'scrub' and 'jungle', or are recollected in a landscape overlaid with the prosaic names of European pioneers. Warren's comments about how European roadworks had cemented in the rainbow snake point to a dynamic and, at times, destructive landscape in which violence and deformation are integral processes.

These comments remind us that spatial narratives or 'topogenies' (Fox 1997) represent conceptual orders, which sometimes, but not always, have a physical manifestation. Recited stories about places are often detailed accounts of absences, or of spaces and structures, which no longer have a material presence. Notwithstanding the apparent lack of physical form, the significance of these spaces continues to be remembered and recalled (see Henry and Greer 1996).

³ I use the term 'romantic' here to try and capture the kind of sentiments Stephen Greenblatt (1990) speaks of when using the concepts of 'resonance' and 'wonder' to characterise what he calls the 'new historicism'. This involves capturing the mysterious, the sensual, the dangerous, the erotic and nostalgic qualities ascribed to particular places or spaces.

⁴ The reference to 'poetic' here draws upon the Greek root of this term, 'poiein', 'to make'.

In the same way that Annette Weiner (1996) argues that there are some objects which are never exchanged because of their acknowledged capacity to authenticate cosmology, then there are some places which, regardless of their disfigurement or, in some cases, complete obliteration, continue to be socially recognised as important loci for the convergence of memory and meaning. In other words, some places invite commentary and people tell stories about them. Again, similar to Weiner's 'Inalienable Possessions', these places are not isolated 'memory palaces' (Yates 1966). Rather, their uniqueness derives from those cultural traditions, which link these sites into a wider netscape of memory.

DJILAN

Travelling down Gadalof Road we enter 'Little Siberia'. Trevor Johnston, Auntie Emma's son, points out the farms owned by Bill Hominko and Leandro Illin, two of the 'white Russians' who settled in the district in the 1920s. Trevor's mum tells everyone in the car that the place looks just the same as it did when she was 'kid' living around here in the 1920s. We are looking for the place where Emma Johnston used to live among the farms and fences that line Gadalof Road. We pass Wall's Dairy Farm. This is where the waters of Lake Barrine came from – from the volcanic crater just behind the milking shed. On the gate to the farm hangs a sign announcing the name of the property, 'Yamani Stud'. The sign is meant as an act of reconciliation, recognising the prior cultural meaning of the place. Yet, it seems like an act of appropriation as we gather outside of the gate and the Ngadjon-Jii discuss among themselves who is going to ask permission to go in.

Auntie Jessie Calico, a Ngadjon-Jii elder born in the 'bush' at the junction of the Ithaca and North Johnstone Rivers sometime around 1930, calls the crater on the dairy farm *Djilan*:

Djilan was also a bora ground. I think they used to live on the edge of that bora ground. I'm not sure, we'll find out from Mrs J [Emma Johnston], she might remember. She lived here with her mother and grandma. It was not far from here to go over there, where Anderson's Farm is, they had a camp there at Bundjabili. This is where they said the slaughter started. This is where it started. People were running away, running trying to get away from the troopers. So they took off that way up to Lamins Hill way. Tom has a story, Tommy English⁵. He said, "I'll tell you that story, how Butchers Creek got its name. That's where all the blacks killed the whites". We fella reckon wrong, you got it back to front. It wasn't that way at all. It was you fella, all the white fellas killing our people, shooting our people. How could we attack you. Our people never had guns, your people did.

At this point, Auntie Emma Johnston joins us, and feels compelled to retell the story as a corrective to the European account of events:

They mustered all the people from Djilan bora ground to Bundjabili bora ground and killed them all. Happened when my mother, Molly, was alive. She was only a kid then herself. No one survived that massacre at Butchers Creek. Story had something to do with women. While men were out hunting, whitemen used to come and rape the women. When the men came back they found the whitefellas. Chased them away with spears and killed them. One got

⁵ The antecedents of the English family are widely recognised in the community as the first Europeans to take up selections in the Parish of Malanda. In the years that followed settlement in 1907, members of the English family have played a prominent role in public life, owning and operating the Malanda Hotel and occupying the position of Mayor of the Eacham Shire Council for several years. The main streets of Malanda are named after the members of this pioneering family.

away and told the police. Police came and shot everyone here at Butchers Creek, at Bundjabili bora ground. Big slaughter there. They left the men to rot. It was bad thing to do. My mother's sister, Polly, got shot at Butchers Creek. Tommy Langton was there too [Emma's mother's brother]. He went up a hollow log when the shooting was going on. Police came to the camp and see that little boy walking around and they took him to Gordonvale. He went to a white family. That's how he got his name, Tommy Allen, from the white people who grew him up.

Standing with our backs to Butchers Creek, taking in the surrounding enclosed and cleared land, it is perhaps surprising to the casual observer that these seemingly domesticated spaces are still the battlegrounds upon which history is contested. As the name Butchers Creek brazenly attests, and as William Faulkner once observed, "the past is not over, it's not even past". More than a hundred years later it is apparent that the creation of open fields and agricultural vistas by the European settlers failed to clear away the doubt, silence the whispers or hide the history of what happened at *Bundjabili*.

While the details of the massacre at *Bundjabili* have been quietly preserved in Ngadjon-Jii oral history, some of these details have also been recorded by Europeans. Local amateur historian Jack May, in his homage to the miners of the Russell River Goldfield, refers to the other kind of clearing that occurred in the region at the turn of the twentieth century:

Stories are told by old Aboriginals of many massacred on the Russell field. The Aboriginals were always searching for food, and any discreet raid on a prospector's camp would bring forth a posse of police from Cairns to clear the bush. Many hundreds are reported to have been shot down in this manner. Butchers Creek is reported to have received its name from such a slaughter on its banks (May 1978: 22).

Archibald Meston also records that at least one Aboriginal person from the area of the Russell River was killed by Europeans in retaliation for the murder of two white diggers on the Russell River Goldfield (Meston 1889: 3, 9). Referring to the incident described in Meston's report on his expedition to the Bellenden-Ker Range, Norman Tindale writes in an unpublished manuscript that:

In June 1889 there were murders of white diggers by the Aborigines on the Upper Russell River and Constable Whelan spent part of July 1889 there. Meston's own camp was visited during the night by an aboriginal hungry for meat and was detected by a Thursday Island helper and hunted away with a rifle shot. Meston was guided to Mt Bartle Frere by Jab:a ... Shortly after he learned that his guide had been one of those concerned in the murders on the Russell River having killed two of the diggers with his own hands. It appears he was killed but history does not say whether before or after judicial enquiry (Tindale nd).

In his unpublished journal of the 'Adelaide and Harvard Universities' Expedition to North Queensland, 1938-1939', Tindale also records a massacre of 'Idinji' people in 1884 at nearby Skull Pocket⁶, now located on the shores of Lake Tinaroo. Tindale's European informant,

⁶ Throughout the Atherton Tableland, one encounters a number of locations called 'pocket' (e.g. Dingo Pocket, Pinnacle Pocket, Purcell Pocket, Long Pocket, Barry's Pocket). In the first years of European settlement, a 'pocket' referred to a small clearing in the rainforest. Many of the cleared spaces that Europeans came to occupy and call a 'pocket' were originally Aboriginal bora grounds. While the rainforested setting of many of these pockets has been cleared, the memory of the original form of these spaces is still conveyed by the retention of the name.

Jack Kane, who was eighteen at the time the massacre took place, participated in the police raid that culminated in the killings (Tindale 1938-1939: 413).

Often labelled 'black-armband history', the recollections of Ngadjon-Jii people, together with those all too brief references to Aboriginal killings in a handful of European accounts, offer "less glorious memories of the colonial encounter" (Strang 2003: 120). One is reminded here of Simon Schama's recent work, 'Landscape and Memory' (1995). Schama excavates through layers of social memory and visual representation, to reveal the many historical associations and varied cultural meanings of 'natural' objects and places. In the course of his scholarly burrowing, Schama warns the reader that not all landscapes are "places of delight", nor are all memories "pastoral picnics" (1995: 18). Here Simon Schama is referring to the horror and public tragedy often encountered on the "trail of social memory" (loc. cit.).

On the relationship between violence and space, Liisa Malkki observes that throughout the 'mythico-historical' accounts of her Hutu informants, and in media reports of later violence in Burundi in 1993, there are numerous reports of violations to "the most holy and valued places" (Malkki 1995: 292). The violence that Malkki records against these sacred and revered spaces is also reported in a number of other regional conflicts. For example, in the former state of Yugoslavia, "sacred and beautiful places" were deliberately targeted with the intention of "removing them so completely as to erase the evidence that people of another religion or ethnicity had once lived in a particular place" (Woollacott 2001: 14).

In the literature on the anthropology of landscape or the ethnography of place, these kinds of dismembered places and distorted spaces barely rate a mention. However, the destruction and disfigurement of these places is not simply the result of wanton acts of vandalism or the inevitable collateral damage associated with a zone of conflict. Malkki makes a similar point when she argues that the techniques of killing and the bodily sites upon which violence is enacted are neither haphazard nor accidental. Rather, as Malkki demonstrates, highly elaborated techniques of cruelty are already "symbolically meaningful", in much the same way that the convergence of violence upon specific places is already directed by certain "symbolic schemes" (Malkki 1995: 92).

In the violence enacted upon space, what once were holy venues or valued community places are replaced by disordered and disfigured spaces. Often, however, the erasures associated with this spatial disfigurement are in themselves transformative, reshaping old landscapes and creating new spaces. In the process, what once was sacred is rendered profane, and what might appear as mundane space is transformed into a sacred site. This complex process of spatial erasure and transformation is evident in Rwanda where, in the aftermath of the 1994 'genocide', ordinary buildings physically deformed by the violence have become national memorials to the tens of thousands of people killed in or around them (Brittain 2001: 3).

As the Rwanda example suggests, the violations enacted on place not only stand as powerful memorials of violent events and histories, but they can also give shape to on-going social processes of reformation and reconciliation. Though, judging by the near absence of any mention of Aboriginal massacres and killings in the numerous commemorative histories of the area, it seems that this kind of 're-visioning' of the history of Malanda is still some way off.

GUBI

Somewhere near *Djilan* bora ground is a *gubi* stone, a 'magic rock'. After spending some time looking for it, Auntie Emma suggests that the rock could have been moved when the 'whitefellas' cleared the area. Disappointed at not being able to relocate this stone, later in the day we drove through Glen Allyn and stopped at Short's Creek to look at another *gubi* place. As we walk off the road and along the banks of the creek, towards the waterfall, Yvonne, Auntie Emma's daughter, recalls:

We used to go fishing all up and down this creek and come back to here [pointing to the waterfall]. This is Short's Creek. There was an old fella named Short, he used to live on a farm over there, near the old school [at Glen Allyn]. And it was named Short after him. We used to get eel, used to be platypus here, used to get turtles here.

Climbing up the banks of the creek we return to the road and stand on the bridge over Short's Creek. Yvonne points to a large rock mid-stream in the creek:

*There's that big rock there, Nana said. They'd sit there and that eel would come down and lick their skin and put all that slime over them. Clean all our sores too. Nobody could catch him. Got to talk lingo for him to come out. This one is the *gubi djaban*. Those *gubi eel* move, they don't stay in same water for long. Since whiteman opened up place they drive *gubi* away. Have to ask mum and them about it.*

*There's a big flat stone there. If you had arthritis, put leg under stone and big *djaban* would eat it. *Gubi eel*. *Gubi* is like witchcraft, sorcery, clever. Old people talk special language to that eel. *Djaban* was a human being. *Gubi* are clever people. Grandmother told me that story. She's dead and gone. – Auntie Emma Johnston*

Europeans reported on the phenomenon of *gubi* among rainforest Aboriginal groups more than a hundred years ago. For example, Walter E. Roth, the Northern Protector of Aborigines at the time, reports that among the Aborigines of the lower Tully River there are men, known as 'doctors' or 'ko-bi', who have the power to remove spirit-inflicted sickness (1900: 53). Based on his explorations in the region around 1914, the Swedish naturalist, Eric Mjöberg writes of Aboriginal 'medicine men' and their use of a 'pointing bone' to bring about sickness and even death (1918: 209). He also mentions that 'medicine men' have the ability to cure illness. According to Mjöberg, in certain tribes the medicine man derives his power from an "important nature spirit who has taken the form of a colossal water snake and is, greatly revered" (1918: 209). More recently in a 1972 book on the Dyirbal language group, which includes 'Ngadyan' as one of six local dialects, R. M. W. Dixon specifically refers to Aboriginal 'doctors', known as *gubi* (Roth's 'ko-bi'). These men have "a thorough knowledge of their environment and of the customs and beliefs of the tribe" (Dixon 1972: 36). In his discussion of *gubi*, Dixon further reports that the "last known cannibalism was in 1940, when an Aboriginal man was deliberately killed for excessive sexual misconduct" (loc. cit.). The *gubi* who was the 'prime mover' for this death was one of Dixon's most knowledgeable informants.

The cultural practices associated with the concept of *gubi*, for example Aboriginal 'doctors' and ritual killings, emerge in more sensational terms in early European depictions of the region as 'cannibal' country. Writing of the Aborigines of Mt Bartle Frere and the Bellenden-Ker Range, Meston proclaims that:

All these blacks are cannibals of a particularly bad type. They kill and eat their women and children, and occasionally they kill and eat their men. It is possible the custom arises out of an irrestrainable craving for fresh food, in a violent reaction against prolonged vegetarianism ... Plenty to eat is the one sole study of their existence. It forms the subject of their dreams by night and stimulates all their faculties during the day (Meston 1889: 8).

Similar comments are made by Christie Palmerston, who called the Aborigines of the upper Russell River area 'great cannibals' (cited in Savage 1992: 237), while the Government Geologist, Robert L. Jack, reported that "cannibalism prevailed among the blacks of this district" (Jack 1888: 1). Jack notes that these 'hideous orgies' have been described by Palmerston and printed in the newspaper, *Queensland Figaro*.

A few decades later, Edgar Short, whose family took up a selection around the watercourse they later named 'Short's Creek' in 1912, observed "cannibalism had gone out of fashion by the time we arrived, due to the penalties imposed by the whites" (Short 1988: 60). However, he also reports "any middle aged Aboriginal then living would have tasted human flesh" (loc. cit.). Short further reports that Joe Clarke⁷, their Aboriginal worker on the farm, was known as 'murdering Joe' on account of the Europeans, Chinese and Aborigines he was suspected of killing, and in some instances, also consuming⁸. Short attempts to make a case for a more benevolent approach to the Aborigines by making due allowance for the fact that "the Aborigines were only ignorant and barbarous savages" (ibid: 61). According to Short, some of the 'nasty practices' of the Aborigines, such as "killing and eating surplus female children" (loc. cit.) are merely practical ways of maintaining an optimal tribal size.

Leaving aside the current debate in anthropology about whether or not cannibalism actually occurred (see Sahlins 2003; Obeyesekere 2003), the issue here is the effect of the belief among Europeans that it did exist. Depictions of rainforest Aboriginal people as 'cannibals' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts are integral to the 'terrifying mythologies' produced by Europeans about the 'horrors' of the jungle and the 'natives' that inhabited it (see Taussig 1987). As Michael Taussig observes, the narrative creation of Indigenes as 'wild', 'uncivilised', and as 'superstitious pagans' is part of a political economy of colonial violence where the savagery attributed to the Aborigines mirrors the barbarous acts perpetrated by the colonists (Taussig 1987: 134). As Edgar Short writes in his recollections of early days in the Malanda district, stories about Aborigines told by miners who had worked on the Boonjje goldfields in the 1880s and 1890s were regarded as:

definite proof of a degree of savage inhumanity which put the Abo [sic] quite beyond the pale, revealing their barbarous and cruel nature, and making them fair game to be shot down like animals at any time (Short 1988: 60).

For Ngadjon-Jii people today, stories about 'cannibal time' and their 'man-eating' ancestors stand as affirmations of the potency and pervasive powers of indigeneity. These fantastic accounts about the mystical powers and magical abilities possessed by *gubi* men or attributed to eels and rocks, among other things, constitute vital forms of social action which challenge and, at times, violate the objective and reasoned histories of European colonisation. Ngadjon-Jii stories comprise a narrative terrain that both pre-dates the dioramic spaces of European settlement and yet also serves to mediate people's everyday experience

⁷ In accordance with the practice of levirate marriage, Emma Johnston's mother's mother, *Gungudja* (Sally Beard), was betrothed to Joe Clarke (*Tagadja*) when her first husband, *Wundadjila* (Jack Clarke), Joe's older brother, died.

⁸ Short reports that Joe Clarke initially worked for George Clarke, "one of the discoverers of the Boonjje goldfield" (Short 1988: 63), and his European name reflects this earlier association.

of this space. If this terrain is invisible to European eyes it is, in some way, because of the partial vision left by history's gaze.

BULUBA BURRGUNA

Nowadays, 'Top Camp' is a small clearing on the side of a gravel road leading to the start of the Mt Bartle Frere walking track⁹. Recently erected signage informs us that this patch of open ground on the margins of Wooroonooran National Park is not the work of Europeans (Figures 4 and 5). This cultivated space is *Buluba Burrguna*¹⁰ – a Ngadjon-Jii camp, bora ground, burial site and initiation place. Parts of *Buluba Burrguna* were bulldozed when the road was put through, while other sections are now enclosed by fences and freehold title on Whittaker's Farm, abutting the other side of the road. Auntie Jessie Calico recalls what happened at Top Camp in the early days:

First Top Camp is the initiation ground. It's where that farmhouse is now [Whittaker's Farmhouse]. People were moved off the land by Europeans. When the first whitefella came and took up land he told old people to move away. They moved to Top Camp, where we are now. Must have been in the early 1920s they moved camp from the initiation ground. Mr Dick bought land off our people for red bandana, plug of tobacco and twenty pounds. Gave it away cheap. Old people had already cleared that initiation ground. He built his house where they lived. It was a man thing that ground.

Auntie Emma was a 'kid' when Pompey Langton, the "last one", was initiated at the original Top Camp:

When they were doing Uncle Pompey, they chased me and my brother away. Not allowed to be there or see them when they did it. They took him to a different camp. Told us to go away. Women and children couldn't see it. Taboo. They had to show they were good warriors before got initiated. Had to prove themselves as hunters when they reached their manhood. All the Murri came here to be initiated.

When got married tribal way, got to get cut on chest, tribal scar. Lot of old people got those cuts. They catch an eel and put eel oil on it to heal it. They can't leave that camp for two weeks.

Had bora ground where Top Camp is now. They had corroboree there at Top Camp. Came from Millaa Millaa, Kaban, Ravenshoe for corroboree. It was a fighting ground, battleground, where they settled their differences.

Auntie Emma was one of a number of Ngadjon-Jii people who lived at Top Camp:

My mother and father, my grandmother, all lived here. Paddy Robinson lived here too. Henry Robinson's sister was born here. Old Grandma Dinah lived here. She was the last one. We came from Whittaker's Farm to bring her food.

⁹ It is possible that the name, Top Camp, derives from the alluvial workings of the same name situated at the headwaters of nearby Toohey's Creek in the 1880s (see Johnston 1983: 10).

¹⁰ R. M. W. Dixon identifies 'buluba' as the Yidiny term for a "ground for a fighting corroboree" (Dixon 1991: 194). "Ngadjon-Jii use of this term is not so surprising given that "Yidin has ... 27% vocabulary in common with the Ngadyan dialect" (Dixon 1972: 27).



Figure 4: Yvonne Canendo and Auntie Emma Johnston at the new sign at *Buluba Burrguna* (Photo: Sandra Pannell).

Jessie Calico also lived at Top Camp with her father, Billy Calico, and mother, Dinah. Auntie Jessie recalls:

That's where the graves are over there. Uncle George and Auntie Em told me they are just on the edge of the scrub, where all those stones are. I know who is there, Grandma [Emma Johnston's mother, Molly Raymond] mentioned them all. Old Grandad Joe Clarke, my Grandfather, Billy Calico, and Granny Dinah, she was married to Grandma's brother, her, and another lady from down the Mulgrave. Grandma said she didn't remember her name, and a little brother belong to Cathy's mum, his name was George. There is another one I can't think of. Six of them buried here. Three men, two ladies and this kid. Henry's uncle was the other chap buried here.

From Top Camp, Ngadjon-Jii people walked to nearby farms to work as labourers and domestic servants. They would also walk into Malanda to visit family living in pockets of rainforest on the fringe of the town. Auntie Emma also recalls walking from Top Camp to visit her 'Granny Mosie':

Alice [Emma's sister] and me went to Gulgagulga¹¹ when Mosie was living there. My granny, Gungudja, was there too [Gungudja is Mosie's sister]. We walked from Top Camp to Gulgagulga to see Mosie. He lived in a midja [traditional dwelling constructed of palm fronds]. He's my mum's uncle. I call him "Granny", that's Murri law. Mosie used to work for the miners at Boonjie. Later he worked for Harry Land.

Edgar Short identifies *Gulgagulga* as Mosie's residential camp and the place where he was later buried. In settler accounts of the Malanda region, the dirt track leading to Mosie's camp is commonly known as 'Gourka Road'. 'Mosie' himself is identified in Short's book as the Aboriginal guide who led the first party of European settlers in Malanda to the summit of Mt Bartle Frere in 1912 (Short 1988: 90). *Gulgagulga* is also mentioned in Christie Palmerston's diary of his 1886 explorations up the Russell River. Writing of his ascent of Mt Bartle Frere, Palmerston reports that the mountain bears "three native names, according to the variations of its contours" (cited in Savage 1992: 230):

The S.E. end or horn, as I have before said, is "Care-ing-ah", by some called "Tachappa", and did belong to "Nooychoo", to whose death I made lengthy reference. Its highest summit is named "warpoorra", with its open spot "Choor-a-chellem", owned by the old "Wallajar" and his elder son, "Cottabar". Its N.W. end is named "Koorka-koorka", and is possessed by an old man, whose name I forget, and whom, as yet, I have not met (Savage 1992: 230).

Palmerston further reports that the name 'Koorkakoorka' also refers to a ceremonial place:

Owing to all my aborigines having left to take part in a general fight that is to come off in a borah ground named "koorkakoorka", some three miles away, I have been prospecting Wairambar Creek by myself ... (Savage 1992: 221-222).

The Government Geologist, Robert Logan Jack, who documented the geology of the Russell River in 1888, records that in the area occupied by the upper Russell River 'natives':

[A] few cleared spots in the jungle were used for corrobories [sic] of the tribe and for hostile meetings of neighbouring tribes. These boro-grounds are

¹¹ Emma Johnston and Jessie Calico identify 'gulga' as a Ngadjon-Jii term meaning 'neck'.

probably of great antiquity, as no tradition of their origin can be gathered from the natives. The clearing of an acre of jungle with stone implements (aided perhaps by fire in the very rare dry seasons) must have been the work of a very long time (Jack 1888: 2).

In the twentieth century, Patrick (aka Paddy) English, a descendant of one of the pioneering European families in Malanda, writes about the recollections of Jim Brown, who he describes as a member of the 'Yareh tribe'¹². Jim Brown (*Burnyang*), also known as Jim Raymond, was married to Emma Johnston's mother, Molly Raymond. According to Patrick English:

Boonyang [aka Jim Brown] recalled a corroboree he attended at Gourka [Gulgagulga] about 1890. A corroboree ground or bora ground is a nice level cleared patch of ground about the size of a football field and all the tribesman not actually taking part sat in a circle round the ground and joined in a rhythm by clanking boomerangs together, clapping hands or slapping themselves on the thigh. It was usual to have only one circle of tribesmen present, but on this occasion so many attended that a double line had to be formed. This would indicate that about 1000 were present (English 1961).

The amateur historian Jack May, speaking of the experiences of one of the first European settlers in the Tarzali region, describes the attendance of Aboriginal people from the Malanda region at a bora ground in Millaa Millaa:

Mrs J. F. Smith who was one of the earliest settlers at Tarzali [just south of Malanda] lived, in those days, a few chains away from the present Gillies Crossing on the Malanda-Millaa Millaa Railway Line, where her son Dirran, the first white child in the Dirran area, was born on 28/2/13. She states the Aboriginals would pass by the hut dressed only in shirts, and carrying boomerangs, shields, spears, etc., and would stop and gaze inquisitively at the hut. She says at times she could hardly breathe for fright. The blacks of course were going to a Corroboree on one of the Bora grounds in the Millaa Millaa area, but she did not know that. But she was never harmed (May 1978: 22).

May goes on to describe the events, which took place at local Aboriginal bora grounds:

The Bora grounds apparently were the public meeting grounds of the Aboriginals. On these grounds were practiced the mystic ceremonies of their forefathers. Here the old men of the tribe, weirdly pigmented, ranked in order of prowess by the head dressings of the scarlet and yellow feathers of the black and white cockatoo, held in place by the warrior head band of possum tails, bestowed upon the youths of the camp full rights of 'Warrior of the Bush'. Here the designed breast markings of the young warriors were carefully cut on the bodies of the new made men. Here too, the wrongdoers in the tribe were punished for breaches of tribal law (May 1978: 22-23).

Edgar Short recalls being taken to a corroboree "being held at the bora ground on our farm" (Short 1988: 58) by 'Utie', the Aboriginal woman who worked on Short's Farm as a domestic servant:

¹² In a brief visit to Malanda in 1972 to witness "aborigines climbing trees" (Tindale 1972: 936), Norman Tindale notes that the "tourist pamphlet calls the Malanda Aborigines the *local Yahrah tribe*" (loc. cit). Tindale remarks that his 'Ngatjan' informant, Noel Raymond, "did not know about this name" (loc. cit.).

The men were all painted and all dances were performed by them, women were not allowed to take an active part in any dance. They sat around at one side of the ground, which was lit by a couple of big bonfires, with their dresses (if any), tied around their waists, and beat time by beating two boomerangs against each other, or simply clapping their cupped hands on their bare thighs.

The men had mock fights with their shields and huge wooden swords, and threw spears at each other, turning them aside with the shields, and did apparently symbolic dances portraying certain things, but their meaning was lost on me and no one would explain (loc. cit.).

The early accounts of European explorers and settlers depict a ritual landscape replete with numerous ceremonial grounds. For example, on his expedition up the Russell River, Palmerston refers to no less than six named bora grounds, one of which he had already appropriated as his 'depot'. The ceremonial life of Aboriginal people, particularly initiation ceremonies, certainly captured the imagination of Europeans, as well as providing conveniently cleared areas for the erection of homesteads and farmhouses. While these acts of appropriation may seem rather final, the recent reclamation of 'Top Camp' by Ngadjon-Jii People demonstrates that these contestations over space are an ongoing process (Figure 5).



Figure 5: New signage at *Buluba Burrguna* ('Top Camp') declares the area a 'Restricted Access Area / Cultural and Natural Protection Area', which only Ngadjon-Jii Traditional Owners and permit holders may enter (Photo: Sandra Pannell).

Europeans, and later Aborigines, referred to participation in this ceremonial life as 'gone walkabout' (Short 1988: 65). In his recollections of early days in Malanda, K. J. Hanrahan, whose family owned and operated the Malanda Hotel from 1922 to 1976, writes:

Once a year with not a word said to anyone, during the night they would vanish, yes, gone walkabout. They would walk out into the scrub and gorges at the foot of Mt Bartle Frere ... and hunt and live off the land as their ancestors lived. After a couple of weeks away, they would reappear (Hanrahan 1991: 11).

For Europeans, however, 'walkabout' soon became a euphemism for talking about 'unreliable' and 'lazy' workers. The refusal of Aboriginal people to live in one place was regarded by Europeans as a major obstacle to their civilisation. Attempts to herd Aboriginal people into government settlements and onto church missions, where the performance of traditional ceremonies was prohibited, was an attempt by the authorities to not only consolidate their power but also perpetuate the fiction of new and empty spaces – a conjoining of *tabula rasa* and *terra nullius*. As Paul Carter comments, "the Aborigine did not travel for the sake of seeing new countries, but in order to continue to inhabit his own" (Carter 1987: 336). The wandering state of Aborigines expressed "a power over space" which, in the early years of colonisation, was largely denied to Europeans. On the settlements, in the missions, and in the townships that sprung up around the Tableland at the turn of the twentieth century, this ceremonial power over space, and the spatial experiences of Aboriginal people generally, was soon transformed into a theatrical performance.

WARMA

For Ngadjon-Jii people, the *warma* or corroborees held at *Buluba Burrguna* served to regulate social relations between themselves and other rainforest groups, such as Yidinydji and Dyrbal people. Corroborees not only created a context for exchange, notably women and ceremonial objects, but as ritual performances, they also constituted objects of exchange between different groups. Importantly, the corroborees performed at *Buluba Burrguna* facilitated and constituted a form of spatial communication between Aboriginal people speaking different dialects and languages.

It is perhaps not so surprising that references to Aboriginal 'corroborees' feature so prominently in the explorer and settler histories of this region. Certainly, Christie Palmerston reports that some of his first contacts with rainforest Aborigines along the Russell River were mediated by the performance of a corroboree or some other form of group ceremony. In these settings of encounter and entanglement between white and black, it is perhaps more appropriate to view the corroboree as a strategic 'contact ritual', rather than as simply an Indigenous entertainment (see Carter 1992: 165). In those initial engagements, it is fair to say that the corroboree was, as Paul Carter observes, "the spatial embodiment of a distinct moment in contact history" (loc. cit.).

In a contact situation, the corroboree represented an attempt by Aboriginal people to mediate a unique and distinctive event, and engage in dialogue with the newcomers. It used a form of communication, both physical and verbal gestures, that encouraged participation and negotiation of the historical space enacted in the performance and increasingly occupied by the colonists. If the corroboree started off as a contact ritual, it soon became a colonial amusement. A European invention that appeared to nullify the original political meanings of the performance.

For example, the *Wild River Times* (3 May 1890) reports that on 'Blanket Day' in Atherton (Figure 6) in 1890:

[A] collection was made amongst the whites and several pounds of tobacco purchased, to be given as rewards to the niggers for climbing large trees, corroboree, etc (cited in Birtles 1982: 58).



Figure 6: 'Blanket Issue Day for Aborigines', Atherton, ca. 1914 (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Aboriginal people were now being herded onto the stage of white history, or so it seemed. In late 2004, Auntie Emma, Warren Canendo, Stanley Morta, George Morta, Arnold Murray and I visited one of these stages in Malanda:

Let's stand up here like the old photos [Figure 7]. This is where they used to dance here, at The Jungle. All the tourist bus used to come up there. Used to throw boomerang, spear, they reckoned three or four bus loads. Grandad Douglas, Uncle Paddy Moran, Claudie Solomon, Noel Raymond. They were in the dance troupe. They used to just be in a lap lap. Prince Charles when he came here, even the Queen come here, Grandad Davey Douglas said to him, "I'll knock that cross off". See that cross up top there [pointing to the cross affixed to the top of the nearby Catholic Church]. He took a piece of that off. That old Pastor got sick of fixing it.

When the tourists used to come here, they used to throw that boomerang and spear, show em, they all painted up too. Then after that they would walk in there [pointing to inside The Jungle enclosure] then and do the dance then. Climb up a tree. Them old people used to get paid with a hessian bag, paid bread, rice, fruit and then a big flagon of wine. That's what this old fella here, that's Tom English's place now [pointing to the property adjoining 'The Jungle'], that's the Migalu [whitefella] now who started it all off. He used to pay them that. He used to make some good money out of them. There used to be three or four busloads they reckoned. Because Tom English used to have the

pub, had 50 rooms, the tourists used to go down there. We just got sick of being ripped off. Wasn't only that, Old Tom lost interest. He made enough djanga [money]. He lost interest after that. It went on for some years.



Figure 7: 'Aboriginal climbing tree in English's Jungle Avenue, Malanda' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

We used to stop on the river there, on the North Johnstone River, at great granny's camp at the Malanda Falls. That's where I learned to swim there. There was me, great nana, Granny Molly, mum, Auntie Marg, Uncle Ernie, Auntie Emma was out on the farm.

After they finished throwing the boomerang and the spear and that, they came down here and dance then at the Tea Shed. They used to get dressed up and everything there. Migalu used to come here and have a cup of tea and thing. Tourists used to chuck em money, and Tom would give them wine.

They used to have a stinging tree here to show the tourists, it was all part of the get up and go. It was fenced off for the tourists, it was to show those Europeans what a stinging tree looked like.

They used to climb these trees here. Grandad Paddy used to climb it. Auntie Jessie been tell us one time when that old fella was climbing that tree, he fell out of the tree because he slipped. And he fell on the ground and all the tourists thought it was part of the act. No, No, No. I'll tell you the true story about that. Uncle Paddy now, climbing that tree now, he got half way, he slipped. When he hit the ground, old Tommy said, "Ladies and gentlemen that's part of the act". Uncle Paddy got up and said "part of the act be fucked!" He was hurting. When he got up all those tourists were still clapping and cheering.

The Malanda Jungle was first established by James English, the patriarch of the pioneering English family, in 1928. It closed during World War II but was reopened by James English's son, Patrick English, in 1946. As local settler and historian, Henry Tranter, observes, the visit of Prince Charles in 1968 briefly revived the popularity of 'The Jungle' as a tourist attraction. The Malanda Jungle eventually closed in the 1970s (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 18).

Ngadjon-Jii people not only performed at 'The Jungle', but as the Ngadjon-Jii elder Henry Robinson once remarked, "we lived in the jungle as a tourist attraction, my mother and father were the main attraction" (Figure 8). Many other Ngadjon-Jii people camped and foraged in 'The Jungle' during the period of its operation and some of them are buried there. Ernie Raymont recalls that when his family moved off the farm at Glen Allyn, they went and lived at 'The Jungle':

When we went to 'The Jungle', the Kidners were there, Parkinsons and Henry Robinson's family. Big Mick Calico, Mick Battle and the Mitchells were also there. They were all living in midja made of ginger leaf and bladey grass. Englishs let people live there. Some people worked for Bulbul ['old man'] English.

Like other Ngadjon-Jii people living on the edge of Malanda, people who lived in 'The Jungle' worked for the English family, either as part of the 'tourist attraction' or as domestics and labourers at the English-owned Malanda Hotel.

In many ways, Ngadjon-Jii stories about the performances at 'The Jungle' point to the "double lives" that Aboriginal people lead as 'subject people'. To cite Veronica Strang's words at length, this double life meant "conforming superficially to the invaders' demands whilst doing their best to maintain, invisibly, the aspects of their culture that the new regime deemed unacceptable" (Strang 1997: 73). I would also suggest here a more ironic reading of

these performances. These boomerang-throwing, tree-climbing and lap-lap dancing performances can be seen as a form of Indigenous burlesque, parodying the whites own theatrical nostalgia for symbolic Aborigines, stripped of any spatial and historical context.



Figure 8: 'Aboriginals at their Natural Huts, English's Jungle Avenue, Malanda', ca. 1930s (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Moreover, actions such as knocking the cross off the church, 'charging-up' for some performances, public swearing, using the very setting of these theatrical manifestations to evade the authorities, all represent small acts of defiance. Stanley Morta explains some of the other uses of 'The Jungle':

'The Jungle' was good for running away from the Law. They used to be frightened to come in here. They couldn't find us. Back then, because the Act only finished in 1968, so they still wanted to take them away and put them in a place to try and civilise them. We used to hide out all through here. There are tracks going all roads here. Buliman [policeman] never used to come in here, they still won't come in here. He'll sit on the edge of the scrub and shine that light. He won't come into the rainforest because he know that Murri territory. He'll be in our backyard.

In the end, the theatre that was played out in one of the last remaining stands of rainforest in Malanda was an act of double representation. It not only mirrored the vestiges of a colonial consciousness but it also dismantled the illusion that this was, in any way, just an act. Perhaps, what really mattered was that these staged displays of Aboriginality allowed Ngadjon-Jii people to assert an undeniable presence in a landscape that was replete with their historical absences.

CONCLUSION

Yamani Country is a different kind of spatial exploration than that undertaken by early Europeans. It sets out to challenge the “picturesque” (Carter 1987: 339) view of landscape one encounters when travelling around the Atherton Tableland or journeying through the journals of white pioneers. This space, nowadays more fragmented with fences than forested with trees, constitutes a sentient landscape for Ngadjon-Jii people and other Aboriginal people who dwell here. The extent to which Europeans occupying the same physical space have understood the Indigenous significance of this cultured landscape is debatable. Brief references in historical texts give some idea of the degree of mutual understanding and the journeys still to be undertaken towards this end.

For example, local historian, J. May writes that:

The belt of country of volcanic origin ranging from the Crater, Bromfield Swamp, Lake Eacham and Barrine and the country around were to the blacks a “no man’s land” of “devil devils” (May 1978: 22).

As May points out, Europeans, worried about ‘hostile natives’, took advantage of these beliefs and intentionally camped in these taboo areas. In ‘North to the Timbers’, Peter English recalls that as James English pushed through the ‘scrub’ towards his selections around Malanda, he camped at Lake Eacham. As English observes:

In camping there they followed the old custom of travellers in that region, because it was held to be safe from aborigines, who were afraid of “debbil-debbils” at the lake (English 1964: 25).

Edgar Short also notes that areas of volcanic eruptions were considered “debbil debbil country, to be avoided if at all possible” (Short 1988: 60).

Archibald Meston, writing about the customs of the ‘blacks’ of Lake Eacham and Lake Barrine, notes that they have a “curious legend about an immense cedar log” (cited in Tindale nd: 151-152). Eric Mjöberg also makes some reference to the ‘great spirit’ associated with these two lakes (Mjöberg 1918: 79-80). In a similar vein, the German ethnologist, Hermann Klaatsch, states that the volcanic lake of Lake Eacham is “believed to be inhabited by a dangerous giant snake; the rainbow was the reflection of its brilliant skin” (Klaatsch 1907: 580).

Talking about his Aboriginal carriers and collectors on the 1904 ascent of Bellenden-Ker, Meston comments that:

They people the vast and solemn solitudes of the summit with weird and awful phantoms of their own imagination (Meston 1904:7).

Rather than dismissing Aboriginal beliefs and practices as mere fantasies and delusions, Eric Mjöberg acknowledges that “the Aborigine’s spiritual life is totally different from that of the white man. They have concepts and beliefs that are totally incompatible with our own” (Mjöberg 1918: 128). Arguing against government and missionary practices of the era, Mjöberg writes:

Let them enjoy their lives in their own territories! Do not poison their minds to the call of their ancestors! Do not hasten their spiritual degradation! Soon enough this fascinating people, a living example of man’s evolution, will be non existent (Mjöberg 1918: 130).

And so it seemed to many, as the land was cleared and cultivated, Indigenous culture “broke down” and the Aborigines of the rainforest disappeared from view on the pages of the settler histories of North Queensland. While marginalised and in many cases, absent from history, as the following chapters attest, Ngadjon-Jii people did not disappear when their country went up in smoke or was washed away on the Russell River Goldfield.

CHAPTER THREE – NATURE IN NAMES

Australian history is almost always picturesque ... It does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies... – Mark Twain, Following the Equator...

In recent celebratory histories of settler achievements, the Atherton Tableland is often described as “one of Nature’s outstanding accomplishments” (Atherton Centenary Committee 1985). Indeed, the Shire of Eacham today acclaims itself as the “Garden Shire of the State” and actively promotes its “picturesque virgin rainforest, evergreen fields, its crater lakes, numerous waterfalls and streams set under Mt Bartle Frere.” Glossy posters extolling the “breathtaking beauty” of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area also draw our attention to “sweeping vistas”, “light-dappled woodlands” and “spectacular forest landscapes”. While the historical trajectory of these viewpoints are quite different, one borne out of the conservation movement in Australia, the other anchored in the foundational processes of discovery and settlement, common to each of them is the perception of these ‘picturesque places’ as natural.

Imperial history and historians often treat the accounts of early European explorers as merely describing what already existed or simply repeating what happened. Yet, as Paul Carter points out, these discoverers and settlers, in their journeys and through their writings, actively constituted both space and history. The lie of the land is not a given but is brought into being through the social actions and cultural perceptions of these individuals. In this sense, arriving explorers and settlers enacted an already historical space – the “country did not precede the traveller: it was the offspring of his intention” (Carter 1987: 349).

In this chapter, I examine the writings of some of the earliest Europeans to venture into *Yamani* country, and what later became known as the Wet Tropics. In particular, I focus upon the 1885-86 diaries of explorer and gold-pro prospector, Christie Palmerston, and the 1889 and 1904 reports of Archibald Meston, newspaper editor and one-time member of the Queensland Parliament, and from 1898 to 1903, Protector of Aborigines. It is through these and other colonial accounts that a landscape – a poetic and historical picture – slowly emerges.

It is important to keep in mind here that for the general public, Palmerston’s exploits and his mineralogically-focused descriptions of the world he encounters, subsequently serialised in the newspaper, *Queensland Figaro*, and reported in Queensland Parliamentary Reports, constitute all that is known of this environment in the mid to late 1880s.

As Paul Carter points out, explorer journals like Palmerston’s, “describe the country in its pre-mapped state” (Carter 1992: 9). These are accounts that are characterised as much by geographical discontinuity, personal inability and historical failure as they are by heroic deeds and the effects of colonial perseverance. The world described in these accounts is fragmentary – first encounters with geographical objects and human subjects – that are only later joined together to form the omnipotent view of the map or chart. The descriptions of Palmerston, Meston and others build the various elemental layers – stone, wood, water – of this emergent landscape, in the process creating a cultural space of historical proportions. Critical to this process of landscape formation is the act of naming – places, people, fauna and flora, little escapes the process of inscription. This process of making and remaking the world through the ascription of names is part of what Stephen Greenblatt calls ‘linguistic colonialism’.

While often glossed over in later narratives of settlement and civilisation, European exploration and occupation occurred within existing Aboriginal landscapes. Glimpses of these landscapes can be seen in the early historical sources. Moreover, it is apparent from these writings that it was these already cultured spaces that made European colonisation possible (see Carter 1987: 339). The diaries of Christie Palmerston give us a clear view of this paradox of imperial history.

NATURAL FOUNDATIONS: CHRISTIE PALMERSTON AND THE MINERALOGICAL FANTASY

As previously mentioned, Christie Palmerston ventured into Ngadjon-Jii country on four occasions. In 1884-85, Palmerston journeyed through the rainforests from Herberton to the Barron Falls. This was a circuitous trip by today's standards. Palmerston and his party travelled from Herberton, past what is now the township of Millaa Millaa, southeast along a route which is today marked by the Palmerston Highway and then turning to the northwest, followed the North Johnstone River towards its source, before breaking from this course somewhere near where Malanda is now, and eventually joining up with Robson's Track, east of Atherton.

In the later half of 1886, Palmerston undertook three prospecting trips up the Russell River towards its headwaters in the vicinity of the area that later became known as Boonjie. On the Herberton to Barron Falls journey, Palmerston spent about a week in Ngadjon-Jii country, from 20 to 27 January 1885. He spent considerably more time exploring what later became known as the Russell River Goldfield, in all about three months, and for this reason I largely focus on Palmerston's incursions along the Russell River and its tributaries.

At the beginning of his diary describing his explorations along the Russell River, Palmerston makes clear to the reader his intentions and motivations regarding these journeys. As he states, "metals alone being my aim and object" (cited in Savage 1992: 190). Palmerston is of course referring here to gold (as well as tin) and his endeavours to discover and open up another field similar to the highly rewarding Palmer Goldfield. In these undertakings Palmerston was not alone. As Paul Carter points out, discovering a gold mine was a "mineralogical fantasy on everybody's mind" (Carter 1987: 301). Given Palmerston's interest in 'metals', it comes as no surprise then that his account of his travels through the catchment of the Russell River reflects this interest. From Palmerston's account, the geomorphological layers of the landscape are gradually deposited through each hard-won step, each hardship encountered, each sentence in his diary. Palmerston's description of the Russell River betrays his geological fantasies and fascinations:

The whole of the river assumed just the auriferous formation to excite the mineral explorer's expectations. The formation consists of a series of coloured rock – sandstone, black, blue and a grey-greenish slate, banded with a fair proportion of quartz. The riverbed is still broad, very crooked, and with exceptional rapids, of a grade not great considering the mountainous country through which it descends (cited in Savage 1992: 201).

Descriptions of various rock formations – 'consolidated lava', 'mountains of granite shale', 'volcanic soil', 'granite boulders', 'monster spurs', 'protruding crags', 'slated ravines', 'quartz reefs', 'alluvial terraces of river sand', dominate the diary. Each crag, ravine, spur, mountain, gorge, bank, creek-bed is described in terms of its auriferous potential. The colour of each rock, stone and boulder is given – 'white crystals', 'black sand', 'light-grey granite', 'chalky slate of variegated colours', 'blue slate', and 'the finest colours of gold', as further indication of the gold-bearing possibilities of this craggy and tumbled landscape. For all the talk of

discovery in Palmerston's writings, particularly of gold, the diaries also reveal that Palmerston perceives a world which is also familiar and it is this that he embraces in his journey and descriptions thereof. This is the rock-solid world of geology – of granites, basalts, quartz, shales, sandstones, slates, volcanic soils and river sands.

Palmerston does more than just naively describe a world that is already there. His descriptions classify, and give form and meaning to this world. The rocks he sees are not just rocks, but types or classes acknowledged within the discursive field of geology. The application of these geological terms serves to constitute the very object world encountered by Palmerston. Moreover, the use of these particular names also embodies the mineralogical passions and ambitions of Palmerston himself. Naming the world he experiences in this way, Palmerston not only brings "history into being", but he also invents "the spatial and conceptual co-ordinates within which history could occur" (Carter 1987: 46).

The discovery of this familiar geological space had both a utilitarian and strategic function. The bedrock spaces described by Palmerston suggest that subsequent Europeans could act in this environment in terms of one of their customary practices, mining, and that there was a link between these new landscapes and the more familiar ones in the home country. Palmerston, like other prospectors, was required to report his 'metal' finds to the authorities, for which he was handsomely rewarded. The authorities in turn subsequently declared the upper Russell River area a goldfield. The discovery of gold along the Russell River not only contributed to the wealth of riches of the state but it also facilitated the State's control of this space.

The natural world Palmerston perceives and describes is elemental – it is one, which appears to consist of little else than rock and water and the land-gouging interactions and effects of these two base materials. Unlike many other explorers of the Australian continent, who saw waterways as facilitating travel, for Palmerston, 'flooded creeks', a 'cavalcade of waterfalls', 'relentless rapids', the 'ice-like water' of swiftly-flowing rivers, the 'miles of white tumultuous waters' that sweep down the river's 'irregularly quarried gorges', and the incessant tropical rain are all regarded as obstacles to exploration and discovery.

From Palmerston's descriptions, while there are many references to "rain, rain, ceaseless rain" (Savage 1992: 195), the forests associated with this rainfall are all but absent from the world he presents. Like the "wild, appalling streams" of this area, the forests are reduced to impenetrable "dark, repugnant, thorny jungle" (ibid: 219) or useless "scrub". Any details about this dense and dank impediment are largely confined to Palmerston's cursory comments about economically valuable timber encountered, such as when he notes the position of "some young cedar trees" (ibid: 197). On the Russell River expedition, Palmerston allegedly 'discovered' a new species of kauri pine, which the Government Botanist of Victoria named *Agathis palmerstoni* (Savage 1992: 285).

In addition to these scant references, Palmerston provides descriptions of the fauna and flora his Aboriginal 'boys', and those Aborigines they encounter, eat and use:

We got an early start ... soon passing large stages piled with "kunkee" nuts [yellow walnut] ... This nut, in size and shape, resembles the "coohoy" nut [Queensland black walnut]; but the "kunkee" contains properties of the most deadly poison, and requires to go through processes of much fire and water before it can be made fit for food (Savage 1992: 198).

Palmerston's diary is peppered with references to the procurement and eating of these nuts and other Aboriginal food stuffs: "some of the boys had a few possums; others climbed the mountains and gathered some 'coohoy' nuts for the night's victuals" (Savage 1992: 216). While Palmerston and his party relied extensively on these sources for sustenance

throughout their time along the Russell River, it is also apparent that Palmerston did not consider these items to be 'civilised' food. On one occasion, on their ascent of Mt Bartle Frere, Palmerston refers to himself and his 'boys' as 'beasts' as they prepare for their evening meal of possum and grubs (Savage 1992: 227). Palmerston's attitude towards the Aboriginal diet (and the Aborigines) is neatly summed up in his comments following his meeting with fellow prospector, George E. Clarke, along the upper reaches of the North Johnstone River:

He graciously gave me food that he knew he could in a short time ill-spare. I ate this with relish that sank the best of the blackfellows' fare to the level of mere animal existence that no civilized being could envy (Savage 1992: 219).

In much the same way that the various elements of the riverine environment failed to congeal into picturesque forms for Palmerston, then so too the Aboriginal occupants of this 'dark' and 'repugnant' (Savage 1992: 219) nature enter European history – described by Palmerston as "savages" (ibid: 211), "foul brutes" (ibid: 218), and "niggers" (ibid: 224). On his expedition up the Russell River, Palmerston is accompanied by his 'boys', a force of seventeen Aboriginal 'swagmen' recruited from around Mourilyan. When not procuring fresh food from the rainforests, these men were burdened with '80lb' packs containing Palmerston's gear and supplies. They also assisted Palmerston in his prospecting activities, panning for gold along the many creeks they traversed. Of this initial party of Aboriginal labourers, Palmerston identifies two as 'civilised boys', while the remaining men are referred to as 'myalls'. It appears that Palmerston's Aboriginal workers were also joined at times by local Aboriginal people, who generally followed and more rarely assisted Palmerston and his Aboriginal labourers for a few days at a time.

As Palmerston and his party travel up the Russell River they regularly encounter "large mobs of niggers" (Savage 1992: 191). Palmerston frequently describes these encounters as 'surprises' and the subsequent reaction of the startled Aborigines as a "panic-like scatter" (loc. cit.). Palmerston's talk of chance encounters is embedded within a broader narrative of violence in which ambush and sudden attacks by 'hostile natives' are met with the 'retributive justice' of Palmerston's rifle. Not all encounters between Palmerston's party and the local Aboriginal occupants are hostile, however. In a number of places in his account, Palmerston talks about how his 'boys' were presented with 'kunkee' or yellow walnut by the 'Russell River blacks'.

While Palmerston's narrative treatment of his often violent engagements with the Indigenous population is somewhat brusque and dismissive, it is also apparent that the spatial presence of the Aborigines was not just a threat to Palmerston's interests. The dense jungle which was the object of conquest and the context of contestation, and which Palmerston saw as affording protection to 'hostile Aborigines', also facilitated his movement through this space. As Paul Carter remarks, "in 1788, Australia was already a highly cultivated space. Aboriginal occupation had created tracks and clearings ..." (Carter 1987: 337).

While the nature of Palmerston's exploration entailed wading through and following creeks and rivers for signs of gold, throughout his diaries Palmerston also refers to the many, well-used Aboriginal tracks that he and his party of 'black boys' travelled along as part of this mineralogical quest:

We met with and crossed the largest native path I have seen in these jungles (Savage 1992: 193) ... A fair-sized aborigines' pathway crosses the mountain just here, and we followed it (ibid: 195) ... along the summit of which ran a large and freshly-used native path, going about east, which we followed ... when it led us straight into an aborigines' camp (ibid: 197) ... we again steeply

ascended a table-land's summit, where we picked up a lot of fresh nigger tracks, which led us into a large encampment by sunset (Savage 1992: 198).

Encountering a camp, often rapidly abandoned by the Aboriginal residents in the most “terror-impressed disorder” (Savage 1992: 197), Palmerston and his party would sometimes ransack the thatched dwellings and hanging baskets for food and other items of value. On a few occasions, particularly when the camp occupants were known to the Aboriginal members of Palmerston’s party, they pitched camp at these clearings in the rainforest. On other occasions, Palmerston and his party spent the night at “an aborigines’ old camping ground, named Pantapo” (ibid: 208).

While it could be said that “exploration civilised the country by translating it into English” (Carter 1987: 63), and in the case of Palmerston, translating it into the familiar language of geology, Palmerston’s diaries retain many of the Aboriginal names for places along the Russell River. Indeed, once Palmerston leaves the already colonised and thus lexically familiar environs of the lower South Johnstone River, he travels in a country without European names, where no settler roads exist. The objective of Palmerston’s journey is not a known place or a final point in a linear trajectory. As Paul Carter observes, explorer narratives “lack plot” (Carter 1992: 11). It is the historical experience and description of space that forms both the content and aim of these accounts.

In his wanderings around the Russell River, an Aboriginal space becomes visible in the form of named bora grounds, camps, animals, plants, waterfalls, rivers and people. For Palmerston, and subsequent prospectors, these Aboriginal names constituted a useful form of spatial communication, which enabled the Europeans, led by their native guides, to move around a landscape which had few notable points of reference, as far as they were concerned. As Palmerston once commented, the rainforests were a “jungle in which one’s eyes could not pierce much further than one’s own length” (Eacham Historical Society 1985: 32). It was perhaps the very nature of the country that Palmerston journeyed through that made the imposition of European names so difficult. Although credited as the first European explorer of this region, from his diaries it appears that in the three months Palmerston spent in the Russell River catchment, he did not once ascribe a European name to a place or geographical object. In many respects, the Aboriginal names recorded by Palmerston have served the same purposes as imposed European ones. These Aboriginal names soon became fixed onto maps and transcribed into subsequent settler experiences of the region. For instance, many of the native names for geographical objects recorded by Palmerston in 1886 appear two years later in the report and on the accompanying map of the government geologist, Robert L. Jack. While retaining their Aboriginal names, the places signified by these names had undergone a rapid transformation. Tachappa, an Aboriginal bora ground in late 1886, had by February 1888 been transformed into a “butcher’s shop and store, and about a dozen Chinese dwellings” (Jack 1888: 2), while many of the original Aboriginal paths had been overlaid with “digger’s tracks” (loc. cit.). Local Aboriginal people, referred to by Robert Jack, as “half civilized blacks” were reduced to ‘beasts of burden’, carrying rations and other gear to the fast-appearing European and Chinese diggings. As Jack’s account and map attest, authorised by the foundational act of exploration and preserved out of context in this way, Aboriginal names allowed Europeans to move around and make some momentary sense of the environment they were soon to radically transform. Moreover, as Carter points out, when taken out of context by Europeans, and placed on maps for example, the use of Aboriginal place names symbolised more the historical presence of Europeans than indicating the *a priori* status of the country as Aboriginal (Carter 1987: 344).

The issue of native place names and European naming practices is very much at the forefront of Archibald Meston’s meditations on his scientific expedition to Bellenden-Ker and Mt Bartle Frere in June 1889. Meston’s account of his travels with F. M. Bailey, the Colonial Botanist, and Kendall Broadbent, the Zoological Collector with the Queensland Museum,

adds another layer to the emerging landscape, adorning Palmerston's bare, geological surfaces with the fauna and flora of the region.

MEANINGLESS NAMES AND A PLEASING GEOGRAPHICAL NOMENCLATURE

Archibald Meston claimed the distinction of being the first European to ascend the summit of the Bellender-Ker Range in June 1889, less than three years after Christie Palmerston made a similar claim with respect to Mt Bartle Frere. While exploratory, it is apparent that Meston's travels are presented as being for a greater scientific and national good, as opposed to the more personal interests of Palmerston's journey along the Russell River. Indeed, Meston boasts that the trip to the Bellenden-Ker Range is the first "purely scientific expedition" in Australia. Both journeys are, however, dominated by economic concerns, in the case of Meston's expedition, the discovery of economically-valuable plants – new species as lucrative as coffee or tea perhaps. From Meston's report on the expedition, it appears that the region's fauna are of secondary significance to the more important task of ascertaining the nature of the "timbers of the district".

On the subject of 'geology', which dominates Palmerston's diaries, Meston writes that there is "little to report". Palmerston's travels had already achieved that act of discovery.

Meston's report is arguably the first 'scientific' account of the Aborigines of the area and he specifically devotes a section to the 'Bellenden-Ker blacks'. This said, Meston's descriptions are quite general and are more focused upon comparing and contrasting local Aboriginal traits with those of other 'blacks' in the region and groups further south, supposedly known to Europeans in the later part of the nineteenth century. Meston's attempt to scientifically classify and arrange the Aborigines of the Russell, Mulgrave and Barron Rivers into a broader taxonomic scheme is informed by evolutionary ideas of the time, notably the social Darwinian notion of 'survival of the fittest'. Within this interpretive framework, the 'Australian blacks', like all "savage and inferior races" (Meston 1889: 9) are "destined to disappear" (loc. cit.) – a fate, which Meston suggests is analogous to that of the dinosaurs. In suggesting that the 'white strangers' "walk over the graves of a dead race" in much the same way that the "blacks themselves trod over the rock sepulchres of the diprotodon" (loc. cit.), Meston also points to the *a priori* and multi-layered cultural and natural dimensions of the landscape.

From Meston's report, it is apparent that the more significant peaks, rivers and prominent geographical features in the region have already been ascribed a European name. This is not a landscape in an entirely pre-mapped state. Indeed, it is this emerging map of named fixed points that, unlike Palmerston's account, provides a plot structure to Meston's narrative – a linear story about the ascent of two mountains.

While integral to Meston's narrative of exploration and discovery, he takes issue with the "utterly meaningless names" (Meston 1889: 1) conferred by surveyors and local residents. He suggests instead, the adoption of native place names. Meston's intentions here are two-fold – to establish what he regards as a more "pleasing geographical nomenclature" (loc. cit.) and preserve aspects of the native dialects "doomed to deplorably early annihilation" (loc. cit.). To this end, Meston informs the public that "special efforts" were made on the scientific expedition to obtain the native names for "creeks, mountains, rivers and other conspicuous geographical features" (loc. cit.).

Notwithstanding these noble intentions, Meston and his party proceed to ascend the Bellenden-Ker Range accompanied by "four strong kanakas", men from Tanna Island in the Solomon Islands. Moreover, as if suffering from some form of lexical amnesia or not yet fully

aware of the ambitions expressed in the revised and elaborated report of the expedition, Meston and his party proceed to ascend the range, conferring English and Latin names on the flora and fauna encountered, and on those geographical objects considered worthy of memorialising with the names of their benefactors, or other prominent Europeans at the time, or commemorating one's own importance.

At a height of 2,300 feet we again found the remarkable fruit which Mr Bailey has named Garcinia Mestoni, or "Meston's Mangosteen" ... (Meston 1889: 3).

Upon coming across a series of imposing waterfalls, Meston records that:

The scene at this spot in the wet season must baffle the human imagination. Even in the dry weather it was a picture of fascinating loveliness, the future paradise of the artist and the lovers of the beautiful, the scenery-hunting tourists of years to come, when the lower ravines of the Bellenden-Ker are become familiar to the outside world of amateur explorers.

To this series of splendid cascades I have given the name of the "Morehead Cataracts", a deserved compliment to the Chief Secretary and Premier of a Government possessing the honourable distinction of being the first to send out in any part of Australia a purely scientific expedition (Meston 1889: 2).

On the eastern face of Bartle Frere is a cataract falling sheer down over two thousand feet ... To that cataract I have given the name of the "Hume Black Falls", in honour of the present Minister for Lands (Meston 1889: 7).

Meston's lyricism about the country he sees stands in stark contrast to the ragged and often despairing words of Christie Palmerston. Palmerston's open-ended and fragmentary account further contrasts with the landscaping efforts of Meston's overarching narrative. This is particularly apparent in the closing paragraphs of Meston's report, where abandoning the shackles of scientific description, Meston describes the scene witnessed from the peak of Bellenden-Ker. Peppered with allusions to Greek mythology, Meston's description of the view thus encountered incites a tradition of landscape perception and experience that renders the foreign historically familiar. Moreover, as Carter remarks, references such as these are not merely words of description but are "instruments of cultural conquest" (Carter 1987: 118), in this case, bearing the authority of the beginnings of European civilisation.

References to Greek mythology surface again in Meston's discussion of the 'Bellenden-Ker blacks'. In a meditation on civility and savagery, Meston considers the words of Minerva to the Furies in his contemplation about the one-sided nature of historical reckoning. Stripped of sentimentalism and euphemism, Meston tallies up the ledger of European-Aboriginal contact, and finds that the "white man has, beyond all question, been the most unscrupulous and deliberate murderer of the two" (Meston 1889: 9).

Acknowledging the savage and 'conspicuous facts' of white colonisation does not, however, prevent Meston from alluding to Darwinian ideas of natural selection to account for the disappearance of the 'Australian blacks'. Less than three years after the initial encounters between Europeans and the Aborigines of the Russell River catchment, Meston declares that "their epoch of time is near its termination. The shadows are deepening towards the everlasting night" (loc. cit.).

Through its notable absences, Meston's report reads as a self-fulfilling prophecy of this "mournful picture" (loc. cit.). In contrast to Palmerston's enlivened account of his encounter with local Aborigines, Meston's description refers largely to signs of prior Aboriginal occupation. Meston and his party travel along "old blacks' tracks", they come across "old

blacks' camp", and they discover the "skeleton of a blackfellow". For their ascent of Mt Bartle Frere, Meston arranges a "native black" to 'accompany' them to the summit. Yet, with the exception of this one reference, Meston's report on the expedition reduces Aboriginal occupation to relics or remnants, or relegates the Aborigines to the latter part of the narrative, sandwiched between a brief account of 'geology' and the more detailed descriptions of the 'timbers of the district', and the region's other natural productions, including flora and fauna.

As for the noble intentions mentioned at the start of his report, Meston concludes his account by suggesting that Aboriginal spatiality is perhaps far more complex than his original idea of adopting their 'pleasing geographical nomenclature' might suggest. To avoid the 'hopeless confusion', in European eyes at least, resulting from the Indigenous fact of places and objects having a number of different names, Meston identifies the need for 'considerable discretion'. As white history has shown, the discretion exercised by Meston and others in response to this issue – fundamentally, a problem of two cultures occupying the same country – resulted in both the erasure of this difference and the appropriation of those Aboriginal places names which remained.

For all of Meston's gloomy pronouncements and the suggestion of an area deceptively unpopulated, there are terse and tightly-loaded allusions to an ongoing Aboriginal presence. Before the expedition reaches the summit of Bellenden-Ker, Constable Whelan of the Native Mounted Police and his 'boys', who accompanied the expeditionary team soon after they commenced their travels, are called away to attend to "some murders by the blacks" on the recently declared Russell River Goldfield. Less than three years after Palmerston's journey into this very same region, Meston reports that:

[L]arge numbers of blacks have been acting as prospectors for the diggers ... [while] ... About 200 have also come in from time to time and worked on the Johnstone River plantations. Several diggers have been killed by the Russell blacks, who have also murdered three or four settlers on the Russell and Mulgrave (Meston 1889: 9).

While cursory, these comments are characteristic of white colonisation across Australia. As Paul Carter comments, "the influence of aboriginal culture in succouring and locating European society in Australia was considerable" (1987: 342). Explorers like Palmerston and Meston were not so much accompanied by native guides, but were led by native scouts. Unwittingly, these Aboriginal guides led the way for their own dispossession and dispersal. Murdered and driven from their own country, the survivors, like those on the upper reaches of the Russell River, were drafted into the workforce as menial labourers. In North Queensland, like so many other places in Australia, this scenario was repeated over and over again with each new wave of white encroachment and colonisation. However, as discussed in the next chapter, strangely familiar relationships were created between colonists and colonised as the earth was sluiced and the trees felled, and new spaces were made and negotiated in the emerging historical landscape.

CONCLUSION

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, a strange and sparse view of the landscape of North Queensland is presented to the public gaze.



Figure 9: Statue of 'Christie Palmerston and his Aboriginal Companion Pompo' at Millaa Millaa, Atherton Tableland (Photo: Sandra Pannell).

For the white readers of local newspapers, such as *Queensland Figaro*, the *Townsville Herald* and the *Queenslander*, and those members of the public familiar with state parliamentary papers, Palmerston's descriptions portray a barren world of rock and water. The elements of this fractured and eroded world are coloured by the lure of immediate economic gain and shaped by personal hardship and perseverance. It is left to Meston and his 1889 account of exploration of the Bellenden-Ker Range and Mt Bartle Frere, to cloak the hard-won surfaces of Palmerston's narrative with a verdant covering of Linnaean taxa and Latin names. As the natural elements of this landscape are painstakingly brought into view by the likes of Palmerston and Meston, the already cultural dimensions of this space, an Aboriginal space, begin to disappear, or so these narratives would have us believe. Yet, as the following chapters indicate, in the ensuing years the Aboriginal occupants of the Russell River region do more than just "loiter on the edge of our historical clearing" (Carter 1987: 327).

CHAPTER FOUR – LAYING BARE THE BONES OF THE SNAKE

*How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object! – William Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part 1.*

Meston's report had barely covered Palmerston's bleak igneous surfaces with a green hue of botanical terms when hundreds of European and Chinese miners descended upon the Russell River catchment and started to strip away the layers of green and black in the search for gold. Cutting deep terraces and tunnels through these sediments of time and washing away the screened effluvia down the tributaries of the Russell River, the miners laid bare the bones of the country created by the rainbow snake, *Yamani*.

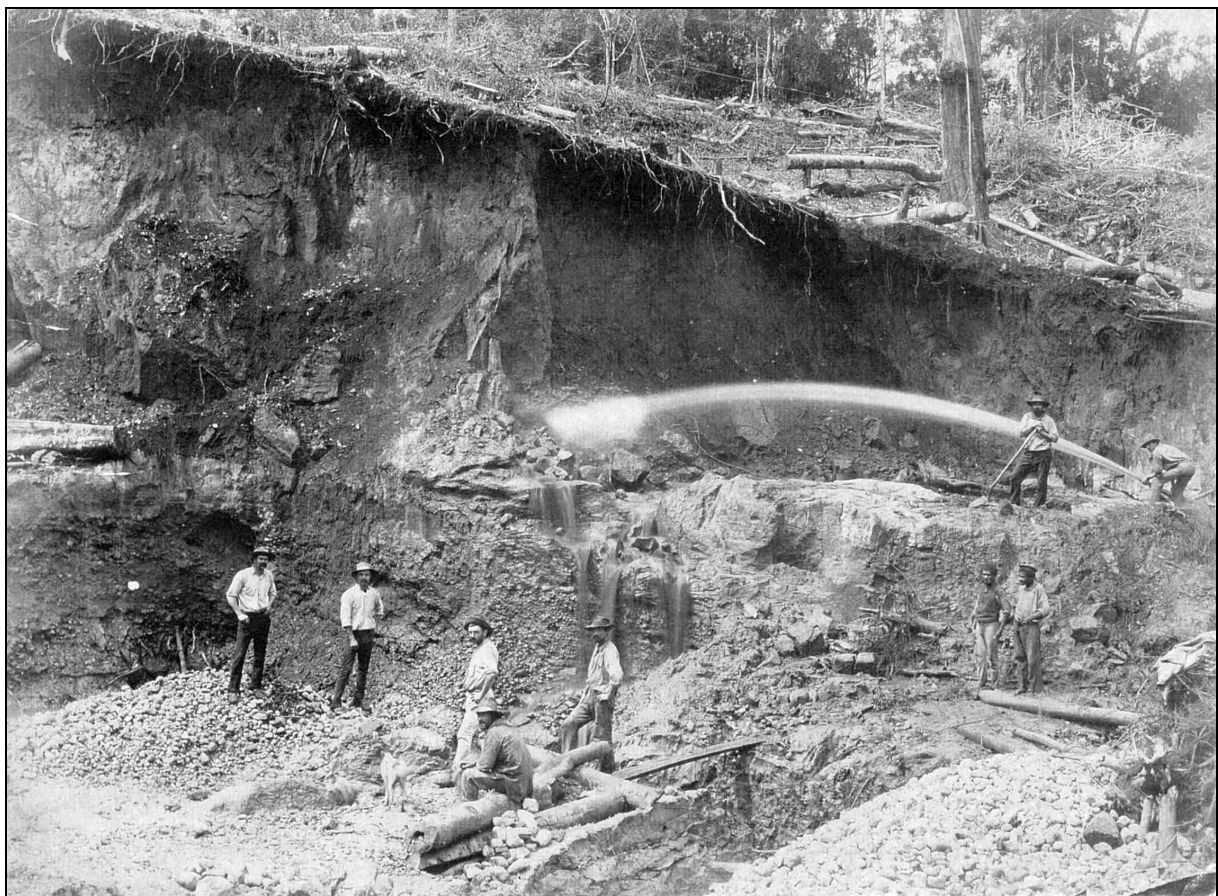


Figure 10: 'Gold sluicing at Union Gold Mine, Russell River, 1890s' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

In its heyday, in the 1890s, the mining town of Boonjie boasted a store, a hotel, a butcher's shop and a bakery (Short 1988: 37). It serviced the hundred or so white miners working the upper reaches of the Russell River Goldfield (sometimes also called the Boonjie Goldfield) from the time of its discovery by Christie Palmerston and George Clarke in 1886 until its demise in the early 1900s. In the late 1880s, the mining encampment at Boonjie marked the first white settlement in what later became, in 1907, the Parish of Malanda. Today, the only physical reminder of the township and its mining past is what remains of the wooden building that once was the store. What happened to Boonjie seems to have been the fate of so many

mining towns around Australia. What is often overlooked in the history of these towns is that these now degraded spaces of abandoned shafts and worked-over mullock heaps have become Aboriginal spaces once again. In some places, the spatial memory of a prior but brief European presence has vanished along with the miners and the mining infrastructure. Like so many other accounts of mining in Australia, the story about Boonjie and the Russell River Goldfield is largely a story about the exploits and gains of the Europeans. As in Palmerston's diaries of prospecting along the Russell River, Aboriginal people seem to only appear in these early scenes of 'golden soil and wealth for toil' as human packhorses and unpaid labourers (Figure 10).

The memories of Ngadjon-Jii people, and the stories they tell about gold-prospecting on the upper reaches of the Russell River, take us beyond the still black and white images of the era, where Aboriginal workers are glimpsed as part of the background of white exploitation. The stories that unfold in this chapter tell a more complex and entangled tale of Aboriginal-European relations than statements by pioneer historians that "native labour, men and women, were engaged by the miners at Boonjie, to dig water races for sluicing" (Johnston 1983: 10). They also tell us more about the production of the mining landscape that emerged around Boonjie at the end of the nineteenth century. Importantly, these stories tell us something about the reproduction of an Indigenous sense of locality and landscape that is also subject to the context-producing drive of Europeans, both as individuals and as a more omnipotent colonial presence.

THE 'KING' OF BOONJIE

Emma Johnston's mother, Molly Raymond (*Bundjabili*, Figure 11), identified in some settler accounts, as the "last Ngadjan Aborigine who could remember the arrival of the first Europeans to the Malanda area" (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6), was born around 1890 in an Aboriginal camp near the headwaters of the Russell River.



Figure 11: Molly Raymond, Malanda, ca. early 1990s (Photo courtesy Yvonne Canendo).

In the same year of Granny Molly's birth, and at nearly the same place, Fred Brown built the store and hotel that became the centre of the mining township of Boonjie. If the establishment of Boonjie marked the first white settlement in the Eacham Shire, then it could also be said that Boonjie was the first Aboriginal fringe camp in the region. However, as Auntie Emma Johnston explains, Boonjie was an Aboriginal camp well before the arrival of the miners:

I remember just a little bit of this place. They used to have sports down here. The white people. Yeah Mum [Molly Raymond] and them used to live down here. Over there where Casanelli's [the name of an European farmer] is now that's where the camp was, all around there. Casanelli's only been here 30 or 40 years. Down that side, that's where the men folk would camp, women folk would go over there, and if they were going to have kids they would go over there. Cousin Dick was born over there. Auntie Kitty Clarke she had her son over there, Dick Illin.



Figure 12: 'A group of Aborigines, Upper Russell River 1895, with implements and body markings' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Emma Johnston's mother, Molly Raymond, grew up at the Boonjie camp. Here she lived with her mother, *Gungudja* (Sally Beard), and her maternal grandfather, *Ngadja* (Barry Clarke), as well as with many other Ngadjon-Jii people. While Molly was born at Boonjie in the first years

of contact with Europeans, a number of her relatives were born at Boonjie in the pre-contact period. They included, Molly's mother, *Gungudja*, Mosie (brother of *Gungudja*), as well as some of the children of *Ngadja*, *Wundajila* (Jack Clarke), *Tagadja* (Joe Clarke), *Juruwayu* (Polly Clarke) and Willie Clarke. Senior Ngadjon-Jii people identify Boonjie as a "big camp, all the Murris were there at Boonjie".

The first Europeans in the region referred to the Aborigines of the upper Russell River as the 'Boonjie tribe' (Figure 12). According to May, "the Boonjie tribe seems to have located the Johnstone River and followed it towards Malanda, as most of the aboriginals still alive in the Malanda district lived originally in the goldfield country" (1969: 3A).

Ngadjon-Jii people refer to the 'goldfield country' as *Ngadja's* country. With the arrival of the Europeans, *Ngadja's* country was also called Barry's Pocket:

Grandad Barry [Ngadja] was here. This is his ground. They called it Barry's Pocket. He lived here with his five wives. This was early days. Migalu [white people] gave him a plaque and crowned him as a king. My mum [Dinah Calico] was little then. Grandad Barry had a daughter called Jinny, and those two were small, they used to say, "Grandad don't walk around with that thing. It looks heavy. Take it off". And he said, "No I can't do that". And they said, "Why". "Because I'm King". When they took his body from around here, that plaque went with him. Our old grandfather died at Boonjie. The old people mummified him. They dried out his body. They took it over to Germany. We still looking for him. - Auntie Jessie Calico

Ngadjon-Jii people are correct in thinking that their ancestor was taken to Germany. From European records, it is possible to piece together something of what happened to the mummified body of *Ngadja*. In early 1905, the German ethnologist, Hermann Klaatsch, made a brief expedition to the 'Bellenden Ker Mountains'. Klaatsch was in Australia at the time to "attack the problem of the origin of the Australian blacks, and of their import in relation to the whole development of mankind" (Klaatsch 1907: 576). His investigations into this issue involved studying the skeletons and skulls of Australian Aborigines and comparing them with "primitive man in Europe" (loc. cit.). Accordingly, his excursions into the rainforests of North Queensland were primarily to collect 'specimens'. On this subject, Klaatsch writes:

A most important field for the investigation proved to be the Bellenden Kerr [sic] Mountains inland from Cairns, where a great number of half-civilised and free-living tribes are located. Some of these were found to be in a good condition, but others were in a state of decay, largely owing to the introduction of opium by the Chinese. One of the best specimens collected here was the mummy of an old chief, "Naicha" of "Boonjie" (Upper Russel [sic] River), which had been perfectly smoked eight months after death. The negotiations with the relatives for the possession were difficult, but successful (Klaatsch 1907: 578).

Appended to Klaatsch's somewhat obscure article are a number of photographs of 'natives' of the Cairns district, including two photographs of the mummified corpse. A frontal view of the "mummy of native chief" shows the corpse with a 'king plate' inscribed with the words, "Naicha, King Boonjie".

As the anthropologist, L. R. Hiatt, remarks "the colonists had adopted the practice of rewarding particular natives for their services by giving them brass breast plates inscribed

with a royal title” (Hiatt 1996: 82)¹³. For Ngadjon-Jii people today, the bestowal of a ‘king plate’ upon *Ngadja* is perceived by them as European acknowledgement of traditional structures of authority within their society. While early European accounts of Aboriginal society indicate that certain individuals were accorded the status of ‘men of high degree’ (Elkin 1945) or ‘elders’, they consistently note, however, the absence of chiefs or headmen, and formal institutions of government. As Hiatt observes, it was only in the later part of the nineteenth century, particularly after the 1874 publication of the Reverend George Taplin’s report of ‘chiefs’ among the ‘Narrinyeri nation’ at the mouth of the Murray River, that a more authoritarian, in contrast to the previous libertarian, view of Aboriginal political life emerged (Hiatt 1996: 86-87). The creation of Aboriginal ‘kings’ and ‘princes’ reflected more the colonists’ own cultural traditions of ‘finding a chief’, than it did those of Aboriginal society (cf Sahlins 1981, 1985). Moreover, the projection of European cultural categories upon Aboriginal society served the political interests of individual colonists and the government alike. This said, so-called Aboriginal ‘kings’ also played an important role in brokering relations between colonial agents and Indigenous people (see Trigger 1992; Sutton 1998). This mediatory role is apparent in one report of the annual ‘Blanket Day’ ceremony in Cairns:

About 115 blacks mustered in the police yard and each received the regulation blanket ... Inspector Durham then invested two aborigines with a brass plate and chain each, declaring them the Kings of the Cairns and Barron tribes respectively and urging them to all in their power to put down tribal fights and prevent lawlessness. He said that the police would protect the blacks so long as they did no wrong and the new kings would have to assist the police in every way to prevent the aboriginals breaking the laws (cited in Birtles 1968: 341).

This ‘structure of the conjuncture’ (Sahlins 1985) – in which European categories came to be embodied by the Indigenes and the ‘natives’ in turn were, often with some difficulty, integrated into the colonial order –, was enacted over and over again as one of the dominant cultural schemes of colonialism. While over time the categories changed – ‘kings’ were replaced by other government appointments – the structural asymmetries between black and white remained.

The anthropologist, Norman B. Tindale, provides further information on Emma Johnston’s great grandfather, *Ngadja*. In the file notes for his unpublished manuscript ‘Little People of the Rainforest’, Tindale has a photograph of a mummified corpse (Figure 13). On the back of this photograph, Tindale identifies the corpse as being that of “Na:tja after mummification June 1904”. This is probably the same person Tindale refers to as “a rather tall ... clever man of the tribe who died in 1904” named ‘Nga:tja’ (Tindale 1974: 183). Tindale notes that the photographic “plate reads Narcha 1897”. While Tindale queries whether the photograph was taken by the Cairns photographer Alfred Atkinson, he writes that the “ceremony was witnessed by Klaatsch in June 1904” [Dr Hermann Klaatsch] (Tindale nd). In another reference, Tindale refers to the corpse in the photograph as “King Narda of the Boonjie tribe via Atherton” (Tindale nd). In yet another reference, Tindale observes that the Australian Museum in Sydney has two mummified Aboriginal corpses. The first is a woman named ‘Con-mo’. Tindale notes that the corpse is decorated in red ochre and is said to be from the ‘Ding-al-Booron tribe’. Tindale believes this tribe to be the ‘Dungara horde of the Irukandji tribe” on the lower Barron River (Tindale nd). The second ‘mummy’ is from the “Lake

¹³ Edmund Kennedy is arguably the first European to initiate this practice in North Queensland. In May 1848, Kennedy and his party landed at a small bay between Tam O’Shanter Point and the mouth of the Hull River (near Mission Beach). A number of natives gathered on the beach to witness Kennedy’s landing. To the Europeans, the Aborigines seemed peaceful. Kennedy presented the natives with two, round tin plates with his initials stamped in them, and chains with which they could hang the plates around their necks (Jones 1961: 31).

Eacham tribe". This specimen is called "Koo-ee". Tindale is unsure of the meaning of this name (Tindale nd).

Christie Palmerston was the first European to witness and record details of a Ngadjon-Jii mortuary ceremony. On September 24, 1886 he witnessed a 'Coway' ceremony performed for an old man called 'Nooychoo'. This ceremony took place in Ngadjon-Jii country not far from 'Pantapo' bora ground, between Wairambah and Kiandra Creeks. According to Palmerston, "there are several hundred of aborigines called together for the special purpose of mummifying the corpse" (cited in Savage 1992: 219). Palmerston records that 'Wallajar', the elder brother of the deceased was present at the ceremony, as were a "dozen of the



Figure 13: 'Aboriginal mummy of King Narcha of the Boonjie Tribe, 1890s' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

dead man's sons" (Savage 1992: 218). Palmerston eyes the "well-cured mummy of a still older brother, named 'Monumbaloo'" and writes that he "would have liked to have taken it for the British Museum" (loc. cit.), but decided that discretion was required, given that he was severely out-numbered at the time.

In his three volumes on the *Queensland Aborigines* (1984), Walter E. Roth provides a series of photographs of Ngadjon-Jii mortuary practices and states, "on the Russell River [the] desiccation process appears to be highly developed, the 'mummy' being ornamented" (Roth 1984: 393). He also notes that 'desiccation' is reserved for "very distinguished males" and that upon 'desiccation' the corpse is tied up and "carried about for months" (loc. cit.). Roth's observations accord with Ngadjon-Jii accounts that the mummified corpse of *Ngadja*, replete with king plate, was carried around by his last wife, Jessie Calico's great grandmother, Sarah Horsey, until it was taken by Klaatsch in 1905.

Perhaps it is more appropriate to speak of Auntie Jessie's 'granny' carrying around the body of the 'King of Boonjie', Barry Clarke, rather than the corpse of *Ngadja*. For the bestowal of the king plate had transformed the identity and status of *Ngadja*. Forever. As Paul Carter points out, "at the very moment he is named, the Aborigine becomes someone else or nobody" (Carter 1987: 331). The heaviness that Auntie Jessie's mother so perceptively refers to when asking her grandfather to remove the breast plate is arguably the weight of enslavement, the bonds of debt-peonage that went with this object of colonial oppression masquerading as a symbol of Aboriginal power.

THE CREATION OF ABORIGINAL LABOUR

The European accounts of what happened to the body of *Ngadja* provide some insight into Aboriginal life in the early years of contact with Europeans. Some twenty years after the opening of the Russell River Goldfield, it appears that Ngadjon-Jii people are still living on their ancestral lands and undertaking a range of ceremonies and cultural practices. While these accounts point to a culturally more complex view of the early contact period, they also succinctly capture European attitudes of the time, particularly those ideas about race clumsily based on social Darwinian principles. As Palmerston's comments and Klaatsch's actions indicate, propping up these racist ideas meant that even Aboriginal people themselves were not beyond appropriation by Europeans – "carried away as cultural treasure by the victors" (Carter 1987: 327). Some idea of the nature and degree of European appropriation and exploitation of Aborigines can be found in the recollections of Ngadjon-Jii people:

My mum [Molly Raymond] told me her and Arnold's granny, Lydia, used to go through Boonjie to Kiandra [Creek] when they were kids. They worked on the gold sluices washing the gold. Granny Molly ran away from old Boonjie when the police came out. Police chased them as they were half castes. When Molly saw the buliman [police] she ran away along the river [Russell River] all the way to Kiandra Creek. They caught Lydia and took her away [to Yarrabah]. But Molly got away. – Auntie Emma Johnston

Palmerston's diaries and interviews with the press of the day provide some insight into the processes by which rainforest Aboriginal people were transformed into 'black labourers'. Palmerston talks of 'giving' various European items, pocket handkerchiefs, matches, blankets, and his own shirt, to the Aborigines he encounters in the rainforest in return for them acting as temporary 'swagmen' (see Savage 1992: 219). There is no suggestion of his 'boys' being paid wages for their labour. Palmerston's 'boys' are fed and clothed as payment, a 'method' which the Government Geologist, Robert L. Jack, reports as being both "expensive and troublesome" (Jack 1888: 2). Palmerston further suggests that treating the Aborigines 'kindly' not only amounts to a form of symbolic payment but also somehow atoned

for the overall brutality of Aboriginal exploitation. As he states in an 1887 press interview, “Blackfellows ... have generally been shot down by any whites who have come into contact with them” (cited in Savage 1992: 237). As his diaries testify, Palmerston himself is not beyond ‘rifling’ (ibid: 218) the Aborigines he comes into contact with. Behind Palmerston’s actions lies his ‘belief “that the country must be cleared and utilised by means of black labour” (ibid: 239). According to Palmerston, Europeans could not be enticed to work for the same kind of pittance provided to Aboriginal workers or “work for a master in the scrubs” (loc. cit.). As Palmerston comments, a ‘white man’ toils so that he can make “a home for himself and his family” and enjoy the future riches and ‘snug comforts’ of such efforts (loc. cit.).



Figure 14: ‘Sluicing gold at the Mayflower Claim on the Russell River using hydraulic sluicing, ca. 1890s’ (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Palmerston’s remarks imply that ‘black labour’ is not compelled by such capitalist visions of prosperity and independence, making Aborigines ideal subjects for future “training as carriers

and clearers” (ibid: 240). Critical to realising this future role for the ‘native blacks’ are the Aboriginal ‘boys’ recruited by Palmerston and other Europeans. Identified by the colonists as ‘half-civilised natives’, they often procured Aborigines from the rainforests to work as carriers or some years later, brought them into government ration depots.

Early European reports speak of Aborigines working with gold miners on the upper reaches of the Russell River. For example, by 1890 Fred Brown had built more than three and half miles of water race to his ‘Astronomer claim’ “and engaged dozens of aboriginals (men and women) in sluicing operations” (May 1969: 4B) (Figure 14). Like Christie Palmerston, Fred Brown “fed and clothed the blacks in return for their work” (loc. cit.). Ernie Raymont recalls what his ‘granny’ told him about Fred Brown and his relationships with the Aboriginal people of the area:

Granny Molly said fella called Brown owned the store at Boonjie. He was good to Murri. He was with Granny Lucy when the miners were there.

Lucy Brown (aka Lucy Bullion) or *Bindiri* was one of *Ngadja*’s four wives. Lucy’s sister, *Yuyarli*, had a relationship with another Boonjie miner, Tom Anderson, and was also known by her European name, Lucy Anderson.

The labour potential of Aboriginal people on the Russell River Goldfield also attracted the attention of European selectors in the vicinity of Atherton. To combat Aboriginal raids on corn crops and livestock, largely brought about by European clearing of the rainforest homes of Indigenous groups, selectors raised a subscription to buy rations for the “marauding wild blacks if the government provided a matching grant” (Birtles 1995: 21). A number of selectors volunteered “to assist in the training of select Aborigines in domestic or farm labour” (loc. cit.). One selector proposed that:

Some of the selectors should go out to the Russell [goldfield], and with promises of free-rations get some of the gins and picaninnies to camp in one of the grass pockets near the Barron [River] (Cairns Post, 1 February 1888, cited in Birtles 1995: 21).

As Birtles reports, in 1888 “the government approved a pound for pound subsidy” (Birtles 1995: 21) and the European community around Atherton “subscribed liberally”. As a result of the subsidy, large numbers of Aborigines were removed from their rainforest homes to government camps located around the main ration depots at Atherton and Kuranda. In this period, 1890-1895, the Aboriginal population of these two camps doubled to more than 800 inhabitants (loc. cit.). From these fringe camps, selectors were able to recruit Aboriginal labour.

There are other reports of the time that suggest local Aborigines were enlisted by ‘the whites’, namely Christie Palmerston, to prevent the ‘Chinese’ from infiltrating the more productive gold-bearing areas in the headwaters of the Russell River (May 1969: 4B). These early accounts suggest that Palmerston, “supported by a body of armed blacks” (Savage 1992: 252), forced the Chinese diggers on the Russell River Goldfield to purchase their supplies from him and extorted payments from them in return for their safe passage to and from the diggings.

Palmerston’s alleged actions highlight the role of terror and violence in the political economy of the goldfields at this time. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the shooting of Aboriginal people was still a commonplace way for Europeans to deal with property theft by the Indigenous population. In his 1888 survey of the ‘Geology of the Russell River’, Robert L. Jack reports several incidences of ‘larceny’, ‘attacks’ and ‘murders’ by both ‘absolute savages’ and ‘half civilised blacks’ (Jack 1888). In turn, Meston’s 1889 report clearly speaks

of the “wholesale murder” (Meston 1889: 9) of Aborigines by miners and other Europeans for “the sake of gain” (loc. cit.). In a situation similar to that described by Michael Taussig regarding the operation of the Peruvian Amazon (rubber) Company, on the Russell River Goldfield the use of terror and violence was rationalised as a means of extracting both gold and Aboriginal labour. Yet, to take Taussig’s point further, on the Russell River Goldfield in the 1880s and 1890s, “there was neither a commodity form of labour nor a market for it” (Taussig 1987: 53). What did exist were Aborigines “with their quite different modes of exchange and valuation, coexisting with various forms of colonial domination: patronage, concubinage, slavery and debt-peonage” (loc. cit.). On the Russell River, it was labour, a “free wage-labour contract with capital” (ibid: 69) that was scarce, and not Aborigines or gold. As Palmerston’s diaries and Meston’s report so chillingly reveal, the slaughter of Aboriginal people by the colonists was not because of the rationality of ‘economic gain’, but because of their alleged savagery and cannibalistic traditions. For Europeans, it was this very innate savagery that drove Aborigines to kill whites. Both colonists and Europeans alike were caught up in the ‘terrifying mythologies’ of what Taussig calls the ‘colonial mirror of production’. In this murky terrain, the “terror and tortures [the colonists] devised mirrored the horror of the savagery they both feared and fictionalised” (Taussig 1987: 133).

What is not often revealed in these accounts of the early days of mining is the sexual labour that took place in the name of discovery and progress. As Auntie Emma Johnston’s story reveals, her mother, Molly, and her auntie, Lydia, were being pursued by the troopers of the Native Mounted Police because of the colour of their skin. Molly and Lydia both had European genitors.

Many years after this event, Molly was interviewed by Norman Tindale at Mona Mona settlement. Molly and her daughter, Emma, had apparently been sent to Mona Mona for being “cheeky” to the policeman in Malanda. In late 1938, Tindale records that Molly’s biological father was ‘Fred Wakely’, a European mining inspector. In an interview with R. M. W. Dixon in the 1960s, Molly further reports that her father was “one of the first white men on the goldfields, a Russian geologist” (Dixon 1983: 175). Molly’s comments about the identity of her European genitor suggest a degree of familiarity. However, Ngadjon-Jii accounts speak of Molly’s mother, *Gungudja*, living with a series of Aboriginal husbands, *Wundadjla* (Jack Clarke), *Walba*, and *Tagadja* (Joe Clarke), and of Molly being “grown up” by one of these men. As Auntie Emma Johnston explains:

Molly and Polly [Molly’s sister] took name of Clarke. Grandad Joe reared Molly and Polly, that’s why they took name Clarke. Molly said that whiteman was her father. She also said that Joe was her father too.

Ngadjon-Jii people recall that one of *Gungudja*’s tribal husbands speared Joe Beard, one of the Europeans who also consorted with *Gungudja*. This latter association accounts for *Gungudja*’s European name, Sally Beard. From local accounts, it appears that several Boonjie miners consorted with Ngadjon-Jii women and fathered children. As Taussig observes, the concubinage of Indigenous women constituted a form of colonial “control over the human body” (Taussig 1987: 60) and, I would add, also over the wider social body. When the concubinage of Aboriginal women is linked to a form of debt-peonage system, where Aboriginal men worked as human packhorses and girls and women as domestic servants for nothing more than rations and cast-off clothes, European domination of Aboriginal people gave the appearance, to whites at least, of a benevolent paternalism. This fiction of power parading as avuncular protectionism is particularly evident in the ‘removal’ policies of the time.

While Molly escaped the troopers that day, her ‘sister’, Lydia, wasn’t so fortunate. She was removed to the Anglican Mission at Cape Grafton known as Yarrabah (operating since 1893 when it was known as the Bellenden Ker Reserve). Lydia, like so many other Aboriginal

people in North Queensland, was caught up in the Act – the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* of 1897. As the name implies, the ‘Act’ ostensibly provided for the ‘protection’ of Aborigines from the depredations of both European and Chinese alike, although the Chinese were more commonly identified in European accounts as the source of Aboriginal “contamination and immorality” (Birtles 1982: 61). Under the ‘Act’, the removal of ‘aboriginal half-castes’ to church missions was not just a matter of protection and preservation, but was also regarded as a means to their ‘improvement’ and ultimate civilisation. Supporters of the ‘Act’ advocated that complete segregation for three or four generations would be necessary before Aborigines could “match European productivity and reliability” (Birtles 1995: 22). Lydia, who was born “in the bush” at Boonjie around 1896 (see Tindale 1938-39), spent the rest of her life being ‘civilised’ at Yarrabah and died there in the 1940s.

The accounts of degeneration and demoralisation one finds so readily in early European accounts of Aborigines on the Atherton Tableland reflect as much European practices as they do the reality of Aboriginal circumstances and conditions. Archibald Meston, in his 1896 report on the conditions of the ‘Aboriginals of North Queensland’ – the basis for the 1897 Act – was appalled by the spread of disease, especially syphilis, and the degree of opium addiction and alcoholism among Aborigines. He also comments on other forms of European abuse and misappropriation, particularly the theft of ‘Aboriginal blankets’ (Meston 1896).

Meston’s report was closely followed by the first attempt at a census of Aboriginal people in North Queensland. Organised by William Parry-Okeden, as part of his investigation into the work of the Native Mounted Police, the census also represented the first systematic attempt by the government to map tribal areas and names (Parry-Okeden 1897). The census was based upon the number of blankets distributed to Aborigines by the police. As Paul Carter points out, if Aborigines could not be counted, “how could blankets be ordered or bullets” (Carter 1897: 321). For the Atherton area, the census gave a figure of 400 Aborigines and listed three so-called ‘tribal’ names, ‘Eaton’, ‘Hucheon’ and ‘Tuffelcey’ (Parry-Okeden 1897). The ‘tribal’ names listed on Parry-Okeden’s map are barely recognisable as the names of the rainforest Aboriginal groups recorded by Norman Tindale in the late 1930s¹⁴.

While a number of ‘tribal’ names first came into view on the government census of 1897, it is clear that by this time many Indigenous personal names had already been supplanted by Europeans ones. Ignoring Indigenous names and giving Aborigines English names allowed missionaries and government protectors to undertake their primary task – to census (see Carter 1987: 332). Naming Aboriginal people in this way turned them into facts, against which useful statistical information could be piled up. Written into police records or on blanket distribution lists as simple syllabic forms, Polly, Jimmy, Lucy, Jinny, etc., Aboriginal people thus entered the ledger book of white history.

Auntie Jessie Calico talks about how *Ngadja* came to be also known as Barry Clarke:

Grandad got his name from people called Clarke who used to be here. That’s how most of them got their name from the people that came in here and worked here. That’s where they got their name from. He worked as a mule packer for Clarke.

Ngadja worked for George E. Clarke, who is said to have “made the first discovery of payable gold” (May 1969: 4A) at ‘Goorka Goorka’ on the Russell River field. Edgar Short observes that *Ngadja*’s son, Joe Clarke, as the surname suggests, was also “employed by George Clarke” (Short 1988: 63). In his account of the ‘Nation Builders’ of the Malanda

¹⁴ Tindale identifies ‘Eaton’ and ‘Hucheon’ as alternative appellations for the ‘Ngatjan’ tribe (Tindale 1974: 183), while Tuffelcey is interpreted by Tindale as referring to ‘Tjapukai’.

region, Short identifies some of the “old miners” that were still around when he and his family arrived in 1912. By this time, however, the Boonjie Goldfield “had almost petered out” (loc. cit.). Short notes that the owner of the Boonjie hotel and store, Fred Brown, was still in the area, as was Tom Denyer and Tom Anderson. A number of Ngadjon-Jii ancestors, notably Jim Brown, Emily Denyer and Lucy Anderson, derive their European surnames from their association with these men.

THE OLD PEOPLE’S TRACK

In settler histories, George Clarke is also synonymous with ‘Clarke’s Track’ (aka the ‘Mailman’s Track’), which ran from “Herberton through what are now named the Crater, Jaggan, Lamonds [sic] Hill, along Gourka Road and then along the Mulgrave River to Cairns” (May 1969: 4A). While European accounts give the impression that George Clarke blazed the track through virgin rainforest, Ngadjon-Jii people speak of the same pathway as an Indigenous one – “the old people’s track”. This track links Lamins Hill to the coast, via the Mulgrave River valley. In the northeast, this walking track is said to mark the boundary between Ngadjon-Jii and Yidinydji people. According to Ngadjon-Jii people, the old people’s track “goes down past Raymont’s Farm, swings back to Malanda, and comes out near Jaggan” (pers. comm. Ernie Raymont).

As noted in chapter three, the existence of Aboriginal walking tracks in this region was recognised by Europeans as early as 1886. As the historian Paul Savage (1992: 215) points out, Christie Palmerston’s ability to move through dense rainforest, sometimes at night, strongly suggests that he used Aboriginal walking tracks, guided as he was by local Aborigines. Indeed, Palmerston mentions the existence of ‘native paths’ throughout his account of his exploration of the Russell River. For example, in the vicinity of Kiandra Creek, near the ‘Lady Olive Goldfields’, Palmerston writes that:

[W]e then saw running along the mountain’s narrow summit north and south a very large native path, following it north, and it soon trended to the north-east ... it led us into a narrow, but long open-capped mountain, named by the aborigines “Yunkka”... (cited in Savage 1992: 205).

Robert Logan Jack, who was accompanied by Palmerston on his geological survey of the Russell River in 1888, also reports the use of Aboriginal walking tracks. He writes that:

[I]n about three-quarters of a mile up a steep basaltic spur on the right bank of Moochoopa Creek (following an old native track) ... we joined the road at a bora ground named Toopan (Jack 1888: 3).

A few years later, Archibald Meston also talks about using an Aboriginal ‘road’ as he moves up the Russell River valley on his scientific expedition of the area (Meston 1889: 108). As Paul Carter points out, European explorers did more than just use native roads, they appropriated them to serve their own ends:

The first roads followed Aboriginal tracks from spring to spring ... The squatters, the drovers with their flocks and herds, the shearers and the teamsters used these native ways and, to gain access to stations, added to them. The big junctions where tracks met or crossed ... became natural campsites from which settlements grew (cited in Carter 1987: 339).

The route taken by Palmerston on his 1886 exploration of the Russell River and its headwaters closely approximates another Ngadjon-Jii walking track which passes Lamin’s Hill, and proceeds to follow the Russell River, winding around the southern base of Mt Bartle

Frere to the coastal plains at Pawngilly. In the words of Auntie Emma Johnston, this track is an:

Old people's track, follows ridge, goes down to Chucklunga Creek, coming down from mountain [Mt Bartle Frere]. Chucklunga goes into Russell River. Follows Jampee Creek. Molly [Emma's mother] used to roam around Jajaba Creek, Majuba Creek before Josephine Falls. Went down to Mulabar. Molly went all the way to Pawngilly [Bungili].

Auntie Jessie Calico recalls that the Russell River track was used by her 'granny', Polly Calico:

Granny Jane [Denyer] used to swim across the Russell River in flood, swim across to Babinda, carrying clothes on her head. They used to talk about Jajaba Creek, used to walk there. Molly Raymond and Polly Calico used to go to Jajaba.

On a trip to Golden Hole on the lower Russell River, Ernie Raymont talked about how his grandmother, Molly Raymond, and great grandmother, *Gungudja*:

Come down to this area. They followed the seasons. They'd come down here and when it got a bit warmer they'd move back up the river. They'd come down from Top Camp, Boonjie, from around Butchers Creek area. When the food ran out that end they came down this end. They were all top Russell River mob, Ngunyanbara Ngadjon-Jii.

The Aboriginal trails along the Russell River were part of a regional network of Aboriginal tracks that connected Ngadjon-Jii people to other groups in the region:

People used to walk from Top Camp to Tumoulin bora ground for corroboree and from Top Camp to Millaa Millaa for corroboree. Granny Molly [Raymond] walked from Top Camp to Tumoulin around the edge of Bromfield Swamp [Biinyabul]. All scrub then. Walked through thick scrub around that swamp. They took yellow walnut with them to trade with Dyirbal people. – Auntie Jessie Calico

Connecting the bora grounds to each other were walking trails kept clear by constant use (pers. comm. Trevor Johnston). The Ngadjon-Jii had several of these major walking trails, mostly from the Tablelands down to the coast. There is a well-remembered trail that starts from near Old Boonjie and passes below Broken Nose on the southern slopes of Mt Bartle Frere (Jeffers 1992).

Ngadjon-Jii people also used these tracks to visit relatives living elsewhere:

When Murri went to Mulgrave they followed the old people's track down. They call it Clarke's Track now. We'd go down there and see our uncles down at Mulgrave, Uncle Tommy Land and Tom Allen. When we were at Top Camp we came over here to Boonjie. I came over with my grandma [Gungudja], she brought me over. We used to like walking around. Just visiting. – Auntie Emma Johnston

The tracks also facilitated the bi-directional movement of trade objects, such as mother-of-pearl shell from the coast, and woven dilly bags from the inland areas.

My grandmother [Polly Calico] had a dilly bag [djandju] with a red handkerchief wrapped around pearl-shell pendants in it. We were told never to touch them. They traded pearl-shell from the coast. She had that dilly bag when we were living in 'The Jungle'. – Auntie Jessie Calico

As Auntie Jessie Calico's comments indicate, these tracks enabled Ngadjon-Jii people to readily move between the coastal lowlands and the upland rainforests. For Ngadjon-Jii people, these tracks provide an important historical link between themselves and their ancestors, whose footsteps they literally walk in as they travel along these walk pads. The walking tracks also represent a physical record of Ngadjon-Jii people's own distinctive occupation of the rainforests. They can also be regarded as the socially-constructed equivalents of 'song lines' or 'Dreaming Tracks' and, as such, constitute an integral dimension of Aboriginal life and land tenure¹⁵. For Ngadjon-Jii people, it is these tracks, and the forest of meaning wound into them, that binds space together and creates as much a landscape of memory as one of physical meandering.

BACK TO BOONJIE

In an interesting reversal of history, Ngadjon-Jii people used the old people's tracks in the late 1960s when prospecting for gold along the tributaries of the Russell River after "being kicked off the farms" when equal wages for Aboriginal people eventuated in the late 1960s. As Emma Johnston's son, Trevor, explains:

Ngadjon people helped clear the land and the women worked on the farms. When the land was cleared people weren't employed any more. From 1966 when Aborigines got independence people got kicked off the farms. They also got fed up with the way they were treated. Some people went and worked in forestry, other went looking for gold.

Reclaiming many of the Indigenous pathways appropriated by Europeans in days gone by, Trevor Johnston recalls their gold-fossicking days:

We did gold chasing around Carr's Hill [near Butchers Creek], and down on Kiandra, Combo and Coolamon Creek. Once I tried camping at The Astronomer [a former gold claim] but packed up in the middle of the night because the spirits were too strong. We used to go to Gulgagulga country for gold. I would go fossicking with Auntie Jessie, my mum [Emma Johnston], and Auntie Elsie Battle. We'd get water from creeks, like Coolamon Creek. We'd be out in the scrub for months. School holidays all the kids would come down and join us. We'd all live off bush tucker.

We went panning for gold. We would dig dirt from corners of the creek and wash it out with sluice. My granny Molly used to go digging for gold. Granny Molly used to blow the rain away. She told the spirits to take the rain away.

¹⁵As this statement implies, land tenure consists of more than merely the control over material resources or is solely concerned with issues of economic productivity. As the work of a number of anthropologists in Australia demonstrates (Berndt 1970; Myers 1986; Williams 1986), land tenure relates to the social and metaphysical dimensions of human existence. Following on from the proposition of tenure as a system of social and cosmological relations, Ingold argues that it may also be the case that "tenure in hunting and gathering societies is not of surface area, but of sites and paths within a [cultural] landscape" (Ingold 1986: 153).

She could also make it rain, talk lingo. Granny Molly would make rain with a fire-stick.

Trevor and his family continued to live with 'spirits' and 'chase' gold around the headwaters of the Russell River up until the late 1980s when the declaration of the region as part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area made 'gold chasing' an illegal activity. For Ngadjon-Jii people, the declaration of their rainforested country as a World Heritage Area signalled a new era of permits and permissions, of surveillance and intervention. Like many other rainforest Aboriginal people, 1988 heralded a new era of protectionism, this time dressed up as *conservation* on a universal scale.

CONCLUSION

These days, the terraces and sluices constructed by the likes of Fred Brown and his Aboriginal workforce have mostly been reclaimed by the rainforest or washed away by the torrential rains that fall each wet season in this region. Notwithstanding the landscape-shaping force of these natural processes, it is still possible to discern the earthworks of the early European miners at the sites of former claims, such as 'The Astronomer', or on the 'Lady Olive Goldfield'.

Today, these relics of a former time are located on the periphery of European settlement, rather than constituting the centre of this settlement, as was the case in the late nineteenth century. Boonjie and the Russell River Goldfield were not obliterated by the axes and fires that followed, but were largely forgotten in the founding of the Parish of Malanda.

CHAPTER FIVE – ON THE FARM

The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms ... But none of them owns the landscape. There is property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title. – Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature and Selected Essays

A report from the Land Commissioner at Atherton on 19 July 1935 mentions an old lady living in abject poverty on a 255 acre dairy farm at Glen Allyn. The house and the property are described as being in a condition of disrepair, and there is a concern on the part of the officials that the conditions of her selection holding are not being met. The report concludes that the ageing Miss Raymont is utterly 'dependent' on the 'natives' working on the property and that should they leave, the Land Commissioner would have no alternative but to dispossess Miss Raymont.

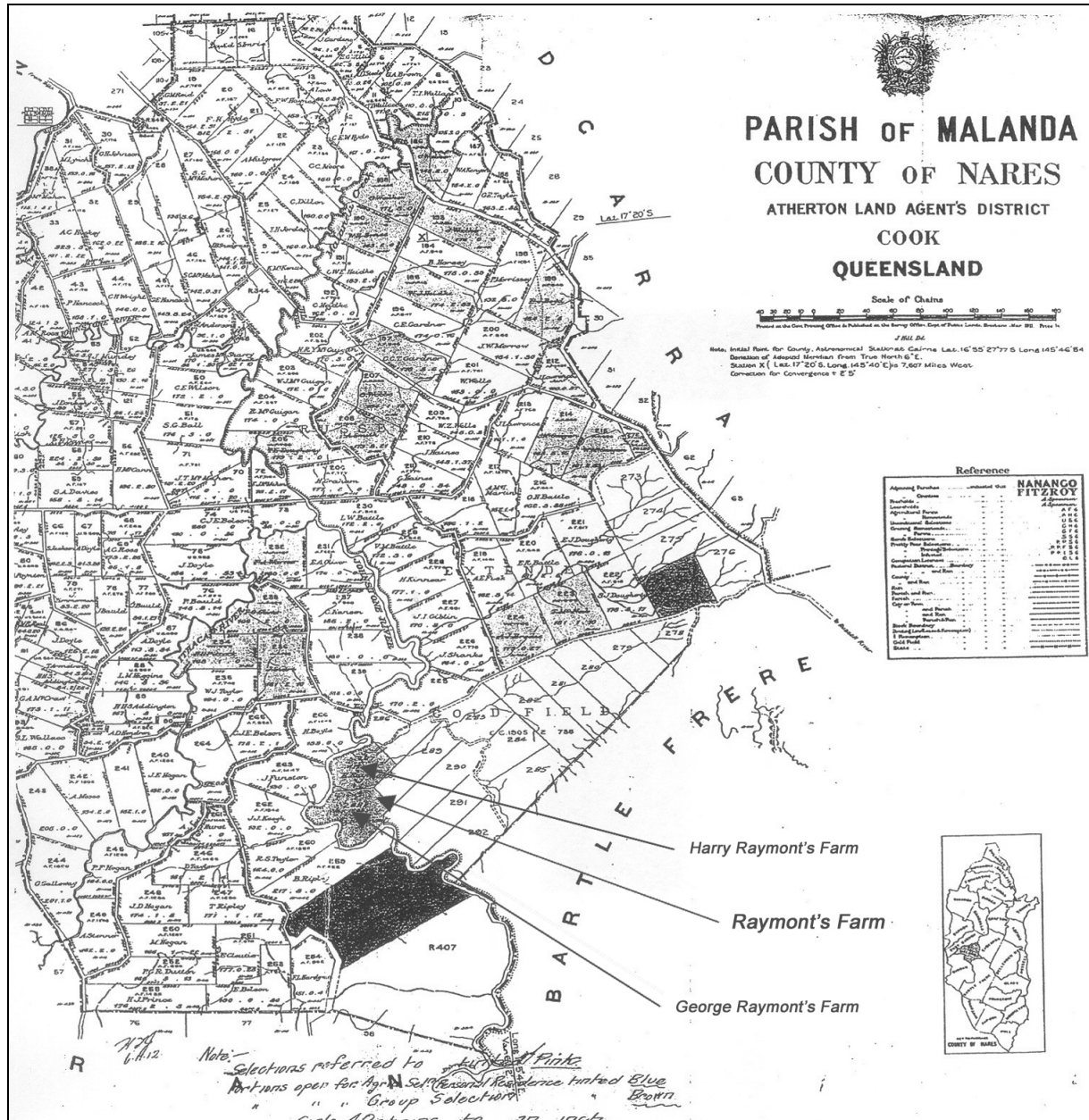
Tales of dependency and dispossession constitute familiar stories in Aboriginal Australia, though I would imagine less so in Australian Settler society – the society that the spinster Laura Raymont and her two bachelor brothers, Ernie and George, were very much a part of at the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 15)¹⁶.



Figure 15: 'The Raymont Brothers with Aboriginal workers, ca. 1920, Malanda' (Photo courtesy of the Eacham Historical Society).

¹⁶ Edgar Short reports that George, Ernie and Laura Raymont were originally from Devonshire and were "among the first settlers in the district" (Short 1988: 39). According to Short, "Ernie returned to his native Devonshire and opened a shop ... but George stayed to become a timber dealer, and Laura worked their farm for many years until her death" (loc. cit.).

These three siblings were among the first Europeans to take up land in the Parish of Malanda when the area was proclaimed open for selection in 1907 (Map 2). As indicated in the previous chapters, these selectors weren't the first Europeans in the area though – timber cutters after 'red gold' or red cedar had gone through the 'scrub' in the early 1880s, while the Russell River Goldfield had been operating since 1886. So by the time the first selectors arrived, a generation of Ngadjon-Jii people had already had some form of interaction with Europeans. However, by 1911 gold mining was on the wane and Boonjie was no longer a thriving settlement. The push was on to clear the 'scrub', "considered useless once the cedar trees were cleared" (Birtles 1982: 39), sow pasture and stock the land with dairy cattle.



Map 2: Allocated selections in the Parish of Malanda, 1911 (Map: Survey Office, Department of Public Lands, Brisbane; Graphics: Birgit Kuehn).

European accounts of settlement of this area rarely mention Aboriginal involvement in the creation of these grassy, pastoral landscapes. To some extent, this silence can be explained by prominent narratives of the day that spoke of widespread Aboriginal dispossession and 'dispersal', as extermination was euphemistically known. Or allied discourses, which portrayed a dejected and acculturated Indigenous population, which by the turn of the twentieth century was the subject of government surveillance, intervention and control known as 'protection'. I would also suggest that after thirty years of contact with Europeans, and in light of official removal policies, Aboriginal people had developed a way of maintaining a certain 'strategic invisibility' in what could still be considered a frontier zone. Yet, a number of photographs from the period (Figure 16) indicate that Aboriginal men and women were used as a "cheap and readily available source of labour" (Birtles 1982: 5) in the production of 'Agricultural Farms', as the selections were destined to become (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 9). Aboriginal involvement in 'land improvement', as selection clearing was officially designated, transformed their status as a "source of menace and danger" to the Europeans to one of being "practically valuable assistants" (cited in Birtles 1995: 24). In the early 1900s, these 'valuable assistants' could still be found living a traditional subsistence lifestyle in the rainforest.

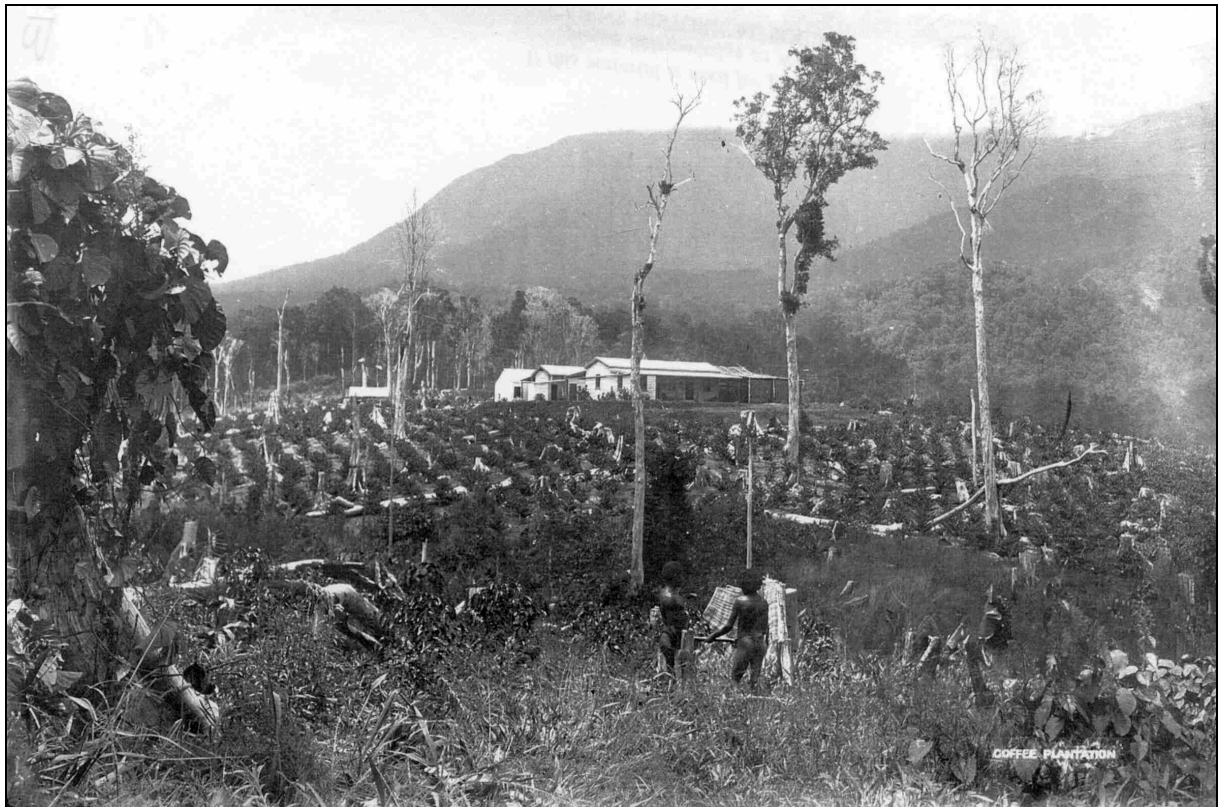


Figure 16: 'Coffee plantation 1900, Russell River' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

INTO THE CLEARING

As the Europeans breached what seemed to them to be an impenetrable 'jungle', they regularly came across Aboriginal encampments. In the words of one cedar cutter in the Atherton area upon encountering a 'native track':

There are roads off the main track to each of their townships, which consist of well-thatched gunyahs, big enough to hold five or six darkies. We counted eleven townships since we came to the edge of the scrub ... At certain seasons this must be a crowded place with blacks ... (Mulligan 1877: 399).

In the Malanda area, selectors didn't have to travel to Atherton to secure a labour force. In his memoirs of the early years of European settlement in the Malanda area, Edgar Short recalls that across the river from their block at Glen Allyn was "the home of a small family group who had been trying to maintain their tribal way of life..." (Short 1988: 56). In 1912, the year the Short family arrived in Malanda, their selection abutted Raymont's Farm along the North Johnstone River.

Another settler in the Malanda parish, Henry Tranter, points out that:

[S]ome early settlers, in order to retain the services of an aboriginal family on their property, provided a few sheets of iron and perhaps some timber to help them with a slightly better shelter than could be made from leaves and bark (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 5).

The Swedish naturalist, Eric Mjöberg, who was in the Malanda area in 1913-1914, describes a number of similar arrangements where European settlers, usually single men, lived with a group of Aborigines. For example, he talks of 'Watson' from London whose shack in the scrub at that time constituted an "outpost of civilisation". Watson apparently led "a simple life in the company of three Aboriginal boys, whom he looks after with paternal care" (Mjöberg 1918: 49) (Figure 17). Mjöberg's other descriptions of the residential conditions of the settlers point to less avuncular situations. For example, describing the living arrangements of a German settler, Mjöberg writes:

He lived with a group of Aborigines in a shack ... He harboured an obvious passion for one of the dark-eyed beauties, and did not keep this a secret (Mjöberg 1918: 57).

The German and his group of Aborigines, and Watson and his three 'boys', were busy clearing the 'scrub' on their selections, creating what Mjöberg would later describe as a smoking "battlefield" (ibid: 58) (Figure 18). While Mjöberg's account gives the impression that large numbers of young Aboriginal men were involved in 'scrub-clearing', Henry Tranter, local pioneer and one time president of the Eacham Historical Society, records the names of only two Aboriginal men who worked with Europeans in felling the scrub (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6). In his account of the pioneering achievements of the English family in Malanda, Peter English only mentions an "aborigine by the name of Jacky Cow" as assisting in the dismantling of the Tolga sawmill and its transport to Malanda in the early 1920s (English 1964: 48). Apart from this brief reference to a later period of European settlement, local Aboriginal people do not feature in Peter English's account of the settlement of Malanda.

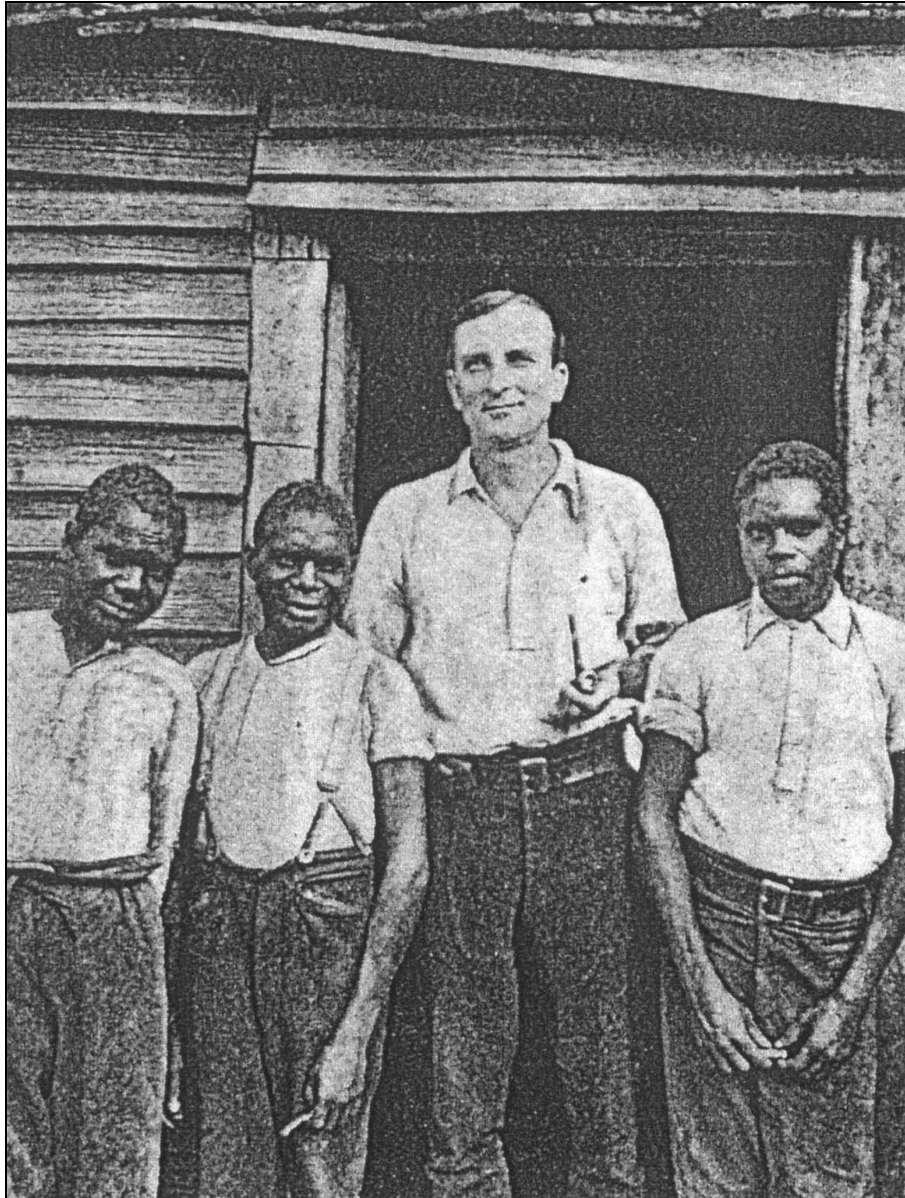


Figure 17: 'Charlie Watson, 1912-14, outside his Malanda hut posing with three Negroid men' (from Mjöberg 1918. Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

Auntie Jessie Calico recalls that her father, Billy Calico, also worked for a number of settlers, timber cutting:

My father did timber cutting at Tarzali for the Wharton family. My father cleared Wharton's block. Billy Calico also worked for the Haines family timber cutting along Haines Road. We were living at the camp on the Ithaca Creek, myself, Granny Polly, and Grandad Mick Calico. They were scrub felling for Mr Wharton.

Terry Birtles suggests that the short-stature of rainforest Aborigines limited their use as labourers in European tree-felling activities. Speaking of the red cedar timber cutters, Birtles states that the "pit sawyers depended upon Kanaka axeman ... and taller Aborigines from coastal areas further south" (Birtles 1968: 123).

The Europeans, sensitive to their own “landscape taming practices”, sometimes, though not often, comment upon the technical skills of axemanship wielded by their Aboriginal workers supposedly as a result of European tutelage. For example, Barlow Thomas who ‘helped’ Jack Prince fell “the first 30 acres of scrub [in the Malanda area] on his block” in 1907, is described by Tranter as “an expert axeman” (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6).

Barlow Thomas’ axemanship is perhaps not so surprising given that prior to the arrival of Europeans, rainforest Aboriginal people used stone axes and other implements to prepare the cleared space of local bora grounds and cut shields and swords from the buttresses of trees. As Christie Palmerston observed, in the post-contact period rainforest Aborigines used steel tomahawks to obtain grubs from the woody depths of these trees and to also keep native paths clear of vegetation.

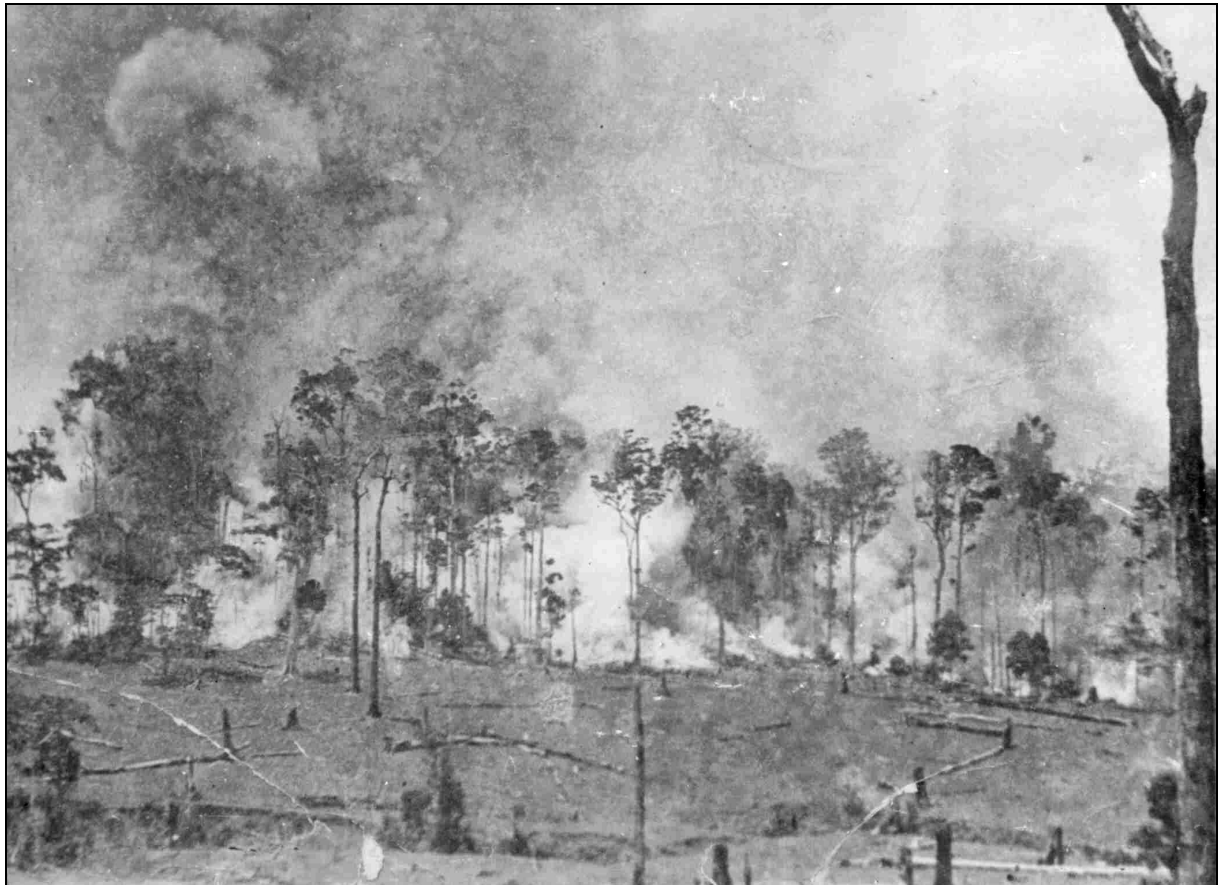


Figure 18: ‘Burning off scrub, Malanda 1907 at G. Plath’s farm’ (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

The clearing activities of Aboriginal people were, however, pale in comparison to those of the early settlers. Selectors were required to live on their block and make ‘improvements’, or else forfeit their selection. As Tranter notes, ‘improvements’ were “interpreted as falling, burning, grassing and fencing” (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 38). The early settlers of the Malanda district set to improving the land with an unbridled vigour and determination. Tranter records that some selectors cleared hundreds of acres in the first couple of years. In ‘North to the Timbers’, Peter English, a member of the pioneering English family, describes the day-to-day work of the men of his family and the other selectors in the Parish of Malanda:

All this time the boys were busy clearing the land, burning off the logs in the paddocks, erecting fences, making roads in the property, and erecting yards and other necessary buildings (English 1964: 32).

English recalls that at the peak of clearing in the Malanda district (Figure 19), there were thirty-five bullock teams, with an average of twenty-four beasts in each team (English 1964: 46).

Indeed, in the four years from 1907 when the first blocks were allotted, to 1911 when the remaining selections were taken up, Europeans had almost single-handedly cleared large swathes of the rainforest, torched the newly-felled scrub, set up sawmills to process the selected timbers removed from their blocks, built their homesteads and the Malanda Hotel from this timber, established the first dairy farms, and sown the cleared and burnt landscape with a mixture of imported grasses (notably *Paspalum* and *Rhodes* grass).

While most pioneer accounts celebrate this rapid transformation of the environment as an outstanding accomplishment in the face of unimaginable hardships, Edgar Short recalls some of the destruction and loss also associated with this period:

In the first few years after we arrived great columns of smoke could be seen in every direction as soon as the weather remained dry for a couple of months, each one meant that thousands of dollars worth of valuable timber was going up in smoke (Short 1988: 14).



Figure 19: 'Large felled tree, Malanda, ready to be transported to the sawmill' (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

As Short remarks, in the early years of settlement the Forestry Department “left all the timber standing on the original blocks” (ibid: 23)¹⁷. Only later did the Forestry Department sell all the ‘first-class timber’ before opening the blocks for settlement.

With the exception of Edgar Short perhaps, few settlers in their recollections of the ‘early days’ comment upon the disruption, and in some cases, loss of Aboriginal people’s livelihood with the destruction of their rainforest home. Walter E. Roth, Protector of Aborigines, reports upon the effects of clearing and the fencing of blocks as early as 1901:

Atherton forms a case in point. Here there are some 250 aboriginals occupying from time immemorial some 64 square miles of rich scrub, which was full of native food, both animal and vegetable. Unfortunately for the autochthonous population this land is rapidly being felled and cleared, and the blacks have accordingly to travel further and further afield to find a sufficient supply of their natural food (cited in Birtles 1982: 62).

While clearing was seen as a necessary ‘improvement’ in the establishment of ‘agricultural farms’, as Paul Carter observes, “it cannot be explained simply as a mistaken theory of agriculture” (Carter 1996: 9). Certainly, one of the effects of ground clearing was to “erase the common ground where communication with the ‘Natives’ might have occurred” (ibid: 6). It could be argued that European clearing of the rainforests expressed an “overwhelming need to clear away doubt ... to silence the whispers” (loc. cit.), to enact an environmental amnesia about the original Indigenous occupiers of the land. In place of the unique rainforests and a distinctive Indigenous spatial history, Europeans erected houses, fences, hotels, railways, roads, and so on, physical look-alikes of another world, some twelve thousand miles away in Britain. In smoothing and enclosing the ground to create these monuments to the idea of civilisation, the settlers effectively desecrated an already cultured and memorialised space – the ancient landscape produced by Ngadjon-Jii people and other rainforest Aboriginal groups. As the many commemorative accounts of European settlement attest, scrub felling cleared the land of its other cultural histories (Figure 20).



Figure 20: ‘View of Malanda, 1934’ (Photo courtesy of the Cairns Historical Society).

¹⁷ As Birtles (1995: 23) points out, the *Land Act* of 1898 “transferred to the selector all rights to timber on a selection as a means of financing land “improvement” (a term which embraced rainforest removal)”.

In many ways reflecting the environmental transformations taking place at the time, the cultural memories of Ngadjon-Jii people regarding the widespread scrub-felling that took place on their country after the area had been opened up for selection under *The Group Settlement Act* of 1907 are both fragmentary and sparse. Ngadjon-Jii recollections appear more focused upon their survival and adaptation to their rapidly shrinking rainforest homelands.

LIVING WITH MISS RAYMONT

It was around the time of Mjöberg's visit that Molly Raymond, her Aboriginal husband, Jim Brown, and her children Harry and Alice, were sent by the local police officer, Sergeant Seary, to work on 'Raymont's Farm' and thus they came to 'look after' Laura Raymond. Molly's daughter, Emma, was born on the property soon after their arrival, in 1918. The fact that Molly and her family stayed on the property until the late 1930s reflects the Eacham Shire Council's 1920 request to the government of the day to amend the 'Act' to "allow aborigines to remain in [the] Malanda district instead of being removed to Missions" (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 61).



Figure 21: Aerial photograph of Glen Allyn, indicating the location of the Raymont Farm and *Nabanaba* (Photo: Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Graphics: Shannon Hogan).

In late 2003, we visited Raymont's Farm at Glen Allyn (Figure 21), and Auntie Emma recalled her days living with and working for Miss Raymont:

I used to play around here. It's terrible. Make you cry. It makes me feel sad to see how it's tumbled down. This was the room for the boys. We were here. An old English woman, single, she had a dairy farm, Laura Raymont, lived here. That's where I got me name from. I sort of grew up here. Mum was here, my brother. My sister, Alice, was away working, she would come back here for holidays. Miss Raymont had boys working for her, Pommy boys, they slept here. We slept out there. My mother did the cooking. Mum did housework and in the dairy too. My brother used to help. Miss Raymont had a brother named Ernie, that's where Ernie got his name from, and also George. They didn't live here. They got married and went away. I think Ernie went back to England. Her brothers built the house, Ernie was the carpenter. I was just a little one here. I went to school at Glen Allyn.

As we step through the front door of the now derelict Raymont's Farmhouse, we can see a patch of remnant rainforest, less than a hundred metres away. On one side of this rainforest pocket are cleared paddocks, on the other side, the ordered rows of a tea plantation. Auntie Emma calls this relic rainforest, *Nabanaba*:

You go inside there, there's a lot of white stones around and that's why they call it that, Nabanaba. They had camps up there in the scrub. My grandmother was living up there. Grandma Sally [Gungudja]. She lived in a midja. Made out of grass, palm leaves and ginger leaves.



Figure 22: 'An Aboriginal camp, Atherton Tableland, showing *mia mia* [*midja*] and *dilly bag*' (Photo courtesy of Cairns Historical Society).

Old Granny Emily and another old woman who lived out in the bush all her life, she came here and she had a little camp out there, her name was Midji. She couldn't speak English, just talk language. My mum used to live up there too. Old Pop lived there, Grandad Jim, and Ernie's dad, Harry Raymond. We used to come down here [to the farmhouse] everyday and work. Mum did. Mum used to come and milk. We had to pull our weight and milk too and work around the farm. When we finished work we went back to the scrub. We lived in there. We used to go looking for mungara [turkey] and djaban [eel] there. We ate bibiya [edible heart of the Alexandra Palm], yabalum [Calamus australis], galadja [edible tree-fern] and wait-a-while berries. We lived on djambun [grub], my granny used to make me eat that. Murri used to do a lot of walking. My granny [Gungudja] used to take me looking for turkey eggs [bumbu] and turtle.

As Auntie Emma recalls, on the dairy farm at Glen Allyn, the Aboriginal Raymont family lived in gender-segregated *midja* or traditional leaf and palm frond dwellings (Figure 22), near an area of remnant rainforest known in the local language as *Nabanaba*. Ngadjon-Jii people collected their water from the nearby North Johnstone River. At this point in time, settlers employing Aborigines were not required to provide “satisfactory sanitary conveniences”. Indeed, it wasn't until 1962 that Malanda residents “who have aborigines living on their land” were instructed by the Eacham Shire Council to provide such facilities (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 63).

While given rations in return for their work, Molly and her family continued to exploit traditional food sources such as scrub turkey from the remaining forest tracts and catch fish and eels in the nearby North Johnstone River. In between household chores on the farm, Molly and a number of older women who were also camped at *Nabanaba*, collected *gungi* (yellow walnut) and other rainforest nuts, producing an edible flour from the grinding and leaching processes associated with the preparation of these foodstuffs.

Living under the ‘Act’, Molly and her family worked on Raymont's Farm (Figure 23) until the late 1930s. Laura Raymont moved to Mareeba after World War II and later died there in the 1950s. This long and intimate association with the property and the Raymonts is reflected in the acquisition of the family's European surname¹⁸. While Auntie Emma and Ernie are also named after the Raymont siblings, there is little in these names to locate them in the world of the European Raymonts. Emma and Ernie, like many other Aboriginal people so named, bear no resemblance whatsoever to their English namesakes. The specificity of these English names clearly signals to others in this close-knit community the status of the Ngadjon-Jii people so named as having a connection with Raymont's Farm. In this sense, the names ‘brand’ people as the Aboriginal ‘workers’ and ‘dependents’ of white land-owners as effectively as any physical marker. These English names may place Aboriginal people in settler history and locate them in a white space, but only for a very short period of time, and only at a cost in terms of their identity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the naming of Aboriginal workers in this way was not an isolated custom and today, while their European namesakes may have disappeared, many of the names of these early settlers persist in an Indigenous form. In this respect, one

¹⁸ To clarify the situation regarding the spelling of this surname, it appears that government authorities referred to Molly and her children, Harry, Alice and Emma, by the surname ‘Raymond’, suggesting a mis-hearing of the final consonant. In time, Molly and her immediate family came to be known by the surname Raymond. Molly's descendants, however, notably Ernie and his sister Margaret, use the original spelling of the surname, Raymont.

could say that the social history of settler society is inscribed as much onto Aboriginal bodies as it is onto early maps depicting a landscape of Anglo-European names and geometric spaces.



Figure 23: Auntie Emma Johnston at Raymont's Farm, August 2005 (Photo: Sandra Pannell).

From Auntie Emma's account of going to school in the region in the 1920s, it seems that other names were also part of this landscape and the regional lingua franca:

When I went to school at Glen Allyn and Butchers Creek, I had some fights with those white kids. They used to call me names. We'd get stuck into them. They'd call me "black gin" and "nigger". That's what we used to fight over. Reckon you don't call us names. Elsie Battle used to help me fight those kids. We had to win. They'd call us some awful names you know.

As Auntie Emma's response to these racist taunts and slurs demonstrates, the act of naming is a struggle about, and for, power. For Auntie Emma and other Ngadjon-Jii people, fighting back and against these accusatory names is about reclaiming their own history and identity.

The act of naming, however, was not the sole preserve of Europeans. Ngadjon-Jii people applied Indigenous terms to some of the Europeans who employed them:

We called James English bulbul [old man] and his wife wulbin [old lady]. Our people were working for the Englishs. All the lady folk worked for the Englishs. We were scared of them. – Auntie Jessie Calico

The use of these terms point to a linguistic and social history suppressed by the imposition of European names. For Ngadjon-Jii people, an important element of personal and group identity is the possession of an Indigenous name. These names can refer to faunal or floral species, natural phenomena such as stars, named places in the Indigenous landscape, or cultural artefacts. Auntie Jessie Calico explains the meaning of her Ngadjon-Jii name, *Bududji*:

*That's an old blanket made out of fig tree. Used to cut bark from top to bottom.
Take it to the river and smash it with rocks.*

Ngadjon-Jii people see their role as bestowing but not creating new 'tribal' names. The names derive from individuals in previous generations. Names are not acquired automatically at birth. Rather, adults observe the behaviour and physical characteristics of a child and consult amongst themselves before an appropriate name from a Ngadjon-jii predecessor is ascribed.

Speaking of the acquisition of a personal name, the anthropologist, Lauriston Sharp, reports that:

Among the Ngatjan a personal name, whether derived from a place or other totem, is given by the father who then 'puts the name under a rock or in a cave' in the child's own country which is part of the larger clan territory (Sharp 1939: 445).

In addition to an Indigenous name, Ngadjon-Jii people are also accorded a personal totem. These may include; scrub turkey (*mungara*), tree-climbing kangaroo (*mabi*), yellow walnut (*gungi*), native bee (*djubawuda*), and swamp eel (*gunadjawa*).

Unlike the European names they possess, which do not bind people to the "cultural genealogy" (Carter 1987: 330) suggested by the name, the naming system of Ngadjon-Jii people serves to affirm a number of important social, spatial and environmental connections. Socially, 'traditional names' not only link individuals to Ngadjon-Jii predecessors, but they are also regarded as an important expression of tribal identity. Spatially, many of the names link individuals to culturally and historically important places within Ngadjon-Jii country, and establish a custodial role in relation to those places. Environmentally, personal names derived from the names of faunal and floral species establish a duty of care towards these species resulting in personal prohibitions against consumption or use.

Some hint of the existence of this system of naming is given in a local newspaper article. In 1961, Patrick English, James English's son, published a piece in the *North Queensland Register* on the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Malanda region, "Our Aborigines". In this article he lists the 'aboriginal names' of a large number of Ngadjon-Jii people, many of who worked for him and his family. The names appear stripped of their meaning, preserved out of context like museum specimens, and probably to most of the European readers, totally unpronounceable. The names stand awkwardly as curiosities from a by-gone era, as meaningless to Europeans as the many Indigenous place names that form the linguistic contours of this settled landscape.

While key indices of settler social identity were reproduced in the Aboriginal community through the ascription of 'English' names, key elements of Indigenous identity were maintained in other exercises of linguistic colonisation. In the Parish of Malanda, and indeed throughout the Atherton Tableland, sidings, stations, and towns, together with a number of geophysical features, retained or were accorded an Aboriginal name. For example, Malanda

(‘name for the Upper North Johnstone River’)¹⁹, Tolga (‘red mud’), Kairi (‘Mazlin Creek’), Kulara (‘fig tree’), Yungaburra (‘enquiring or questioning’), Peeramon (‘name of a nearby hill’), Tarzali (‘water gum’), Minbun (‘brown possum’) (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 25; Birtles 1995: 25), to name just a few places, have their linguistic origins in a different cultural geography than the one that commemorates European individuals and events.

While the Atherton Tableland constitutes an entangled linguistic landscape, as Birtles suggests, “the passage of time has dimmed the meaning of these and other Aboriginal words adopted by the invading culture” (Birtles 1995: 25). Perhaps it is not so much a dimming of memory but an issue of understanding. As one settler account states, “all attempts to interpret their [the Aboriginal names] meaning end in confusion (May 1969: 3B).

While settler accounts of the history of the Eacham Shire state that the remaining Aborigines “are rapidly adopting the life of the white man” (May 1969: 3C), the ethnographic evidence suggests the existence of two different cultural worlds which at times intersect, collide, but never really overlap. It is clear that Europeans remain remarkably ill-informed about the history and cultural complexities of Ngadjon-Jii society. Most of the settlers know little about the story places and the social meaning of the lands they control. At the same time, Ngadjon-Jii people find whole areas of white culture closed to them. Perhaps the widest divisions lie in Ngadjon-Jii people’s maintenance of many pre-colonial values and ways of interacting with each other and the environment. For as Europeans strove to create culturally comforting and familiar vistas of deforested, agrarian landscapes, Ngadjon-Jii people went about their own everyday rituals of producing locality and the structure of sentiments associated with country and kin.

For Molly Raymond and her family, life on Raymont’s Farm wasn’t altogether an alienating experience. The farm was part of their traditional lands, on which, as R. M. W. Dixon observes, Molly had been brought up in “a totally tribal way” (Dixon 1983: 175). Until her death in 1992, Molly maintained and instilled in her children Ngadjon-Jii beliefs and values about her tribal lands.

For Ngadjon-Jii people, these lands are more than just an economic resource that requires ‘improvement’. Country is regarded as a conscious entity that generates and responds to their actions. The sentience of this landscape is manifested in numerous ways.

Unbeknown to the white Raymonts, the river that fronts their property contains a number of story-waters. Some, like the ‘gubi hole’, a stretch of the river just below the homestead, are considered so powerful that they pose a real threat to strangers, and need to be spoken to by the traditional occupiers of the land. Auntie Emma explains the danger of living with the snake:

Gubi hole down there [in the North Johnstone River]. Granny used to tell us never to go near it. “Never go fishing there”. Story water there. Can’t go down there, you’ll never come back. They call that place Milgabudji, it’s a real rainbow serpent that’s there. Yamani there. If you go there it will swallow you up. He lives in that water. He protects that water. We’d go down there but they would tell us, “don’t go in the water”, so we’d never go swimming. It’s a funny place.

¹⁹ In ‘North to the Timbers’ Peter English states, “the name Malanda is an aboriginal word and was chosen by the Railway department. There is some doubt as to its meaning but some said it meant waterfalls” (English 1964: 33). According to Ngadjon-Jii people, the name Malanda derives from the term ‘malan’, meaning “near the river”.

This belief in a sentient country, a cosmological landscape permeated with ancestral presence, highlights the culturally-saturated nature of place. While the settler, Laura Raymont, and the Ngadjon-Jii woman, Molly Raymond, and her family, may have occupied the same space and shared the same land out at Glen Allyn on Raymont's Farm, they certainly weren't in the same place.

From Raymont's Farm, Molly and her family would regularly walk to *Buluba Burrguna* or 'Top Camp' near Lamins Hill, to visit relatives camped in the rainforest and to also tend the graves of those kin buried nearby. Sometimes they travelled to 'Top Camp' to attend regional ceremonies at the nearby bora ground. Here, men from the area were initiated and fights over women were resolved.

At other times, they would walk into Malanda itself. Here they would spend time with kinsmen and women living in *midja* in the scrub at the bottom of the Malanda Falls ('Bottom Camp') and at the 'Malanda Jungle', a patch of remnant rainforest in the township owned by the English family, the pre-eminent pioneering family in the town.

In Malanda, Molly and her family also went to the police station to obtain the blankets and rations owing to them from their work on Raymont's Farm. Auntie Emma explains what happened on one such visit in the late 1930s:

We went to the police station to get blankets and things like that. We went in one day and he locked us up. He said, "you're going to Mona Mona tomorrow". But we didn't go there. Mum and Dad and my brother were sent to Stuart Creek [prison in Townsville] for fighting the policeman. He needed that hiding. Anglim was his name. It was a twisted looking turn out. The police weren't fair with us. All he wanted to do with us was batter us around. He was all right in a way, but I didn't like him. When they had that fight at the gaol house in Malanda I ran off to 'Top Camp'. Then I was sent to Mona Mona. Mum and Pop and my brother were sent to Palm Island. I was there until I got married. I was sent there when I was fifteen or sixteen. I got married when I was nineteen or twenty. They were on Palm Island for a while. When I went to Mona Mona, I got the superintendent on the mission where I was to bring them up, I asked him one day if he could bring my parents up from Palm Island. They were there with me then. Miss Raymont wanted all the Ngadjon-Jii to come back and work for her, but after Mona Mona we went to work on Johnston's Farm.

And so, Molly and her family left Raymont's Farm at Glen Allyn to spend several years effectively incarcerated at Mona Mona, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission near Kuranda. After a brief marriage to a Kuku Yalanji man at Mona Mona, Molly's daughter, Emma, returned to Glen Allyn as a widow after World War II, and went to work on the farms of Lance and Cyril Johnston. But that is another story.

CONCLUSION

As we drive around the Malanda district, Auntie Emma and Auntie Jessie together with the other Ngadjon-Jii people present in the vehicle, point to the other farms where they've worked and camped. After World War II, Ngadjon-Jii people continued to work on the various dairy farms at Glen Allyn, as well as pick potatoes, peanuts and corn on Beattie's and Gallo's Farms. Auntie Emma and Jessie talk about the "big" Aboriginal camp along Lesley Creek on Beattie's Farm. They recall how Granny Maggie Anning camped at the Curtain Fig Tree (now a national park), when the tree was small. Even though it was before their time, they are able to recall the people who lived there and what happened to them. They also name the

Europeans who 'owned' the various farms we pass and talk about their children, and who took over the farm when the original owners left. As we travel around the country, a different kind of landscape emerges from the back seat of the Toyota. It's a dense forest of Aboriginal memories and European names, supporting a tangled undergrowth of deeply personal experiences enmeshed in broader historical events. While all around us, the physical landscape is a smooth planisphere of paddocks, fence lines and bitumen roads, a more uneven surface is apparent in the stories people tell. Out of these stories comes a history of the lie of the land, a bicultural narrative, where the pasts and the destinies of Ngadjon-Jii and settlers are at times woven together so tightly that now and then they seem impenetrable.

They also talk about the changes that have occurred since living on Raymond's Farm. Raymond's Farm today is surrounded by tea plantations, paddocks of planted bamboo and, of course, the cleared pastures of the remaining dairy farms in the Malanda area. The patch of rainforest on the Glen Allyn Road known as Docherty's Scrub, where Emma's family looked for turkey eggs, has gone. Down Gourka Road and Boonjie Road they note the rainforest that has been cleared since the 1970s. Around Butchers Creek there is more talk about the recent plantings of bamboo and the cessation of peat mining at Lynch's Crater, a *Yamani* place. Out near Peterson's Creek, Auntie Emma's grandson, Warren Canendo, points out the revegetation work undertaken when he worked for a brief time with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), while the old women talk about the bora ground at Dingo Pocket and the corroborees held along the creek at Chumbrumba. As we drive towards Yungaburra, Auntie Emma's son, Trevor Johnston, recalls "how sugar cane has just come in the last ten to fifteen years". Trevor's comments point to the shifting and fickle nature of the agricultural landscape on the Atherton Tableland in the past thirty years or so. Traditional farming pursuits, such as dairying, and old-time settler crops, like corn, peanuts and potatoes, have been gradually replaced by avocados (1975), tea (1977), sugar (1981), macadamias (1981), and in last couple of years, bamboo shoots (see Eacham Historical Society 1995).

This kind of agricultural diversification appears to have had some effect on the environment, for as we cross the Barron River, Uncle Ernie Raymond talks about how polluted the Barron and North Johnstone Rivers are these days. Everyone talks about the time in 1978 when effluent from the milk factory in Malanda killed fish, eels, turtles and crayfish along a three-mile stretch of the North Johnstone River (see Eacham Historical Society 1995: 65). As we pull into Lake Eacham National Park for lunch, Auntie Jessie recalls the time when the rainforest around the crater lake was much thicker than it is now. She suggests that increased tourism and car fumes are to blame for the reduction of the rainforest and the loss of the cassowaries and tree-climbing kangaroos that once were a part of this place.

Throughout the Atherton Tableland, the rainforest that Auntie Jessie was born in and speaks of as gradually disappearing is largely contained within areas designated as 'protected' – World Heritage areas, conservation parks, national parks, reserves, and so on. Such is the fate of the last remaining stand of rainforest in the township of Malanda.

CHAPTER SIX – BUYU

Most Australian country dwellers know from the outside the places where the Dark People live in separate communities. – C. D. Rowley, Outcasts in White Society

In late 2002, Ngadjon-Jii people built a *midja* in the Malanda Conservation Park (Figure 24). Constructed of various species of palm fronds, the pliable trunks of several rainforest saplings, ginger leaves and bladey grass collected from Wooroonooran National Park, the erection of the *midja* was ostensibly part of a larger research project investigating the architectural form of traditional rainforest dwellings. It was soon apparent, however, that the building of the *midja* was more than just a demonstration for scientific purposes. As Ngadjon-Jii people wove the palm fronds (*djungganyu* and *bibiya*) into the shell-like infrastructure of bound (*barrga*) and staked saplings (*djungganyu*), they talked about the many years spent living in *midja* in the *buyu* (rainforest) on the edge of the Malanda township.



Figure 24: Ngadjon-Jii people and the *Midja* they built in the Malanda Conservation Park, 2002 (Photo: Roger Wilkinson).

Most of these rainforest ‘camps’ are located in what is now the Malanda Falls National Park (an area of 15.2 hectares) or in the Malanda Conservation Park (5.62 hectares), situated

immediately across the road from the national park²⁰. Ngadjon-Jii people also lived in *midja*-based camps in the only remaining pocket of privately-owned rainforest in Malanda called 'The Jungle'. Owned by a member of the English family, 'The Jungle' adjoins the south-eastern boundary of the Malanda Falls National Park.

The European tenure history of these pockets of rainforest is interesting. When the Parish of Malanda was originally surveyed in 1906, the area around the waterfalls on the North Johnstone River, and a stretch of the river itself, was declared a reserve to protect the source of the future town's water supply. However, this small reserve was surrounded by a number of selections, all of which bordered the river. As Peter English points out, some of the original reserve area was 'given' to Patrick English as compensation for the portions of his selection that were resumed by the authorities for the township of Malanda (English 1964: 33). In 1973, the Eacham Shire Council purchased a further eight acres for inclusion in the Malanda Falls Reserve. Most of the original reserve area today forms the Malanda Falls National Park. Some of the original reserve area also forms part of the Malanda Conservation Park. Most of the area enclosed by the conservation park, however, was originally part of the selection allotted to R. Cook in 1907. Little, if anything, is known about what became of R. Cook. In 1956, the council purchased seventeen acres of the adjoining block from the estate of James English in order to establish the Malanda Caravan Park, which borders the conservation park (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 63). 'The Jungle', sometimes also known as the 'English Jungle', is part of the original block (portion 60) allocated to James English and remains part of the English family estate called 'Oakhill'. In 1977, the Eacham Shire Council, with a \$30,000 offer of assistance from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), attempted to purchase 'The Jungle' from the English family. However, the asking price of \$150,000 was well beyond the council's financial means and the issue was shelved (ibid: 65).

Somehow, in the hundred years since they were first enclosed by Europeans, initially on paper and then later with barbed wire, these pockets of rainforest survived the settler's axes and local council administration. However, it wasn't until the 1990s that these two areas were declared protected areas²¹. The somewhat retarded gazettal of these two areas as protected areas reflects the anti-conservation attitude of the Eacham Shire Council in the relatively recent past. As council minutes reveal, in 1987 the council lodged objections "against World Heritage listing of North Queensland Rainforests" (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 65), suggesting that 'farm forestry' was a more sustainable response to rainforest conservation. Prior to this, in 1980, concerned about the introduction of 'exotic diseases', the council registered its opposition to the establishment of a wilderness area in Cape York Peninsula (loc. cit.). In many ways, the council's position regarding the Aboriginal residents of the shire

²⁰ While the Malanda-Atherton Road appears to separate what appears to be the Malanda Conservation Park from the area identified in on-site signage as the Malanda Falls National Park, the matter of boundaries is not so simple. The area administered by QPWS includes land on both sides of the road. A thirteen and half hectare area of the national park is located on the southeastern side of the road, while a 1.7 hectare area on the other side of the road, around the falls and associated swimming pool is also designated national park land. The boundary between the conservation park, administered by the Eacham Shire Council, and the area that falls within the jurisdiction of QPWS is not physically marked on the ground, however. The issue of names is equally confusing. On site, the QPWS-administered area is identified as the Malanda Falls National Park. On paper, QPWS refers to this same area as the Malanda Conservation Park. For the purposes of this chapter, I shall refer to the rainforested area north of the Malanda-Atherton Road as the Malanda Conservation Park, while the section of rainforest on the southeastern side of the road is identified as the Malanda Falls National Park.

²¹ Some of the area that today forms the Malanda Conservation Park and the Malanda Falls National Park was declared a reserve for the purposes of camping and water in 1939. Later, in 1975, it was declared a reserve for environmental purposes. It was only in 1994 that the area was declared a conservation park and national park.

is the antithesis of its opposition to environmental protection measures in the 1980s. As council minutes indicate, an 'Aboriginal settlement' still existed in Malanda as late as 1990 and the "poor condition of [the] dwellings" in this fringe camp on Reservoir Road is the subject of council attention and intervention (ibid: 66).

There is something ironic about the fact that the most recent Ngadjon-Jii experience of living in a rainforest environment occurred within the physical and administrative confines of the Malanda township. While living so close to the tended gardens and ordered houses of European settlement, Ngadjon-Jii people seemed as invisible to settler society as the elusive tree-climbing kangaroos, which cling on to life in one of the last remaining patches of eponymously-named 'mabi forest' in the region.

BUYU

In the past one hundred years, the natural environment of this part of North Queensland has undergone something of a rhetorical transformation; from vilified 'scrub' to idolised 'rainforest'. As Terry Birtles points out, while the botanical term 'tropical rainforest' was coined in 1903, it was not widely applied to the vegetation of this region until the late 1970s (Birtles 1982: 32). Prior to this, Europeans referred to these forests as 'scrub', 'bush', 'jungle' and 'myall woods'²² (loc cit.). As the use of the term 'myall' indicates, some of these appellations were also applied in a derogatory fashion to denote the Aboriginal occupiers of these forested areas. A range of adjectives were commonly appended to these noun forms – 'impenetrable', 'inhospitable', 'dank' and 'dark'. As Birtles points out, these lexical combinations evoked images of inferior, tangled forests harbouring a plethora of unseen dangers – sicknesses such as 'jungle fever' and 'tropical ague' (Birtles 1995: 3-4) and the lurking threat of murderous savages. Construed in this way, the 'scrub' not only "constituted an obstacle to agricultural settlement ... a nuisance to be removed to expose the soil for cultivation" (ibid: 3), but also an impediment to social progress and civility. Terms like 'scrub' and 'jungle' denote more than just a geographical object. As the use of the word 'jungle' illustrates, they also evoke cultural memories from other colonial settings²³. Speaking of the tropical forests of Colombia, Taussig suggests that terms such as 'jungle' stand as "colonially intensified metaphor[s]" (Taussig 1987: 75), whereby the "brutal destructiveness imputed to the natural world serves to embody even more destructive relations in human society" (loc. cit.). For all these cultural reasons, it seems only natural that Ngadjon-Jii people would inhabit the last remaining stands of rainforest on the periphery of white settlement.

What was 'scrub' in the past is today promoted and more commonly spoken of as 'rainforest'. Since the mid-1970s, these rainforests have been scientifically mapped and classified as a series of vegetation types and complexes (see Tracey and Webb 1975; Tracey 1982). The remnant rainforests that form the Malanda Falls National Park and the Malanda Conservation Park are regarded as an 'overlap area', exhibiting features of 'Type 1b' forests and 'Type 5b' (Tracey 1982: 28). Type 5b forests, often referred to as 'mabi rainforests' after the Ngadjon-Jii term for the Lumholtz tree-climbing kangaroo, are "now practically all cleared" (Tracey 1982: 2). The Malanda forest "indicates greater moisture availability" (loc. cit.), where "tree stratification is more diffuse ... and fern epiphytes are more common on tree trunks" (ibid: 28-29).

As McDonald and Lane identify in a set of impressive statistics, the rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area contain the "highest concentration" of primitive flowering plants

²² Birtles states that the term 'myall' was originally applied to a "species of wattle (*Acacia pendula*), found widely in country not settled by Europeans" (Birtles 1995: 4).

²³ As Birtles points out, the term 'scrub' is borrowed from the old Danish word (Birtles 1995: 3), while 'bush' had Dutch origins. 'Jungle', on the other hand, derives from the Hindustani term, *jangal* (ibid: 3).

found anywhere in the world (McDonald and Lane 2000: 7). They also contain “30% of all marsupials on the continent, 60% of the bat species, 30% of all frog species, 23% of the reptiles, 62% of the butterflies and 18% of the birds” (ibid: 7). The scientific view of this area as a series of unique natural ecosystems comprised of plants and animals of universal significance, contrasts with Ngadjon-Jii ideas about *buyu*.

As previously indicated, *buyu* denotes a sentient and sentimental spatial experience. *Buyu* is alive, but not just with a range of biological objects, such as the plants and animals referred to by McDonald and Lane (McDonald and Lane 2000). The presence and, at times, unpredictable behaviour of a variety of powerful totemic and ancestral beings, such as *Yamani*, *gubi* rocks and eels, *Yawi*, *Guyngnun*, and the spirits of the ‘old people’, animates *buyu* as well. These non-human or post-human forces are part of a terrain that is simultaneously ecological, social and cosmological in nature.

Ngadjon-Jii actions don’t just take place against the rainforested backdrop of this Indigenous ‘Dreamtime’. Rather, Ngadjon-Jii people engage with and enact this already cultured historical space in their everyday landed practices. Highlighting the quotidian experience of the ‘Dreamtime’, Elizabeth Povinelli talks about how “on fishing trips Dreamings surge from beneath motor-powered dinghies” (Povinelli 1993: 169).

Landscapes, as Barbara Bender observes, “are created by people – through their experience and engagement with the world around them” (Bender 1993: 1). As Bender’s comments suggest, *buyu* also denotes a very humanised space, where people and place are mutually evocative. Through the small rituals of everyday social life, Ngadjon-Jii people produce the experience of *buyu* as a situated structure of sentiments and values. These feelings and experiences, which are an integral aspect of the meaning of locality, are inscribed on Ngadjon-Jii people through such practices as the bestowal of individual totems and personal names. In turn, these practices locate people in “socially and spatially defined communities” (Appadurai 1996: 179). As this suggests, local knowledge is “about producing reliably local subjects as well as about producing reliably local neighbourhoods within which such subjects can be recognised and organised” (ibid: 181). Following Appadurai’s comments on the ‘production of locality’, *buyu* can be regarded as denoting an actual spatial referent, ‘rainforest’, as well as the relational and contextual qualities of social life, which are realised in this physical setting. Seen in this light, Ngadjon-Jii people’s experience of living in *buyu* on the outskirts of Malanda amounts to more than just survival on the fringes of a white neighbourhood. Their stories also point to the stresses and challenges of producing locality and local subjects in colonised and radically altered contexts.

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Throughout Australia, Aboriginal fringe camps were, and continue to be, an element of rural and city landscapes that are largely avoided or denied by Europeans. At one level, these encampments are the tangible products of local by-laws and state legislation that historically banned Aboriginal people from town areas. At another level, these segregated spaces are also created by, and through, the racialised practices of everyday life in country towns and cities throughout Australia. As Gillian Cowlishaw remarks, “the racial division is deeply embedded in the history of many Australian country towns and in the understanding of the residents” (Cowlishaw 1997: 179).

As Cowlishaw’s comments indicate, these racialised identities and histories are often expressed in spatial terms. For example, Benedict Anderson’s work reveals how in the Netherlands East Indies ethno-typologies were often spatialised, so that people and place became immutably fixed in the emerging cartography of colonial knowledge of the other. This ‘grammar’ of ethnic-racial typologies, most apparent in the census, reached its denouement

in the convergence of the census with the Mercatorian map. As Anderson remarks, “by a sort of demographic triangulation, the census filled in politically the formal topography of the map” (Anderson 1991: 174).

In the entangled “ethnoscape” (Appadurai 1990: 7) of difference enacted both in space and as space, it is easy to see how a person’s ethnic affiliation or cultural identity is readily understood in terms of an association with place, i.e. ‘Chinatown’. In the Australian context, ‘fringe camps’ are not only synonymous with Aboriginal people, but the expression itself serves as a loaded spatial marker of a distinctively racist history. The supposedly ‘run-down’ and ‘dirty’ condition of these encampments not only forms the basis for European attempts to obliterate these ‘blots’ on the landscape, but it also serves to symbolise the ragged and shabby nature of the European-Aboriginal interactions. This is a point made by Neil Jarman (1993) in his discussion of the militarised landscape of Belfast. As Jarman remarks:

[t]he violence that marked the beginning of the Troubles was expended on property as much as on people. Boundaries between differing faiths were reinforced by the firing of homes ... [d]ereliction became the hallmark of the interfaces (Jarman 1993: 111).

As the history of Northern Ireland, the Middle East and elsewhere graphically demonstrates, the politics of identity and power articulates itself through space and is, primarily, about space.

As these comments suggest, space is part of “an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification” (Massey 1994: 3). This is brutally evident in the bucolic context of the Atherton Tableland, as it is in places that more readily spring to mind, such as Northern Ireland or the Middle East. To paraphrase Edward Said (1993: 7), Ngadjon-Jii town camps can be regarded as ‘geographies which struggle’, disturbing the notion of space as somehow inherently fixed or settled.

These exclusionary spaces or segregated places cannot just be regarded as transitory, ‘non-places’ (cf Auge 1995) or as aesthetic blights on the landscape, readily shunned or removed, as rural communities and the Australian nation ‘comes of age’. Rather, these ‘troubled’ spaces occupy an important place in the social consciousness of a group or a people. As the anthropologist Jeff Collmann remarks, “Aborigines who have adopted new ways of life in the face of new circumstances cannot be simply dismissed as deviant, detribalised, or somehow less than full members of the community” (Collman 1988: 4). Writing of the fringe camps around Alice Springs, Collmann argues against the commonly held view of these encampments as the “symptom of individual affliction and group decay” (Collman 1988: 3). Rather, he argues that the establishment of fringe camps constitutes an important political act, which allows Aboriginal people to assert more control over the “impingement of white power” in their everyday life (loc. cit.). As Collmann concludes, Aboriginal fringe camps are, paradoxically, a response to those European policies and programs designed to prevent their very development. As these comments suggest, the work of producing locality and neighbourhoods is often “at odds with the projects of the nation-state” (Appadurai 1996: 191). Indeed, as the following section illustrates, *midja*, as social formations located in *buyu*, represent Aboriginal spaces where the ‘techniques of nationhood’ are either weak or contested (ibid: 190). At the same time, as Arjun Appadurai points out, the “task of producing locality, (as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community) is increasingly a struggle” (ibid: 189). The production of locality is thus always a risky and fragile achievement.

MIDJA IN THE MIDST

Ngadjon-Jii elder, Ernie Raymont, and I are walking along a cattle pad in a cleared paddock on the edge of Malanda. We are following the western fence line of the Malanda Falls National Park, towards the banks of the North Johnstone River. Uncle Ernie knows this area well from the time when he and members of his immediate family lived along the edge of the river in the 1950s and 1960s:

When we came in from the Johnston's Farm [in the 1950s] there were camps up there in 'The Jungle' and below the waterfall [the Malanda Falls] at 'Bottom Camp'. Nobody [Aboriginal people that is] lived in town when we lived here on the North Johnstone River. Some people lived at the barracks at the Malanda Hotel. They worked for the English family. Grandad Ben English lived in a camp over there in what is now the industrial centre on the way out of Malanda. He was still there when I went out to work, he was there until he died, that would have been mid 1960s.

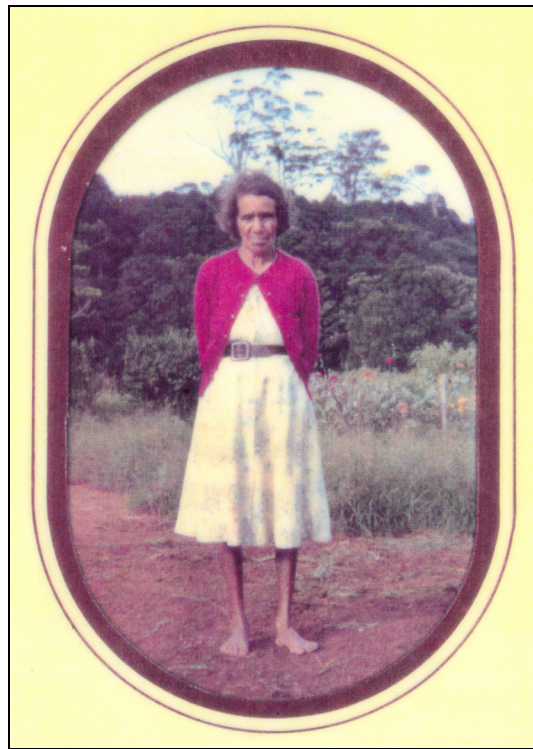


Figure 25: Molly Raymond standing in front of J. K.'s Farm, ca. 1960s (Photo courtesy of Yvonne Canendo).

Prior to living at the camp on the banks of the North Johnstone River, Ernie Raymont and a number of other Ngadjon-Jii people lived at 'Bottom Camp'. Sometimes known as the 'Falls Camp', this camp was located in the rainforest that today forms the Malanda Conservation Park. Auntie Jessie Calico recalls life at 'Bottom Camp' in the 1950s:

After we shifted from the Malanda Falls we went to the bottom of the falls, in the scrub again. They used to show us how to get our yellow walnut, gungi, and show us how to collect it, and how to sit down and grind it, throw it on the coals and, take it out and let it cool, us kids used to smash all the shells, then we used to sit down and grind all that thing into flour. We toast it up and then

throw it back into the dilly bag, dgundgu, you call it puntoo (Dugulbarra) I think, then we would have to take it down into the river and just where there is a stream they used to show us how to divert the water ... and then down here at the bottom where there is say a little fall there, put the dilly bag there, hang it, of course, you have got dingii leaf on the bottom, then they get that dingii leaf and make it like a funnel, then the water flows into that, that's to cure that thing... we used to eat mainly at night time, there was always plenty of other stuff in the scrub to eat during the day ... like that little red thing we call guiyu, we might get quandong or white apple ... lawyer cane, berries and all that stuff. At night we had a proper feed. ... Lawyer cane, if you stick that in the fire green it will frighten the Quinkan away, that noise it makes ... they taught us how to go down in the water and catch fish and djunki and mowut ... those little djumbun, little beetles (wood larvae), they used to just eat the wood, to us they were clean so we used to eat it, we were still in the scrub then ... from there we came out of the scrub and onto the cleared paddock [J. K.'s Farm]. (cited in Johnston 1994: 20).

Some fifty years later, as we walk through the cleared paddocks abutting the national park, Ernie Raymont explains where we're going:

We're heading towards the junction of Williams Creek and the North Johnstone River. There was a car track between the rainforest and fence line. We lived in a patch of rainforest where the William Creek comes into the North Johnstone River. At the junction there was a little island, they got some logs from the rainforest and made a sort of a bridge. When we went to town we used to walk along the edge of the river and then gradually walk up the top. We had to cross another farmer's block to get into town. This track here was constantly used by our people.

As Ernie's comments indicate, Ngadjon-Jii people moved along different tracks and roads than those used by Europeans. Movement from one place to another wasn't simply a matter of Euclidean geometry, of taking the shortest linear route, as most Europeans want to do. Ernie's description of how he and other Ngadjon-Jii people walked into town from the fringe camp on the North Johnstone River is far from a direct route. In some ways, this meandering track along the river and through the remaining patches of rainforest bordering the watercourse reflects traditional ways of walking in step with the lie of the land – aligning themselves to the “inclines, folds and pockets” (Carter 1996: 2) of this ground. This ‘wandering state’, as Paul Carter calls Aboriginal historical space and its enactment, are as much journeys about country as they are travels produced by the very nature of the country itself.

However, as hinted at in Uncle Ernie's comments, these journeys from camp to town, and from camp to camp, are movements through space that is deeply racialised. Ernie Raymont and other Ngadjon-Jii people constantly surveilled their steps and actions to avoid surveillance from others, notably white authorities. Many of the Ngadjon-Jii people who walked along the river “up into town”, worked for the English family at the Malanda Hotel. Ernie Raymont recalls that he worked “at the pub, washing bottles, cleaning up”. Some older Ngadjon-Jii people, like the two widows Jenny Spear (*Gurguny*) and Fanny Wright (*Banajawa*), who worked in the laundry at the Malanda Hotel, “camped at the back of the pub”. Keith Hanrahan, son of Mary English and Jack Hanrahan, who owned and operated the Malanda Hotel from 1922 to 1976, recalls these two Aboriginal workers:

Jennie Denyer and Fanny Wright, two aboriginal women took charge of the laundry during the fifties ... These aboriginals were a type of pygmy, were very black and of short stature (Hanrahan 1991: 11).

The camp on the banks of the North Johnstone River was located on ground Ngadjon-Jii people knew as “J. K.’s Farm” (Figure 25). ‘J. K.’ refers to James English’s son, James Kevin English. As previously mentioned, the English family is widely acknowledged as the pre-eminent family in the settlement and development of the town of Malanda. In 1907, the English family ‘took up’ many of the selections in and around the township. Ernie Raymont describes the nature of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the English family:

Englishs owned all the land around town. Charlie English owned Bottom Camp [Ngadjon-Jii camp below the Malanda Falls]. Top Camp in ‘The Jungle’ was also owned by the English family. Englishs were the family that cleared Malanda. The English family looked after us to stop government taking us to Palm Island. We didn’t have to pay them to camp on that land. Aboriginal people worked for the Englishs. Molly Raymond worked for them as a domestic. Elsie Battle also worked for them. Jim Brown used to work at the pub now and then.

Ernie Raymont’s comments point to some of the contradictions inherent in the policies of separation, such as the prohibited area ordinances that prevailed throughout much of rural Australia in the twentieth century. While Europeans felt that towns represented an array of ‘demoralising influences’ in the form of alcohol, opium, “prostitution, idleness and disorder” (Merlan 1998: 5), from which Aborigines should be protected, they also relied upon the cheap labour provided by Aboriginal people. Local regulations regarding the movement of Aboriginal people dealt with the attraction-repulsion elements of this situation by stipulating that only Aboriginal people gainfully employed by Europeans were permitted in town areas during daylight hours. In Malanda, the farcical contradictions embedded in the practices of protectionism were played out on a daily basis, as Ngadjon-Jii people walked into town each morning to work at the ‘English’s Pub’. The Aboriginal encampments in the rainforested edges of town thus served white labour needs as well as allowing Ngadjon-Jii people to access traditional food resources, and thus augment the rations paid as wages when they went “up town”.

While Ngadjon-Jii people may have worked at the English’s Hotel, and camped on J. K.’s Farm, they made this cleared space, brushed with European history, a distinctively Indigenous one:

Some Ngadjon-Jii people had their camp, inside the [national] park, in the late 1950s and 1960s. They had a grass hut made out of bladey grass. There was Tommy Mitchell, his wife, Alice [Emma Johnston’s sister], and their kids, Ena and Stanley, that’s all that was staying in that place. It was all made out of natural rainforest material. They had a stove and also collected wood from the park. In the late 1960s they moved into Atherton. Nobody ever came and told them they couldn’t stop there. We just thought must be all right. No one came around.

All the same mob lived here. Grandad Jimmy Brown and Grandad Tommy Land, my grandmother’s brother [Molly Raymond’s brother]. My dad, he was staying here in a humpy, then all us kids. Auntie Jinny Brown, she stayed with us too. After she lost her husband, she still worked around town. Then Eddie Mitchell [Ernie’s matrilineal parallel cousin] and his wife came to stay with us. Eddie was always with us. We were never short of relatives coming to visit us or stay with us.

That scrub on the other side of the river, and this one here on the North Johnstone side was always there. We’d go down the bank to the river to get our water. The camp on the English’s Farm had no electricity, no piped water,

no fridges, we used to use kerosene lamps. To wash clothes had a boiler on the banks of the river. We had clothes baskets made of lawyer cane vine.

This is where the men folk had their house. That was always Murri Law. All the men folk one side and the women and children on the other side. Older men stayed separate from their wives.

We all stayed in the same place, we always made room. We had lino [linoleum] on the dirt floor and people camped there. Our house had an iron roof and the walls were iron. We put down the lino that people threw out of their house. They used to come down and leave it for us across the river there. We used to walk across the river to get it. – Uncle Ernie Raymont

While officially Malanda didn't have an 'Aboriginal Reserve' until the mid 1960s, the camps that Ngadjon-Jii people created and occupied on the outskirts of town were regarded by whites as such, and certainly they conformed to the conditions that characterised Aboriginal Reserves in other parts of the continent. The lack of electricity, water and sewerage services at the Ngadjon-Jii camp is indicative of the conditions prevailing in Aboriginal fringe camps throughout Australia at this time (and even later). As Peggy Brock observes, "white families ... pointed to these conditions as an excuse for their racially motivated demands that Aborigines be moved out of their towns" (Brock 1993: 103). Ernie Raymont's description of the physical and social parameters of camp life in Malanda evoke images more often associated with the 'deep south' of America, rather than the far north of Australia. While Ernie's family were officially exempt from the 'Act' at the time they lived on the banks of the North Johnstone River, this seemed to matter little to the white pioneers that comprised the settler society of Malanda:

We were exempt then. We didn't live in town. We lived on the edge. I don't think Malanda people knew that such an act existed. We were an exempted family. We got exempted in 1943. But people didn't know that we could live with whites. Exempted families couldn't live on the Reserve.

The Settlement is over there. That's where the Reserve is. When we lived here, the reserve just started. In the 1960s. They had buildings then but they couldn't get anyone to live there. Later they got some old people from the Malanda Hotel to live there. Jinny Spear was put in a reserve house by herself. – Uncle Ernie Raymont

'The Settlement', as the Aboriginal Reserve in Malanda is more commonly known, was established on the southern outskirts of the town in 1964 (Figure 26). Ngadjon-Jii people remember that 'The Settlement' land was originally part of a local dairy farm and was purchased by the National Party government of the day to give Aboriginal people "a chance". As Ernie Raymont recalls:

They were closing down all the missions around that time and so they set up the Reserve for those people. People came from Yarrabah, Woorabinda and Mona Mona. They were all mixed up. Later when those people moved back to their traditional country, some Ngadjon-Jii people went and lived on 'The Settlement'.

Like other states in Australia, in the early 1960s the Queensland Government was encouraging Aboriginal people to move away from missions by providing housing, education and other services, which would enable Aboriginal people to better integrate into non-Aboriginal society (see Brock 1993: 18). In the case of 'The Settlement' in Malanda, the

Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs erected a number of dwellings on the block and were basically responsible for its administration. Similar encampments were established by the Department in the Tableland towns of Ravenshoe and Mt Garnet.



Figure 26: The Aboriginal Settlement in Malanda, ca. mid 1990s (Photo: Yvonne Canendo).

Uncle Ernie's cousin went to live on 'The Settlement' in the mid-1990s after the reserve had been 'handed back' to Aboriginal people as inalienable freehold land, controlled by an Aboriginal land trust. In the 1990s, the transfer of former Aboriginal reserves to Indigenous land trusts happened in many of the rural townships throughout North Queensland. The original buildings on the Malanda Aboriginal Reserve were eventually condemned by the Eacham Shire Council some years after the transfer and were subsequently demolished. Today, 'The Settlement', a one-hectare strip of cleared land adjoining the Malanda Falls National Park and 'English's Jungle', stands as an overgrown reminder of the nature of Aboriginal-European relations on the Atherton Tableland, and elsewhere in Australia.

LIVING IN CHANGE

Ernie Raymont's family eventually left the camp on J. K.'s Farm and went "out working" on other European-owned properties in the district. However, they left the camp more for cultural reasons than economic ones:

My oldest brother and Grandad Jim Brown died. So people moved away from the scrub [the camp on J. K.'s Farm].

The untimely deaths of a number of Ngadjon-Jii people is also given as the reason why Ngadjon-Jii people moved from their previous camps around the Malanda Falls and at 'The

Jungle'. As we stand in the Malanda Conservation Park, Ernie Raymont points to a Ngadjon-Jii burial ground in the midst of the rainforest:

Over in that area there, that's where all the people are buried. Before Bottom Camp, people had their camps around here. Before us mob came here to live, this mob was camping here before World War II. Some of the old people died here and that's where they buried them. We had our camps back here when I was a kid. Only one old person died there. Grandad Mick Calico died here. Police came and took his body away.

Today, some of the area that formed part of the old people's camp lies under the St Vincent's Aged Care facility, which adjoins the conservation park.

While death instigates major shifts in the social landscape for Ngadjon-Jii people, the actions of Europeans are linked to, and are often invoked, as the basis for other changes in this landscape. Pointing to the trees on the other side of the barbed wire fence, in what is now the national park, Uncle Ernie talks about some of the environmental changes that have taken place on the outskirts of town in the past fifty years:

This was all cleared. It was cleared years ago. Nothing growing here. The trees were planted by the Johnstone River Tree-planting Group. That was in the 1970s and 1980s when conservation became a big issue on the Tableland. Their house was in here, the Mitchell's house, on the other side of the fence. In the park now. It was all clear then. The only patch of rainforest that was here then was down here along the river [the North Johnstone River]. There was a patch of rainforest left here. They chopped down the original rainforest, the farmers, that rainforest was our windbreak. It protected us from the storms.

Ngadjon-Jii people, like Ernie, can also recall the time when a sawmill operated in what is now the national park, and the main road to Atherton cut through the area today enclosed by the conservation park. As Tranter records, the sawmill was established and operated by John Prince from 1910 to around 1920. John Prince's selection "adjoined the Malanda Falls Reserve", and his claim to fame is that he "felled the first thirty acres of scrub ... in the Malanda area" (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 20)²⁴. As we walk through the Malanda Falls National Park, some eighty years after the cessation of the sawmill's operation, Ngadjon-Jii people point to where the "whites chopped trees. They cut timber in the park and milled the logs on site. But didn't touch trees along the river".

Widespread clearing of the rainforest is one of the more visually obvious changes that have taken place in the Malanda region over the past one hundred years. However, as the recollections of Ngadjon-Jii people attest, there are other transformations that have occurred, largely on the periphery of most people's vision:

Dangadja [Atherton Oak], blue fruit, it's eatable [sic] by our people. Tastes like almonds. It's one of the fruits in the rainforest that's got no toxin in it. When they drop to the floor of the rainforest, then it's ripe. This change of climate has really confused the trees. I've seen them over at Lake Eacham last month [October], they were dropping there. I thought it seemed strange.

When I was a kid, the lemon aspen would only flower and fruit about this time of the year. Around Christmas time. But now the climate has changed they are

²⁴ English records that the sawmill operated by John Prince was "located a couple of hundred yards beyond the Malanda Falls" (English 1964: 36).

now flowering and fruiting in the middle of the year. It's got warmer. This change of climate has really confused the trees. It also effects mungara, brush turkeys.

You have a couple of thunderstorms at this time of the year and that ignites something in the turkey. That's when the male and female come together and the male starts gathering the leaves. When he builds the nest so high that's when he opens it up and the female lays her eggs. What happens then, after she finishes laying the eggs, in the meantime it's thundering and lightening, we getting a lot of rain, thunderstorm rain. The temperature in the nest it's steaming. But it's not happening like that now. What is happening today, we don't get any more thunderstorms. We do get rain but it's coming from the coast. It's just drizzle and it's very hot. We don't get that steamy weather like we should and also that thunderstorm rain. The temperature in the nest has been reduced. And so that changes the sex of the turkeys, get more males and less females these days. I only noticed this about five years ago when I first started working here. There used to be a lot of turkeys here, but nowadays there are not so many. What is going to happen is that eventually there'll be no turkeys.

In the early days we had native quolls in these rainforests²⁵. What happened here is that the quolls got used to people. They started going onto the dairy farmer's properties and eating all the chickens. What happened, the farmers ended up shooting them and laying baits. That's why we used to have a large population of scrub turkeys here because we didn't have that natural process. When I was a kid there was that natural process going on. The quolls used to kill the turkeys. That natural process has been upset. I think it comes from a lot more use of the land. Very few Europeans went in the rainforest, only Aboriginal people used rainforest. There is still a large population of quolls over at Bartle Frere, closer to the bigger national parks. – Uncle Ernie Raymont

Speaking of another endangered rainforest species, Ernie Raymont explains some recent movements of the Lumholtz's tree-climbing kangaroo:

Mabi is my totem. I'm not allowed to eat the tree-climbing kangaroo. It's my totem. He's my countryman. I'm not allowed to eat my countryman. They've started to move out too, with the warming in the climate. They've gone over to the mountain ranges over there, near the Crater [Mt Hypipamee]. It's a lot higher and a lot cooler for them there too. So they are getting away from the lowlands to the highlands where it's a lot cooler. Most of the dairy farms up here on the Tableland still got patches of rainforest on their property. So they go from one rainforest to the other. People don't know this is going on.

Ernie Raymont's identification of environmental change as the intersection of local factors with global processes points to changes in relationships and the occurrence of certain events only apparent from a lifetime of living in rainforest country. In this sense, Ernie Raymont's knowledge of the rainforest gives form to Ngadjon-Jii cultural memories about the production of the landscapes we see today. As Ernie's comments suggest, these landscapes are the product of social and natural relationships, interacting in unpredictable ways, at a number of different levels. This talk of change signals a growing sense among Ngadjon-Jii people of a

²⁵ In his account of the 'early days' of Malanda, English notes that "in those times there were wild bush animals called tiger cats and they appeared to take a great liking for the taste of poultry" (English 1964: 30).

gulf between their recalled past and their experienced present. To ameliorate this sense of distance and difference, Ngadjon-Jii people employ their cultural knowledge about living in *buyu* as a “central resource[s] for how to live in change” (Merlan 1997: 237).

The changes that Ernie and other Ngadjon-Jii people speak of in terms of ‘loss’ and ‘confusion’ are heralded by some European pioneers in the area as significant milestones on the road to progress and prosperity. Speaking of Jack Hanrahan, long-time owner and operator of the Malanda Hotel, Peter English writes:

One who first saw the Tableland as virgin scrub, saw huge changes in roads, buildings, factories, education, transport ... (English 1964: 52).

While Ernie and other Ngadjon-Jii people talk about the loss of terrestrial species and habitat, they also speak of some of the changes in the aquatic environment or *bana*:

We'd go fishing in the river at the English's Farm. Caught eel, jewfish. There was no perch or black bream in those days. In the late 1940s the Lions Club, or could have been Rotary, brought black bream fingerlings and put them into 'The Falls'. There used to be native fish in the river before then. Piga is name of native fish used to see in the river. You can still see them today but not as many. Eel and jewfish not as thick as they used to be now. Lots more in the early days. The eels come down in the wet season. The swimming hole is a good fishing spot but we're not supposed to fish at 'The Falls' now.

The introduction of tilapia species into the waters of Lake Eacham and the subsequent extinction of the native rainbow fish constitutes one of the Tableland's more infamous cases of environmental insensitivity in an aquatic context. While these comments highlight the dangers of introducing exotic species into a native landscape, they also point to the impact of other forms of European legislation upon Indigenous people.

EDGE EFFECTS

The declaration of the remaining rainforests on the outskirts of Malanda as protected areas in the 1990s effectively, at the stroke of a pen, transformed traditional cultural practices into a series of illegal activities. As Gillian Cowlshaw observes, the use of legislation and “local ordinances provides the basis for the criminalisation of Aboriginal activities and mechanisms for control” (Cowlshaw 1997: 177).

This is not the first time that a change in European tenure has transformed Ngadjon-Jii people into potential criminals. As they travel throughout their traditional lands they regularly encounter ‘Keep Out’ and ‘Trespassers will be Prosecuted’ signs, or find that the tracks they customarily used are now closed-off by electric fences and locked gates. Their responses to these physical obstacles and declared exclusionary spaces are always contextual and highly relational. In an ironic reversal of Fred Myers’ identification of the content of Aboriginal ownership as “the right to be asked” (Myers 1986: 99), Ngadjon-Jii people sometimes feel that they need to “ask permission” from European landowners. At other times, it is clear that there is a form of understanding between a long-time property-owner and Ngadjon-Jii people, which only requires that gates are closed and things are left as they are. These evolved rituals of colonisation and survival appear not to apply in the more de-personalised setting of public spaces, such as a national park. This said, Ngadjon-Jii people’s continued use of these spaces is achieved by maintaining a strategic invisibility and silence about their actions.

Ngadjon-Jii people continue to hunt brush turkeys, collect their eggs, and harvest wild fruits and nuts from these now 'protected' rainforested locales. However, they do so in an environment of uncertainty and fear. There is the constant fear of being apprehended by the authorities and the ongoing uncertainty about whether these long-standing, cultural practices amount to legal rights under the recent Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993*. Ngadjon-Jii people, like so many Aboriginal people throughout Australia, don't assume the existence of rights in an electorate of former One Nation supporters²⁶. History appears to confirm this particular understanding of 'whiteman's law'.

As McDonald and Lane point out in 'Securing the Wet Tropics', the 1988 declaration of the rainforests of North Queensland as the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area ignored the rights and interests of at least twenty-thousand Aboriginal people (see also Dale *et al.* 2000: 187). The listing basically amounted to a form of 'green imperialism' in the more benign guise of environmental protection. As this example illustrates, all too often in Australia's past there has been a real lack of Indigenous involvement in conservation measures and strategies, amounting to a profound social experience of marginalisation or invisibility. As a corrective to this situation, contemporary environmental discourses emphasise equity and social justice. To achieve the kind of democratisation proposed, co-management, community-based or, more recently, integrated management strategies are often advocated. In the current context, where the concept of crisis has reached fashionable proportions, the notion of joint management is proposed as some form of magic cure for environmental ailments and social injustices. As this suggests, co-management strategies now represent novel and enticing alternatives for the likes of policy makers and environmental managers. While joint or integrated management may be the most recent buzzword in many parts of Australia, it has also become the latest password for skirting the sensitive political issues of Native Title and Indigenous sovereignty.

Ngadjon-Jii people have responded to the physical and rhetorical reality of environmental protectionism by re-inventing themselves as 'cultural rangers'. Their status as 'rangers' serves to legitimate access to, and use of, rainforest enclaves now designated as protected areas. For Ngadjon-Jii people, there are several such areas on their traditional lands²⁷. Whereas previously their very status as Aboriginal people confined Ngadjon-Jii people to these marginal spaces, nowadays Ngadjon-Jii people are required to literally wear their Indigenous status as an achievement badge on their sleeves in order to execute many of their customary practices. However, in the new era of environmental managerialism, it is not sufficient to just be Indigenous. If they wish to be employed by the peak environmental agency that administers the remaining pockets of rainforest on their traditional lands, Ngadjon-Jii people are now required to be 'experts' or 'specialists'. To achieve this status as an 'Indigenous Expert', Ngadjon-Jii people undertake relevant TAFE-based 'capacity-building' courses for a number of years. In the past, one Ngadjon-Jii person was employed as a ranger at Lake Eacham National Park by Queensland's Environmental Protection Agency. However, not one of the twenty or so 'trained' Ngadjon-Jii rangers is officially employed in that capacity today. Instead, as overly qualified 'experts', these Ngadjon-Jii men and women work on country as CDEP²⁸-paid rangers. Minus the epaulettes and the official imprimatur of environmental bureaucracy, Ngadjon-Jii people continue to do what they have always done. Like so many other Aboriginal people in Australia, they go about the routine task of producing locality, landscapes and their own identities in the myriad ways they've mastered to minimise the effects of white intervention in their lives.

²⁶ In recent state and national elections, Malanda emerged as the heartland for supporters of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party.

²⁷ They include; Malanda Falls National Park, Malanda Conservation Park, Topaz Road National Park, Lake Eacham National Park, Curtain Fig Tree National Park, and Wooroonooran National Park.

²⁸ Often called 'work for the dole', CDEP refers to the federally funded 'Community Development Employment Program'.

IMPACTS AND THREATS

On the surface of things, it appears that protected area management is one of the few areas of contemporary rural life open to Ngadjon-Jii people where cultural difference is positively acknowledged, and is not the basis for discriminatory spatial practices.

Yet, perhaps we have to ask ourselves: what or who is being managed here? Is it the case that the discourse of environmental management is really about the management of resources or environments? Or is it really a question of 'managing people'? Or, is it more a case of managing the production of particular kinds of subjects – Aboriginal people as the original conservationists or exemplars of good management? The discourse of environmental management constructs a world where there are no 'owners'; there are only managers, resource users, stakeholders and, more recently, investors. This is a world, which disenfranchises people as effectively as any colonial regime or centralised state.

Increasingly, Aboriginal people are referred to as land managers. While the classification of Aboriginal people as 'managers' appears to be egalitarian in motivation and empowering in impact, it effectively denies the very basis of Indigenous people's identity and influence. That is, their cultural difference. While classed as 'environmental managers', Aboriginal people rarely possess the experience and expertise associated with European forms of management. In this scenario, capacity building amounts to training Aboriginal people as rangers, according to the principles of scientific management. Many Aboriginal people resist attempts to categorise them as managers and choose instead to identify themselves as 'Traditional Owners'. The legal recognition of Native Title in Australia lends support to their demands for the acknowledgment of their distinctive and unique status as the original occupiers.

As managers and rangers in the new equitable, sustainable and efficient environmental management regimes, Aboriginal expressions of 'caring for country' are, at best, given token recognition in terms of the environment significance of these practices. For example, the use of fire by Aboriginal people is recognised by some western management agencies as having a conservation value. Other Aboriginal beliefs and practices, however, are either ignored or there is a complete disavowal of their environmental relevance. All too often, as the recently formulated Commonwealth of Australia Coastal Policy (DEST 1995: 27-31) indicates, political commitment to and support for Aboriginal environmental 'management' practices amounts to nothing more than 'consultation', 'involvement', 'participation', 'promotion', 'encouragement', 'acknowledgment', and of course, 'engagement' in non-Indigenous management arrangements.

In the accumulating literature on environmental management, particularly the material on co- and integrated management, there is a tendency to speak of traditional knowledge or local practices as if they are abstract systems, akin to scientific knowledge, shared by every member of the community. Moreover, the principles that inform these belief systems are regarded as not only eminently discoverable but ultimately replicable in a number of different contexts. The dehistoricising universalism implied in the widespread application of scientific knowledge is now accorded to Aboriginal beliefs and practices. Aboriginal knowledge is now assigned a privileged position as an environmental canon or it is elevated to the status of an ethno-science. However, this does not necessarily make these 'sciences' or the canon stable or universal. It merely globalises them.

Attempts to transform Aboriginal ways of knowing and using country, and the social and cultural virtuosity associated with this, into transcendental and disembodied information systems or management practices raises serious questions about where and how Aboriginal people fit into this scenario, or whether they figure at all.

NEW SPACES, OLD PLACES

In a recent commemorative history of the Eacham Shire, the president of the Eacham Historical Society observed that:

In 1995, Aborigines living in the Eacham Shire appear to be reasonably well integrated into the general stream of present day society. Aborigines no longer live in camps on the edge of town, however, in their hearts they probably still cherish their dreaming” (Eacham Historical Society 1995: 6).



Figure 27: Location of Ngadjon-Jii camps and dwellings, and other places of historical significance in Malanda (Photo: Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Graphics: Birgit Kuehn).

Henry Tranter's comments paint an interesting picture of the social and physical landscape of Malanda (Figure 27). In this view, Ngadjon-Jii people's experience of living in rainforest camps on the 'edge of town' is portrayed as part of a civic past best forgotten, left behind in the wash of assimilation. These comments also strongly suggest that Ngadjon-Jii people today no longer live on the edge of white society, let alone on the edge of town. Integrated into the mainstream, it appears that the original colonial project of enlightenment has finally succeeded in the closing moments of the twentieth century. The Dreaming now nothing more than a faint pang in people's hearts. There is something unsettling about this comforting, two-

dimensional scene of contemporary life in Malanda. Notwithstanding Ngadjon-Jii people's experience of living in change, some things remain the same.

Auntie Emma Johnston and other Ngadjon-Jii people in Malanda continue to live on the edge of town, nowadays in rudimentary public housing (Figure 28). From this site on the outskirts of town, Ngadjon-Jii people travel along the rainforested corridor of the North Johnstone River back to their camps at 'The Jungle', and in the two protected areas – Malanda Conservation Park and the Malanda Falls National Park. Walking along the river from their new Besser block 'camp', they go hunting and fishing in the remaining pockets of rainforest.



Figure 28: Trevor Johnston, holding his grandson, with his mother Emma Johnston outside their *Besser Block* 'camp' on the outskirts of Malanda, ca. early 2000 (Photo courtesy of Yvonne Canendo).

This 'fringe camp' on the periphery of town is the centre of Ngadjon-Jii people's social world. Like the situation with their former camps in the rainforest, 'family' and other Aboriginal people move in and out of this place. Some people camp the night, others just call-in for a 'cuppa' and a chat. While the term 'camp' implies a spatial referent, 'camp' for Ngadjon-Jii people invariably invokes the presence of people. In this sense, 'camp' can be regarded as a relational concept expressing a connection between a person and a place, or between a group of people and their country. The concept of 'camp' encapsulates a sense of belonging – belonging to country and belonging to other Aboriginal people connected to that country. As such, 'camp' refers to those places Ngadjon-Jii people regard as their "home" and where they feel "at home". Thus, while living on the margins is a place historically familiar to people, unthinkable as it may be to the settlers in Malanda, it's also the place where Ngadjon-Jii people want to be – camping back on the edge of *buyu*.

CHAPTER SEVEN – AFTERWORD

Father Latour judged that, just as it was the white man's way to assert himself in any landscape, to change it, make it over a little (at least to leave some mark of memorial of his sojourn), it was the Indian's way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like fish through the water, or birds through the air. It was the Indian manner to vanish into the landscape, not to stand out against it. – Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop

IN THE CHAMBER

It feels like an inquisition, sitting on hard leather-bound seats, lined up along the edge of the chambers of the Eacham Shire Council. The council building in the heart of Malanda appears to warp space and time – inside the walls are lined with the rainforest timbers of Ngadjon-Jii country. Outside we are greeted by a fibreglass diorama of pioneering achievements and agricultural implements. These icons of European settlement of the district, felled trees and sown pastures, memorialise the present as much as they do the past. For nothing much has really changed, even though everywhere there is a veneer of modern life.



Figure 29: *Djura Djilam* – Mt Bartle Frere, taken from Lamins Hill (Photo: Roger Wilkinson).

This perceptual discordance is also apparent in the chamber. From the throat clearing and seat scraping, it appears that everyone is uncomfortable. Ngadjon-Jii people sit in this administrative gallery as though spectators to the history of their own dispossession. On this

stage, they are about to perform in the latest epoch in the history of Indigenous-Anglo-Australian relations – the era of Native Title. The audience for this spectacle is the body of seven male councillors, many of who are the descendants of the original European settlers. Ngadjon-Jii people and councillors alike awkwardly acknowledge their mutual familiarity and shared histories. Though this doesn't amount to greeting each other by name. They face each other as two cultural categories, divided along racial lines, rather than as individuals.

Instead of tree-climbing and 'painting up' to perform corroboree dances, Ngadjon-Jii people are required to execute a much more difficult task. Somehow, they have to communicate to this body of seven men something of what, for the Ngadjon-Jii people present, amounts to an unreflexive everyday practice – culture. They are required to present to this elected body of respectable citizens a twenty-minute snapshot of who they are and how and why it is they should be acknowledged as the Traditional Owners of the country enclosed by the boundaries of the local government area.

We start with a photograph of Mt Bartle Frere taken from the vantage point of Lamins Hill (Figure 29). Warren Canendo calls the mountain *Djura Djilam* and talks about how it is a "sacred site, this is where the spirits of our old people live and where we go when we die". One of the councillors points out that we are not only looking at Mt Bartle Frere, but in the foreground of the photograph lies his farm. He seems at ease upon recognising a familiar place in the unfolding Indigenous space narrated by Warren and the other Ngadjon-Jii people.

The talk of Ngadjon-Jii people is replete with stories about landed productivity, though not anything immediately recognisable by the farmers present in the chamber. They speak about "living off bush foods", such as *mungara* (bush turkey) and *bumbu* (turkey eggs), the fruits of brown apple, *murrurr* (bumpy satin ash), *gungi* (yellow walnut), *guwa* (black walut), *guyu* (an edible berry from an unidentified vine species), and *yabalam* (edible lawyer cane species).

What is often reduced to a mode of subsistence or spoken of purely in economic terms is a key framing activity for Ngadjon-Jii cultural identity and interests in country. As Elizabeth Povinelli observes, the sweat and speech associated with hunting and gathering in an environment imbued with all form of sentient beings are "seen to make the country 'sweet' and productive and willing to give its produce" (Povinelli 1993: 32). Moreover, these foraging activities provide Ngadjon-Jii people with a way of:

[A]ttending to, reenacting, and ensuring the physical, mythical, and emotional production of the environment, the human body, and the social group in the midst of sometimes horrendous historical upheavals and dislocations (Povinelli 1993: 30).

As Ngadjon-Jii people talk about bush foods and the entities that inhabit their country, *Yamani* and *Gubi*, and name in language places within the rural landscape of Eacham Shire, one wonders how this Ngadjon-Jii performance of knowledge and identity will be assessed by the councillors. The councillors appear mildly curious about the other uses of rainforest species revealed to them in the unfolding Indigenous hunting-gathering discourse. Though it seems that all this talk of foraging in the scrub is an aside to the main game of Native Title.

As Elizabeth Povinelli suggests in her analysis of the legal hearing for the Kenbi land claim in the Northern Territory, assessments of Aboriginal people and culture are often "tied to their varying degrees of association with Anglo culture and economy" (Povinelli 1993: 55). Embedded in these evaluations is a taxonomy of racial typologies, "is the Aboriginal narrator of 'full blood' or 'mixed' parentage" (loc. cit.), and a history of race relations. This became apparent in the chamber when, towards the end of the presentation, one of the councillors turns to Yvonne Canendo, her mother, Emma Johnston, and the other members of their

immediate family, and states that, “when I was a kid growing up in the Malanda area, we were always scared to go near the Aborigines out at Glen Allyn”.

It is here, on the sharp edge of fear, that Ngadjon-Jii people’s aboriginality and cultural difference is given local form and meaning. There is no suggestion here that the Ngadjon-Jii people who now live on the edge of the built environment of the township have lifestyles or histories that look anything like those of the Anglo-Australian residents of this district. Indeed, there is no suggestion that there are any similarities at all. This one comment succinctly gathers up the history of the past one hundred years. This is the fear that the pioneers wrote about in the recollections of the ‘early days’ in Malanda. It is as much a cultural memory for the European population of the district as it is a reality for Ngadjon-Jii people. On a rainy morning in the main street of Malanda in 2005, this one statement appears to establish without further discussion the very basis of white society’s fear – a prior and on-going Aboriginal presence in the remaining rainforests of the Atherton Tableland.

A LANDSCAPE OF HISTORICAL LEFT-OVERS

Throughout the Atherton Tableland, a new landscape is emerging. On maps it appears as a series of irregular polygons strewn haphazardly across the plateau. Often coloured red, as if to warn of some impending danger, these disparate pockets of unallocated state land (USL), national park, state forest, and reserve land are the tenure remains of a century or more of European exploration, settlement, and industry on the Tableland. For a range of reasons, these areas were not alienated as ‘agricultural farms’ and other forms of freehold land when the region was originally surveyed and cut up into selections, or in later waves of ‘land opening’ (see Frawley 2000). Some of this land was set aside for ‘camping’ and ‘scenic purposes’, other parcels were identified as water reserves, while the vast majority of the remaining area was crown-owned forestry land (Gould 2000; Holzworth 2000). Today, these patches of variously designated state land provide the contours for, and geographical content of, Aboriginal Native Title claims on the Tableland.

In the Malanda district, the leftovers from the colonial project of settlement and development amount to a handful of residual rainforest pockets – the Malanda Falls National Park, a disused and overgrown ‘quarry’ reserve near Peeramon, and the Topaz Road National Park²⁹. Further away from Malanda, a portion of Wooroonooran National Park and an ephemeral island in the middle of the Russell River are also part of the Native Title claim lodged by Ngadjon-Jii people³⁰. As the encounter in the council chamber highlights, these colonial discards form the physical, as well as symbolic, sites for on-going legal negotiations and political contestations about the nature and culture of Malanda’s spatial history. These contestations alert us to the fact that landscapes are also disputed and, at times, denied. In this sense, the idea of landscape can be regarded as a ‘concept of high tension’ (Inglis 1977), often enacted at the interstices of history, society and culture. Emerging from this crucible, the era of Native Title challenges the pervasive culture of forgetting and the environmental amnesia associated with the historical production of the landscapes of the Atherton Tableland. Yet somehow, in this unfolding view of fields and farmhouses, rainforest pockets, and rural townships, the contours and coils of *Yamani Country* can still be glimpsed.

²⁹ Barely 400 metres at its widest point, and measuring only 1,200 metres in length, this park largely consists of a section of a steep-sided, rain-forested creek. In other words, a gully. This parcel of land, abutting the Lamins Hill to Topaz Road, was declared a reserve for ‘scenic purposes’ in 1935 and a national park in 1977.

³⁰ A portion of what is today Wooroonooran National Park was first declared a national park in 1921. In 1960, additional areas were added to the national park. In 1994, the current area of the national park was declared a protected area.

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